

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

Introduction

The safety of every member of the Kingsley Montessori School (“Kingsley” or the “School”) community is critical to the mission of the school. Thus, it is expected that all members of the Kingsley community treat one another with civility and respect. It is the policy and commitment of Kingsley to provide an environment in which students can learn and grow, free from bullying, cyberbullying, unlawful discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and verbal, physical, or emotional misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

Kingsley’s Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the “Plan”) is published in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, otherwise known as the *Massachusetts Law about Bullying in Schools*. The Plan applies to all students, and is made available to students and their families, as well as all employees of the School, and will be distributed annually. Kingsley reviews and updates the Plan annually and will reach out to families biennially for comments. Parents are also welcome to provide comments on the Plan at any time and should direct any such comments to the Head of School.

The Plan provides all students with the same rights and protections, regardless of the student’s race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ethnicity, citizenship, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other class protected by federal, state, or local law and is consistent with broader protections against discrimination, harassment, and other inappropriate conduct as detailed in the School Handbook and the Employee Handbook. Further, in accordance with the School’s policies, values, and standards of conduct, the School has supplemented certain definitions and concepts provided by law in an effort to enhance the school’s anti-bullying curriculum. For example, although the law defines bullying as “repeated use” of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, this Plan affirms the school’s discretion to impose disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act, or gesture, if the School determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action, or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying. The School also retains the right to investigate student conduct and take corrective action, even if the conduct does not meet the definitions of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. The School may modify the protocols set forth in this Plan and use its discretion in the interpretive enforcement of all ideals and standards of conduct.

Kingsley recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Accordingly, Kingsley will work with families of these children to provide a dedicated resource. Specifically, Kingsley has engaged an individual to serve as the Director of Student Life who will serve as the contact person and dedicated resource. Kingsley will also provide training in conjunction with the Director of Student Life for all faculty and staff to assist in handling bullying or other issues as they may impact those in our community who are more vulnerable.

The goals of this Plan are:

- to prevent bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation among Kingsley students;
- to encourage students and parents/guardians to come forward promptly if they become aware of conduct that is prohibited by this or any other school policy;
- to promote confidence in the school’s procedures; and
- to aid the appropriate implementation of discipline and other corrective measures when warranted.



It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the Kingsley community. Ensuring adherence to the Plan is the responsibility of the Head of School (or the Head of School's designee, as may from time to time be designated).

Policy Against Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Retaliation

Kingsley will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyberbullying, nor will it tolerate retaliation against anyone who brings forth a claim of bullying, allies with one who is being bullied, provides information in the investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited on Kingsley's campus and the property immediately adjacent to school grounds, on school vehicles, and at school-sponsored events, activities, athletic contests, and off-campus trips. Kingsley-owned technology may not be used to intimidate, harass, threaten, or bully another student. Expressions or acts may constitute bullying even if they occur after school, when students are not in school, and/or while students are not participating in school activities. Specifically, bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School, if the bullying: (a) creates a hostile environment at school for a student, (b) infringes on the rights of a student, or (c) materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the School.

Should it be determined that a student has engaged in any form of bullying, the Director of Student Life, appropriate Education Division Director, faculty member, and Student Support Team members will strategize how to best proceed in helping the student understand that the student's behavior does not reflect the values of the Kingsley community. Any corrective action against a student or employee who is found to have engaged in bullying will be determined by the Head of School or the Head of School's designee. After supports are in place, the student's progress will be carefully monitored and evaluated. A lack of growth in this area could result in the student losing their place at Kingsley. At the same time, Kingsley will also engage in support and regular communication with the target of bullying and the target's family consistent with this Plan and will take steps to ensure that any incidents of bullying will not be repeated in the future.

Definitions

Aggressor: A student or employee who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards another person.

Bullying: Bullying is defined by Massachusetts law as the repeated use by one or more students or members of the faculty/staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student's property;
- places the student in reasonable fear of harm or reasonable fear of damage to the student's property;
- creates a hostile environment at the School for the student;
- infringes on the rights of the student at the School; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the School.

