

# **Bellesini Academy**

## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

### **I. Introduction**

Bellesini Academy expects that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect for all differences.

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

The School will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying or teasing. The Plan is consistent with broader protections at Bellesini Academy against discriminations, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that appear in our *School Handbook* and our *Faculty/Staff School Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the Bellesini Academy community. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to either the Head of School or Assistant Head of School.

### **II. Policy against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation**

Bellesini Academy 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 at school bus stops, on school buses and other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school, and through use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school. In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying 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 creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or have reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

### **III. Definitions and Examples**

It is very important that all members of the School community understand what is meant by bullying, cyber-bullying and others terms covered under the policy. The following definitions are drawn from the Massachusetts law against 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 or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process of the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying, is bullying through 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 messages, text messages, and internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise.

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 is a 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.

Staff includes, but it not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurse, athletic coaches, after-school support staff, or evening study staff.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

**Examples of bullying:** Bullying can include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

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

**Examples of cyber-bullying:** Cyber-bullying may include the following kinds of behaviors:

- taking a private email, instant message or text message and forwarding it, or threatening to forward it to others or posting it where many can see it to embarrass or intimidate a person;
- spreading hurtful rumors online about another person;
- threatening or insulting through aggressive emails, instant messages, text messages, or posts on social networking sites;
- posting, or threatening to post embarrassing pictures of someone online without his or her permission; and
- creating a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation causes any of the conditions listed in the definition of bullying found in this Plan.

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Bellesini Academy's policies in order that we may prevent inappropriate verbal and physical 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, the School reserves the right to apply 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 as defined under the law.

#### **IV. Reporting of Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, or Retaliation**

**Reporting by Students:** Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying prohibited by this policy is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School or to any other faculty or staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible.

**Reporting by Parents and Guardians:** Any parent of a student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying is strongly urged to promptly notify the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. Furthermore, any parent who has him or herself witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School.

**Reporting by Faculty and Staff:** Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyber-bullying in violation of this policy or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. There are to be no exceptions.

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.

**Anonymous Reporters:** Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not School members, may be made anonymously, however, the law provides that not disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of 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. Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation seriously. Also, while the School cannot promise strict confidentiality, because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation only on a legitimate need-to-know basis.

**Reporting Resources:** The School makes a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, (1) an Incident Reporting Form, (2) a dedicated mailing address (Head of School, Bellesini Academy, 94 Bradford Street, Lawrence, MA 01841), (3) a Referral Form.

While the use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report, the School makes the Form readily available as a convenient and efficient means of providing necessary information on which the School can base its response and investigation. The Incident Reporting Form will be provided in the beginning of the year and can be found in the *School Handbook*. It is also available in the school's main office, Head of School's office and Assistant Head of School's office.

**Contact Information for Reporting an Incident:** Contact information for reporting an incident to the Executive Director or Dean of Students is as follows:

Ms. DiFilippo, Head of School                      (978) 989-0004                      [jdifilippo@bellesiniacademy.org](mailto:jdifilippo@bellesiniacademy.org)

Mrs. Colfer, Assistant Head of School                      (978) 989-0004                      [kcolfer@bellesiniacademy.org](mailto:kcolfer@bellesiniacademy.org)

## **V. 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 Head of School or Assistant Head of School, 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 implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to: creating a personal safety plan; pre-determined seating arrangements for the target and/or aggressor in the classroom, at lunch or on school transportation; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and/or increasing supervision in certain

areas at certain times. The Assistant Head of School or a designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Assistant Head of School or a designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reposted act of bullying or retaliation.

## **B. Obligation to Notify Others**

- 1.) Notice to Parents or Guardians – Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, Assistant Head of School or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and, if appropriate, of the procedures for preventing further acts of bullying or retaliation. There may be a circumstance in which the Assistant Head of School or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to, or during the investigation. All such notifications will be made to the extent required by law and consistent with any applicable policies and practices of the School’s regarding confidentiality of student information.
- 2.) Notice to Another School or District- If the reported incident involves students from more than one school, the Assistant Head of School or designee will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All such notifications will be made to the extent required by law and consistent with any applicable policies or practices of the School’s regarding confidentiality of student information.
- 3.) Notice to Law Enforcement – At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Assistant Head of School or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Assistant Head of School will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the established agreements with the local law enforcement agency and the School’s applicable policies and procedures. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Assistant Head of School or designee shall conduct the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making any determination under this Plan, the Assistant Head of School or designee may, consistent with this Plan and with applicable School policies and procedures, consult with other individuals the Assistant Head of School or designee deems appropriate.

## **C. Investigation**

The following is an outline of the procedure that is pursued once a complaint has been brought to the attention of the Head of School or Assistant Head of School:

A prompt and impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. That 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. The scope and extent of the investigation will depend upon the particular circumstances of each situation. Pursuant to the School's policies, all students and staff are required to cooperate with the School's investigations of bullying and retaliation complaints.

Depending on the circumstances, the Head of School or Assistant Head of School conducting the investigation also may choose to consult with other teachers and/or staff members. The Head of School or Assistant Head of School will maintain confidentiality during all investigations.

#### **D. Determinations**

The Head of School or Assistant Head of School will make a determination based upon all the facts and circumstances as to whether bullying, cyber-bullying, retaliation or other violations of school policy or inappropriate behavior has occurred. If, after the investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Head of School or Assistant Head of School will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent reoccurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefitting from school activities. The Head of School or Assistant Head of School will: 1.) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending on the circumstances, the Head of School or Assistant Head of School may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s), and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior. If there are underlying issues found through the interview process the parent or guardian will receive referral information to community counseling services.

The Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Notice to parents will be consistent with the School's policies on confidentiality of student records and information. Therefore, the Assistant Head of School may not be at liberty to report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

In situations where bullying or retaliation has not been found, the School reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action if the conduct is found to violate another of the School's policies, be inconsistent with the School's mission or educational purpose, or to be in breach of the School's general expectations for appropriate behavior.

Certain types of conduct, whether or not it meets the definition of bullying, may also trigger the School's duty to report to an outside agency, such as hazing or child abuse. In such situations, the School will comply with its legal obligations.

## **E. Responses to Bullying**

### **1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skill-building**

Upon the Head of School and Assistant Head of School determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the School may use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Skill-building approaches that the Head of School and Assistant Head of School may include, but are not limited to:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's anti-bullying policy;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students;
- implementing a range of academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying policy and social skills building activities at home;
- making a referral for evaluation.

### **2. Taking Disciplinary Action**

If the Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School decide that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found during the interview process. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the School's Handbook. Disciplinary actions and other corrective actions for violations of this policy may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- written referral
- parent conference
- limiting or denying student access to a school activities
- exclusion from participation in school-sponsored functions and/or extracurricular activities
- an apology to the target
- mandatory counseling
- suspension
- expulsion or withdrawal from the school

If the Head of School and/or the Assistant Head of School determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action, example include (without limitation) letters of apology, suspension, up to and including expulsion.

### **3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others**

The Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. This might include, but is not limited to, more adult supervision in certain areas, a safety plan, a change of seating in class.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Assistant Head of School or designee will contact the target to

determine whether there have been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Assistant Head of School or designee will work with the appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **VI. Annual Notice, Handbooks and Training**

At the beginning of each school year, the School will send parents and students a packet which will include the *Student Handbook*. The Plan will be located within the *Student Handbook*. Each Bellesini Academy student and parent is responsible for going over the Handbook before the start of the school year. Changes made to the Plan will be outlined in a letter and talk about during the Back to School Meeting held in September. The plan will be made available in the language(s) most prevalent to the School community.

The School will also provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the *Faculty and Staff Handbook* or both other effective means. The School will also provide all staff with annual training on the contents of the Plan, their responsibilities to prevent bullying and retaliation and to report suspected incidents. Such annual training will also include an overview of the steps the Head of School or Assistant Head of School will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Bellesini Academy is dedicated to providing a school environment that is free from bullying, cyber-bullying, retaliation or any other forms of behavior that have a negative impact on members of our school community. This Bullying Prevention Plan is intended to (1) assist the School in its efforts to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students; (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted; (4) help the School to maintain a safe, positive and respectful school environment.



## Appendix A Examples of the types of aggression that are viewed as bullying

### Examples of Physical Aggression:

- Pushing
- Kicking
- Punching
- Shoving
- Hitting Stealing
- Spitting/objects
- Tripping
- Hiding property
- Slapping
- panting)
- Hiding/property
- Pinching
- Inflicting bodily harm
- Threatening with a weapon
- Throwing objects
- Knocking possessions down off desk
- Committing demeaning or humiliating physical acts that are not physically harmful (e.g. de-

### Examples of Social/Relational Aggression:

- Gossiping
- Embarrassing
- Ignoring
- Laughing at
- Giving the silent treatment
- Spreading rumors
- Excluding from the group
- Maliciously excluding
- Publicly embarrassing
- Taking over a space (hallway, seats)
- Setting up to look foolish
- Malicious rumor mongering
- Social rejection
- Manipulating social order to achieve rejection
- Setting up to take the blame
- Threatening with total isolation by peer group
- Making rude comments followed by justification or insincere apology
- Humiliating on a school-wide level

### Examples of Verbal/Nonverbal Aggression:

- Mocking
- Name calling
- Writing notes
- Rolling eyes
- Insulting
- Slander
- Taunting
- Ethnic slurs
- Slamming books
- Writing graffiti
- Making putdowns
- Swearing at someone
- Teasing about appearance
- Teasing about clothing or possessions
- Making disrespectful and sarcastic comments
- Threatening violence or bodily harm
- Threatening aggression against property or possessions

### Intimidation

- Defacing property or clothing
- Stealing/taking possessions (lunch, clothing, books)
- Posturing (staring, gesturing, strutting)
- Taking over a space (hallway, lunch table, seats)
- Extortion
- Blocking exits
- Publicly challenging someone to do something
- Invading one's physical space by an individual or crowd
- Threatening coercion against family or friends
- Threatening bodily harm
- Threatening with a weapon

**BELLESINI ACADEMY PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM**

**1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

**2. Check whether you are the:**            Target of the behavior                     Reporter (not the target)

**3. Check whether you are a:**     Student     Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_  
    Parent             Administrator             Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your contact information/telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**4. Information about the Incident:**

**Name of Target(s) (of behavior):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Aggressor(s)** (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s) of Incident(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time When Incident(s) Occurred:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident(s)** (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_                     Student     Staff     Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_                     Student     Staff     Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_                     Student     Staff     Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**6. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.**

**7. Signature of Person Filing this Report:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

**8: Form Given to:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Received:** \_\_\_\_\_