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Prevention of and Response to Bullying

Gateway Montessori is committed to helping children respect personal boundaries and supports this throughout the school, providing children a safe place to grow, and safe adults to approach for support when needed. We emphasize respect for each other and the environment we share together each day. This policy is created to meet the requirements of the Illinois State Board of Education.

Preventive Training

In keeping with Montessori philosophy and pedagogy, the school focuses on preventive measures by teaching children how to:

- Be curious and courteous
- Cooperate with others
- Deal with negative feeling such as anger, jealousy, etc.
- Stand up for themselves without being aggressive

Starting at an early age, students learn respectful listening and communication skills to solve normal peer conflict.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the school.

Students will from time to time engage in teasing with friends. Gateway strives to help both parties involved in such a situation understand intent versus impact and guide students to resolving the interaction. *Bullying*, including *cyberbullying*, is a more serious act and is recognized as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, spreading rumors, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, purposefully excluding someone from a group, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

We require all members of the Gateway Montessori community, including but not limited to administration, faculty, staff, consultants, parents, students, and volunteers, to not engage in

bullying, discrimination, or harassment of any other member of the Gateway community. This includes but is not limited to offensive comments or jokes, gestures, graffiti, or other verbal or physical conduct that creates a hostile or abusive environment or is intimidating, demeaning, or threatening.

Definition of “Cyber-bullying”

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. “Cyber-bullying” includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. “Cyber-bullying” also includes the distribution by electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.

Reporting

Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing to the Director/Complaint Manager, or any staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Anyone, including staff members and parents/guardians, who has information about actual or threatened bullying is encouraged to report it to the complaint manager; Director, Emily Page, director@gatewaymontessorischool.org, 773-539-3025, or to any staff member. Anonymous reports are also accepted

All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, by:

1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation in less than 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the report incident of bullying.
2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
3. Notifying the Director or her or his designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.

Any reported alleged incident will be kept confidential to the extent possible while it is investigated. Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Director or designee shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student who is involved in an alleged incident of bullying. The Director will offer an opportunity to meet with the Director or designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident. Actions may include, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, other interventions.

The Director or designee shall investigate whether a reported incident of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction and shall require that the school provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Intervention

When an incident occurs, employees are required to complete an Incident Report and to send copies to the complaint manager; Director, Emily Page, director@gatewaymontessorischool.org, 773-539-3025. Parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying will be notified.

- If the behavior is deemed or becomes extreme, the teacher will schedule a meeting with the parents, and, depending on the circumstance, with the Director or appropriate staff. Staff, parents, and child will respectfully work together to modify the behavior.
- If a pattern of willful, disruptive behavior develops, consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement as is required by law:
 - Teachers will record behavior observation
 - The teacher will inform the student's parents
 - Appropriate staff will be notified
 - The student, teacher, parents, and Director will work together to modify behavior and when appropriate additional professional help will be solicited.
- If a child persists in the unprovoked, willful, and deliberate hurting of others, after being reasoned with and experiencing consequences, there may be an immediate one day suspension from school.
- Continued negative behavior will result in the school requiring a behavioral evaluation by a professional, and the possible removal of the student from the school.

The Director or designee shall use interventions to address bullying that may include, but are not limited to, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, psychological services, and community-based services.

A reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences of other appropriate remedial actions.

A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the school's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences of other appropriate remedial actions.

The school's bullying prevention and response plan must be based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including student and parents/guardians.

Policy Effectiveness Evaluation

The Director or designee shall assist the Board of Trustees with its evaluation and assessment of this policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, without limitation:

1. The frequency of victimization
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at school
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs.
4. The types of bullying that are common or occurring.
5. Bystander intervention or participation

The information developed as part of the evaluation process will be made available to school administrators, Board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

This Bullying policy aligns with Montessori philosophy and other policies of the board. The policy will be posted on the school's internet website, and included in the student and staff handbook, and, where applicable, posted where other policies, rules and standards of conduct are currently posted. The policy shall also be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students in the school handbook, and school personnel, including new employees when hired in the staff handbook.

Policy is consistent with the policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school.

Review

The school will review and re-evaluate its Bullying/Harassment Policy every 2 (two) years or as needed and will be updated to reflect any necessary and appropriate revisions. If no revisions are deemed necessary as a result of the review process, the Board president shall issue a signed statement indicating that the policy was re-evaluated and no changes were deemed to be necessary.

Date of adoption: December 17, 2019. Amended January 31, 2022.