By way of example only, bullying may involve, though it is not limited to:

- threatening;
- intimidating;
- stalking;
- cyber-stalking;
- physical violence;
- sexual, religious, racial, or any other type of harassment;

- public humiliation;
- destruction of personal property;
- social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion; or
- rumor or spreading of falsehoods.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, 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, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, text messages, social media, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes but is not limited to: (a) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, and (b) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation constitutes bullying conduct as defined above.

Cyberbullying 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 conditions included in the definition of bullying.

Faculty/Staff/Employee: Kingsley faculty and staff include, but are not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, support staff, paraprofessionals, and all staff associated with providing auxiliary activities outside the normal school day.

Hostile Environment: A hostile environment refers to a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive so as to alter the conditions of a student's education, as determined by the Director of Student Life and Directors of Education.

Retaliation: Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or an employee who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, witnesses, or has reliable information about bullying.

Target: Any student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

School Grounds: Any property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased, or used by the school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction, or training.

Prevention of Bullying and Cyberbullying at Kingsley

Kingsley is proud to maintain a community in which bullying is actively discouraged—not only by involved adults, but also by a positive peer culture that does not tolerate such mistreatment. The School Handbook contains clear expectations for student conduct. All families receive access to the School Handbook online via *MyKingsley*.

Kingsley has developed a bullying prevention curriculum and will have regular presentations which will be led by its Director of Student Life for both students and faculty. Kingsley will share information with parents and guardians on how they can reinforce the curriculum at home, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyberbullying.

At Kingsley, students are encouraged to appreciate that they possess inherent dignity and deserve to be treated with civility and respect. Respect and kindness towards others and responsibility for one's own behavior are important values in the school community. The School strives to teach students how and when to reach out to appropriate faculty members and staff if at any time they are concerned about their safety or well-being, or that of a fellow student. We teach, instill, and enforce strategies for preventing incidents of bullying in a number of ways including but not limited to the following:

- **Safe Learning Environment:** Students are in an academic environment that supports inquiry and both independent and collaborative exploration. The materials and instruction are differentiated to provide students at all levels with satisfying work. Through a combination of self-directed and teacher-directed learning, students are engaged in high level, non-competitive tasks that absorb their attention and build their confidence. As a result of these aspects of the Montessori Method and our Social Emotional Learning programs, students are less apt to engage in negative behaviors.
- **Teacher Observation:** Observation is a foundational tool for all educators and is used in a variety of ways, in both the academic and social arenas, to evaluate student progress and inform teacher-directed lessons. These observations allow teachers to monitor the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral development of each student and to foster effective learning, identifying when additional support may be needed.
- **Emphasis on Community:** Independent schools allow for student independence and foster collaboration. Students sit together as a whole class to reflect on what they're learning, both academically and socially. Class Charters and agreements are made that are often reviewed or referred to during this time. This supports students in making decisions that have a positive effect on their peers.
- **School Culture:** Teachers are not an authority over children, but instead co-creators of the school environment. As a result of the multi-age grouping, students may have the same teacher for multiple years and are able to develop rapport and trust. These supportive connections can serve as the basis for strong behavioral health and provide students with the comfort to confide in adults.
- **Parents/Guardians as Partners:** Parents/guardians are partners in supporting their children's growth and development. Regular communication is fostered to address any emerging difficulties in a timely manner. In this way, issues do not accumulate, and high-level incidents are prevented.
- **Training and Professional Development:** The School conducts an annual training for all employees regarding its *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan*, *51A Mandated Reporting* along with *Boundary Training*, and *ALICE Safety Training*.

Reports of Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation

Kingsley's mission includes creating a school culture that encourages students, faculty, and parents/guardians to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior, experienced, reported, and witnessed. We are a community committed to addressing these incidents and empowering students to be part of the solution

A student who is the target of bullying or cyberbullying, or who has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyberbullying, or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyberbullying prohibited by this Plan is strongly encouraged to report the matter promptly, either verbally or in writing, to the Education Director, Director of Student Life, the Head of School, or to any other administrator or faculty member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. If a student is uncomfortable contacting one of these individuals, the student may ask another adult or a classmate to help. Also, any student or faculty member who is subject to retaliation, or who knows of another student or faculty member who has been subject to retaliation, is urged to report it as soon as possible. Kingsley will not tolerate any retaliation against any person who in good faith reports allegations of bullying.

