

**PRESENTATION OF MARY ACADEMY
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN
DECEMBER 2010**

1. Introduction

At PMA, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect.

It is the policy of PMA to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal, physical, or electronic misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

The PMA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the recently enacted Massachusetts law against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote a safe learning environment and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process or cause harm to our students. This Plan is to be applied in accordance with the school's "Nondiscrimination Policy," which appears in the student and staff handbooks.

This Plan is consistent with broader protections at PMA against discrimination, harassment, hazing, and retaliation that appear in our student and staff handbooks. It is intended (1) to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students, (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in PMA's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other PMA policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the PMA community. The Principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to the Principal.

2. Policy against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation

PMA will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited on school grounds and at school-sponsored events, activities, functions, and programs. Bullying and cyber-bullying also are prohibited on school buses and other vehicles owned, leased, or used by PMA, and through use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by PMA.

In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not PMA-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by PMA, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at PMA for a targeted student, infringes on the rights of a targeted student at PMA, or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of PMA.

Definitions. The terms used in this policy are defined as follows:

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

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or damage to the targeted student's property;
- Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student;
- Infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, e-mail, instant message, text messages, and internet postings, whether on a web page, in a blog, or otherwise.

Hostile Environment. A hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

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

Some examples of Bullying and Cyber-Bullying:

Bullying: Bullying can include, but is not limited to, any of the repeated events defined as follows:

- a. hitting, slapping, pushing, and other physical conduct that causes bodily harm.
- b. teasing or threatening in a manner that puts someone down or is cruel.
- c. deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumors, psychological manipulation, and other actions that hurt someone's feelings or demeans them.
- d. sexually harassing conduct.
- e. hazing activities.

Cyber-bullying: Cyber-bullying may include, but not be limited to, any of the following kinds of repeated behaviors:

- a. forwarding or threatening to forward a private email, instant message or text message to embarrass or intimidate a person.
- b. spreading hurtful rumors online about another person.
- c. threatening or insulting through aggressive emails, instant messages, or text messages.

- d. posting, or threatening to post embarrassing pictures of someone online without his or her permission.
- e. creating a web page or blog

Legal Definitions and PMA Policy. It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior than those provided by law may apply under PMA's policies in order that we may prevent inappropriate conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "repeated use" of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, PMA reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act or gesture, if PMA determines that it consists of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action.

3. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-bullying

From the beginning of their time at PMA, students learn that as members of our community they have a right to be treated with civility and respect. Our statement of purpose emphasizes respect for differences, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. When necessary, parents are notified and asked to reinforce standards for membership in the PMA community.

The handbook is reviewed with students and shared with parents each fall. This handbook includes explicit policies around expectations for appropriate behavior including the acceptable use of technology at PMA.

Staff members are trained annually regarding the Presentation of Mary Academy Bullying Policy. Staff members make sure that students are well informed about what is expected of them and to reinforce positive conduct.

The administration and faculty recognize that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend to the classroom, the cafeteria, the library and other places of study, the locker rooms, athletic practices, social events, buses and the like. PMA strives to ensure that appropriate adult supervision is provided on PMA premises, on PMA-provided transportation throughout the school year as well as at PMA sponsored events.

4. Reports of Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, or Retaliation

Any student who is the target of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation or has witnessed an incident of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation or otherwise has relevant information about such conduct is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Assistant Principal or Principal, or to any other faculty or staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. A parent of a student who is the target of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about such conduct is strongly urged to promptly notify the Principal. Furthermore, any parent who has witnessed bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation or has relevant information concerning such conduct is strongly urged to promptly come forward to the Principal.

Any member of the faculty or staff of PMA who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation in violation of this policy is required to report it immediately

to the Principal. A member of the faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs him/her of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. Students and parents may make reports anonymously, but generally, no disciplinary action will be taken based solely on an anonymous report. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Also, while PMA cannot promise strict confidentiality, because some information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, PMA releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation only on a need-to-know basis in order to conduct an effective investigation or to ensure that the requirements of this policy and applicable law are met.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

5. Responding to a Report of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation

- A. **Preliminary Considerations.** When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Principal, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted by the Administration. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation during an investigation.
- B. **Notification of Parents.** It is the policy of PMA to notify the parents of any student who is found to be a target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who is found to have engaged in such behavior promptly after a determination has been made.
- C. **Investigation.** An impartial investigation of the complaint will be promptly conducted by the Administration. All students are expected to cooperate fully with any investigation under this policy. Failure to cooperate with any PMA investigation can result in disciplinary action.

The investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student who was the target of the alleged bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident.

Depending on the circumstances, the Administration, while conducting the investigation also may choose to consult with others, including teachers and/or the School Counselors. Searches of lockers, backpacks or other containers, electronic systems and devices may be made with the help of the Principal and the Assistant Principal.

D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up

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

Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as PMA deems appropriate, the Administration will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this Plan or any other PMA policy has been violated, the Principal, usually with the help of the Assistant Principal will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate, balancing the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. The full range of discipline outlined in the handbook may be taken against a student found to have engaged in bullying or retaliation.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency will be notified immediately. In addition, if a reported incident involves students from another school, PMA will notify the Principal or designee of the other school of the incident so that such school may take appropriate action.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Administration 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. The Principal will communicate with their parents to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, to inform the parties of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted or retaliated against in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents.

6. Collaboration with Families

Each year PMA will inform parents and guardians about its bullying prevention and intervention plan. This plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis.