



## **BULLYING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE**

Bullying and Harassment Free School: Wolcott students respect the rights of all students and staff to be in an environment free from physical and verbal abuse. All students and staff have a right to a safe environment and to be respected. Any form of bullying or harassment will not be tolerated.

Bullying is prohibited on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Wolcott also complies with all applicable antidiscrimination requirements set forth in the Illinois School Code for Illinois nonpublic schools.

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and Wolcott College Prep policy. A student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate are diminished by bullying and other aggressive behaviors. Such conduct interferes with a student's educational environment, safety, and academic performance. Preventing students from engaging in these aggressive and disruptive behaviors and providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important Wolcott College Prep goals. Wolcott College Prep uses the definition of bullying as provided in the Board's policy and this section. However, nothing in Wolcott College Prep's bullying prevention and response plan is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Students are expected to act respectfully toward their peers and to avoid bullying and aggressive behaviors in their interactions with other students. Wolcott College Prep prohibits and will not tolerate aggressive student behavior, including bullying conduct of any type or on any basis, as defined below. Further, Wolcott College Prep will protect students against retaliation for reporting incidents of aggressive behavior and bullying, and will take disciplinary action against any student who participates in such conduct.

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

Bullying is prohibited in each of the following situations:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school- related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the School. This paragraph (item #4) applies only when a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require staff members to monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

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

*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, photo-electronic 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. Cyber-bullying also includes 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.

*Restorative measures* means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

*School personnel* includes, but is not limited to, educators, therapists, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, classified staff, substitute and temporary teachers, volunteers, or paraprofessionals (both employees and contractors).

Reporting Bullying or Harassment: All individuals are encouraged to immediately report bullying. Students, school staff, and parents/guardians who witness bullying or who have information about actual or threatened bullying shall immediately report it to the Head of School, Director of Student Life/Dean of Students or any Wolcott College Prep employee. A report may be made orally or in writing by completing a Bullying Reporting Form. The form can be found on the school website or obtained from Director of Student Life/Dean of Students. Anonymous reports also are accepted. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

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### Investigation:

The Head of School or designee shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, in accordance with Board Policy. All reasonable efforts will be made to complete the investigation within 10 school days; involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff with knowledge, experience and training on bullying prevention; notifying the Head of School or designee of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received as deemed appropriate in the investigation process; and consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the Head of School or its designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The Head of School 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 school and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Head of School or designee shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, as to the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

### Interventions and/or Consequences:

When an investigation determines that bullying occurred, the Head of School or designee immediately shall impose the appropriate consequence under the Head of School. The Head of School or designee shall use interventions to address bullying, which may include, but are not limited to the following: school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and referrals to community-based services. When used, restorative measures must increase student accountability where an incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category identified in the *Illinois Human Rights Act*.

Additionally, the Head of School or designee shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the school and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Any form of reprisal or retaliation directed against any person who reports bullying or provides information during an investigation about actual or threatened bullying is prohibited. Any such act by a student will be met with disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions consistent with this policy.

A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information about actual or threatened bullying, even if the school's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing false information will be met with disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions consistent with this policy.

Wolcott College Prep's bullying prevention and response plan will be based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. The Board or its designee will re-evaluate its Anti-Bullying Policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.

The Head of School or designee shall make the Anti-Bullying policy available and, where applicable, post it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted. The policy must also be distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

The Head of School or designee shall assist the Board 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 a school;
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
4. The types of bullying utilized; and
5. Bystander intervention or participation.

The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that the school already collects for other purposes. The information must be provided to school administrators, Board members, school personnel, parents/guardians, and students.