Parents/guardians who believe that their child is the target of bullying or cyberbullying, or whose child has witnessed, or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyberbullying, are urged to notify the Education Director, Director of Student Life, Head of School, or another administrator immediately. Furthermore, any parent or guardian who has directly witnessed bullying or cyberbullying, or has relevant information concerning such an incident or any incident of retaliation, is strongly encouraged to contact one of these administrators.



Any employee of Kingsley who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyberbullying, or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information, must report it immediately to the Head of School, Education Director, Director of Student Life, or to any other administrator. Additionally, if an employee witnesses an act of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation in progress, the employee is expected to take reasonable steps to stop the act.

Kingsley employees should not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent/guardian who informs them of an allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. While a member of the faculty, staff, or administration may make a report under this Plan anonymously, the School urges employees not to make anonymous reports under this Plan, as it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if a report is made anonymously. If an employee wishes to make an anonymous report, they should direct it to Kingsley's Human Resource Specialist or the Head of School.

Although Massachusetts law permits a student or the parent or guardian of a student to make a report of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation anonymously to the Education Director, the Director of Student Life, or to the Head of School, the School urges students and their parents/guardians not to make anonymous reports under this Plan. While there are circumstances in which an anonymous report is better than none at all, it is nonetheless far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if a report is made anonymously. If a parent, guardian, or student wishes to make an anonymous report, they should direct it to the Education Director, Director of Student Life, or the Head of School.

Massachusetts law prohibits Kingsley from taking disciplinary action against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation seriously. While the School cannot promise strict confidentiality to a student, parent, or guardian who makes a report under this Plan, because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning reports of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation only when it determines that there is a legitimate need-to-know.

Responding to a Report of Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation

Preliminary Considerations

The requirement to report to the Head of School, Education Director, Director of Student Life, or other administrator does not limit the authority of the employee member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for maintaining safety, behavior management, and/or discipline in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children involved. When a complaint of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Head of School, Education Director, or Director of Student Life, an assessment is made to determine the initial steps appropriate to protect the well-being of the students involved and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while an investigation is undertaken. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision or stay-away mandates may be issued to prevent bullying, witness interference, or retaliation during an investigation.

Both during and after an investigation, the School is committed to protecting the physical and emotional well-being of all of its students and employees and will take appropriate measures to do so. Thus, the School will be sensitive to the needs of both the alleged targets as well as the alleged aggressors. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan, pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying an employee who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and/or access to the target. The School will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as may be appropriate, including implementing protocols for protecting individuals who report or witness bullying, or who are interviewed regarding bullying.



If at any point after receiving a report of bullying, cyberbullying, and/or retaliation, the Head of School or the Head of School's designee, determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Head of School or designee shall immediately notify the local law enforcement agency if the Head of School or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against a perpetrator.

If the School receives a report of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation involving students from another school, the Head of School must promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school, so that both may take appropriate action. If the School receives a report of bullying or retaliation on school grounds involving a former student under 21 years of age who is no longer enrolled in school, the School must immediately notify law enforcement and/or the Department of Children and Families if criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Notification of Parents/Guardians

The School will promptly notify the parents/guardians of a student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, and the parents/guardians of a student who may have been involved in the perpetration of such behavior, after a report of such behavior has been received by the School.

Investigation

The goal of an investigation, and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation, is to correct the situation to the extent reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent repetition of the incident and to prevent the student targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

The following is an overview of the protocols that will generally be followed once a report of behavior prohibited under this Plan has been brought to the attention of the School:

Initially, appropriate school personnel (typically the faculty/staff member who first witnesses or becomes aware of the complaint) will speak with the students to conduct an initial assessment of the situation. Factors to be considered may include: age, maturity level, special needs, degree of harm, surrounding circumstances, nature of behavior(s), past incidences, pattern of behavior, relationship between the parties, and the context in which the alleged incident occurred.

Then, an impartial, fact-finding investigation of the complaint will be promptly conducted by the Head of School or the Head of School's designee. This investigation may include, but is not necessarily limited to, interviews with the person or persons who made the complaint, the alleged target, witnesses to the incident, the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and any other parties who witnessed or may otherwise have information relevant to the alleged incident. The investigator(s) may consult with the Education Director, the Director of Student Life, teachers, a school nurse, the parents/guardians of the student or students who were allegedly targeted, and/or the parents/guardians of the student or students alleged to have been the aggressors, or any other person whom the investigator(s) deem to have knowledge about the complaint.

Kingsley neither tolerates nor engages in retaliation against an individual for filing a complaint of bullying, or for cooperating in an investigation of such a complaint. No adverse action will be taken against a student or employee for making a good faith report of alleged bullying. An individual who is found to have engaged in retaliation against a student or employee for filing a complaint, or participating in the investigation of a complaint, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the School or termination of employment.

All persons involved in an investigation should understand that false or exaggerated accusations can be extremely damaging to innocent persons; therefore, the School expects and requires the honest and full disclosure of facts by all involved. Any person who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary action.

Resolution

Following interviews and any other investigatory information gathered, the Head of School or the Head of School's designee will determine in their sole discretion whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If there is reason to believe this Plan has been violated, the Head of School or the Head of School's designee will determine any disciplinary action and/or other remedial action that may be appropriate and how it will be implemented. The Head of School or the Head of School's designee will also work with the Director of Student Life to determine whether counseling, or a referral to appropriate services, should be offered to targets, aggressors, or family members of the affected students or targets.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Head of School, or person(s) who conducted the investigation, will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student or students against whom the complaint was made. If disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, the parties will be informed of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student and employee records or other confidentiality or privacy considerations.

The parents/guardians of all students involved will also be contacted by the Head of School or the Head of School's designee promptly upon the completion of the investigation. The Head of School or the Head of School's designee will inform the parents/guardians of the students involved of the outcome of the investigation as it relates to that student.

In cases when it is determined that bullying or retaliation has occurred, Kingsley will assess the target's need for protection and will make appropriate efforts to restore the target's sense of safety. Kingsley will confer with the target, the target's parents, and with appropriate school officials and indicate in writing the steps the school will take to restore the target's sense of safety. Parents/guardians of the target(s) will also be notified of any action to be taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Finally, follow-up communications may occur with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this Plan and the student's parents/guardians (as applicable) to inquire whether there have been any further incidents.

Information about consequences or other corrective action will be shared with the Kingsley community as deemed appropriate by the Head of School. The amount of information provided may be limited by laws protecting student records and/or the integrity of investigatory processes. When it is determined by the Head of School or the Head of School's designee that the student body or faculty would benefit from reporting of the events and associated consequences of an incident of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, an announcement may be made in person, electronic communication, or otherwise.

Resources, such as counseling or referral to appropriate services, are available to all students and during and after an investigation. These resources are available to both alleged aggressors and alleged targets. On-line link to resources which are available in Massachusetts can be found here: stopbullying.gov

Disciplinary Action

The Head of School and/or the Head of School's designated representative will determine, in their sole discretion, any appropriate disciplinary action for a student who is found to have committed an incident of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. The range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation will balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior and may include:

- loss of privileges;
- written apology to another student;
- close supervision of the student;
- suspension from the School; or



- dismissal from the School.

If, as the result of an investigation, the Head of School determines that the employee should be subject to disciplinary action, such disciplinary action will be handled in accordance with the policies set forth in the Employee Handbook.

Conclusion

This Plan, which is consistent with the school's mission and policies that appear in the School Handbook, outlines the school's bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation policy and is consistent with the school's ongoing commitment to fostering a safe, supportive, and respectful learning environment for all members of the Kingsley community.

Questions regarding this document or other aspects of Kingsley's prevention and response to matters of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation should be directed to the Head of School, an Education Director, or the Director of Student Life.