Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
August 2019
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

The Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA) is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our combined efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Definitions

The following definitions are defined by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O:

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students, or school volunteer, or by a member of a school staff including but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

“Cyber-bullying” is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail (e-mail), internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include:

- The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person
- The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation created any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying
- 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 posting creates any of the conditions in the definition of bullying

“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 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.

“Aggressor” is a student, school volunteer, or staff member who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

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

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

For the purposes of this Policy, references to bullying shall include cyber-bullying. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (b), acts of bullying are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds
- At a school sponsored or school related activity, function, or program whether or not on or off school grounds
- At a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school
- At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Prevention and Intervention

The AMSA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying. As required by the M.G.L., c. 71 § 37O, the policy was developed in cooperation with teachers, school staff, students, parents and guardians, the Marlborough Police Department, professional support staff, and the Board of Trustees. The school is committed to working with the AMSA community to prevent issues of aggression. The Principal or designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the policy. The Principal will designate a team of administrators each school year, consisting of the Deans, counselors, and selected staff and/or faculty, to assist in determining appropriate responses to bullying.

Designated administrators and professional support staff will work with the Principal to assess the adequacy of programs and curricula, current policies and procedures, training programs, and behavioral health services. Data on behavior that exemplifies good character will be reviewed periodically and policies and procedures will be updated as needed. The Principal or designee is responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- Soliciting reports for where and how the school should identify opportunities for character growth and development
- Collecting and analyzing school-wide data on respect and responsibility in action among students, staff, teachers both in and around the school community
• Recording and tracking incident reports of behavior that is counter-productive to our character-driven mission
• Planning professional development that enhances the two-prong approach to our vision of academic rigor and character education
• Overseeing supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors that would threaten our approach to education
• Choosing and implementing the bullying prevention curricula for the school
• Developing new or revising current policies and procedures under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation
• Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct
• Drafting parent information materials
• Reviewing and updating the Plan each year

Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member must be recorded in writing. AMSA staff members are required to report immediately to the Principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school staff members may be made anonymously. The requirement to report to the Principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. Reporting resources include, but not limited to, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Report Forms (located at the Deans’ of Students and Guidance offices), the AMSA administrative team, and the HR Manager.

At the beginning of each school year, the school will provide the AMSA community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources will be included on the school website.

REPORTING BY STUDENTS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS, AND OTHERS
AMSA expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely based on an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from the appropriate Dean of Students in the lower or upper school to complete a written report. Students will be provided confidential, safe, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION
Student safety is the school’s primary concern when responding to allegations of bullying or
retaliation. Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal or designee will take steps to provide a sense of safety to the alleged target and to protect the alleged target from the possibility of further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, the following student safety planning strategies:

- Changing seating arrangements for the target and the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus
- Identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target
- Modifying the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target

NOTICE TO PARENTS OR GUARDIANS
Once the Principal or designee has determined that an incidence of bullying or retaliation has occurred, parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor will be promptly notified and provided with the procedures for response to the notification.

NOTICE TO OTHER SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS
If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Principal or designee first informed of the incident 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 communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

NOTICE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT
After receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal will notify the Marlborough Police Department. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00. 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 Principal or designee shall contact the Marlborough Police Department if there is a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. The Principal or designee will, consistent with AMSA school policies and procedures, consult with the Deans and other members of the administrative team when making such determinations.
INVESTIGATION
The Principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and consider all available information known, including the nature of the incident and the ages of the students involved. The Principal or designee as necessary will interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others. The alleged aggressor, target, and witness will be reminded that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, or other members of the administration. The Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigation to the extent as possible, given the Principal's obligation to investigate and address the matter. If necessary, the Principal will consult with legal counsel. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

DETERMINATIONS
The Principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances of the reported incident. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor and explain what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents will comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Specific information cannot be reported 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.

The Principal or designee will take steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in school activities. The Principal or designee will determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive action and/or disciplinary action is necessary. If appropriate to the circumstances, the principal or designee will consult with the students’ teachers and counselors, and the target’s or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issues that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

RESPONSES TO BULLYING:
DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND THE PROMOTING OF SAFETY
In accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d)(v), AMSA has developed strategies for teaching appropriate behavior through skills building, and other individualized interventions that the school may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation.

- Providing educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with the Principal, Deans, counselors, and appropriate support staff
- Implementing academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals
- Incorporating anti-bullying curricula into the Health and Physical Education Program and during Directed Study
• Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the development of good character and social skills at home
• Making a referral for evaluation
• Participation in mediation or other conflict resolution strategies

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on the facts and findings of the investigation, the nature of the conduct, the age of the students involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. All disciplinary action will be consistent with the AMSA code of conduct. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004).

The Principal or designee will contact the target within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary consequences to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If there is evidence to support a recurrence, supportive measures will be implemented immediately. If the Principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action. Strategies to enhance the safety of the school environment may include:

• The increase of adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur
• Assigning administrators, faculty, and staff to strategic intake, dismissal, and lunch posts to actively supervise students during non-academic activities and transition times
• Reinforcing the school culture of understanding and acceptance of diversity with a focus on teambuilding in the classroom, in sports, and other extracurricular activities
• Partnering with community-based agencies and programs

Training and Professional Development

As required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O., AMSA will provide ongoing school wide professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, athletic coaches, and professional support staff. The school will provide training during the annual teacher orientation in August and during the school year as determined by the Principal at regularly scheduled staff meetings and/or as the focus for one or more professional development days during the school year.

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes character development, civility, respect, and responsibility. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to promote a culture and climate of respect, responsibility, and kindness. As required by law, professional development on bullying will include the following six topics:

• Developmentally or age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
• Developmentally or age appropriate strategies for immediate, effective intervention to stop bullying incidents
• Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witness
• Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk in the school environment
• Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying
• Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying

AMSA will also provide professional development to staff that addresses ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities or circumstances that must be considered when developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans. This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

An integral part of the AMSA school culture includes ongoing routines and policies that include:

• Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference
• Teaching students’ skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others
• Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language
• Using positive behavioral intervention strategies
• Constructively managing classroom behaviors
• Applying constructive disciplinary practices
• Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students
• Building relationships and communicating with families

Academic and Non-Academic Instruction on Bullying Prevention

AMSA will provide all students in grades 6 through 12 with age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention. Bullying prevention instruction will be incorporated into the Health and Physical Education curriculum and during Directed Study in grades 6-8. Effective instruction will include classroom activities, school wide initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

The administrative team will provide instruction and guidance to students about the resources and services available to them as defined in the Plan through the bullying prevention curriculum. Daily school routines designed for lunch period and Directed Study (for grades 6 through 8), will reinforce healthy student interaction and respectful behavior.

Specific bullying prevention strategies will be research based and emphasize the following approaches:

• Using scripts and role plays to develop skills
• Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance
• Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying
• Emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
• Practicing skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
• Helping to build a climate and culture that emphasizes response and responsibility.

Collaboration with Families

AMSA will actively collaborate with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) to actively support the school’s efforts to maintain an environment of respect and responsibility. AMSA’s English Language Learner (ELL) Community Outreach Program will continue to develop a rapport with all of our families from non-English speaking backgrounds in order to promote mutual respect for and appreciation of each of the cultures represented in the school.

AMSA will inform parents or guardians about the anti-bullying curricula that is being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety and how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home. AMSA will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school’s internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be available in electronic formats and be posted on the school website. Hard copies will be available by request in the school office. Notices and information will be available in other languages if needed.

Problem Resolution System

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Problem Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Executive Director’s office.

Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and AMSA policies, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to the school or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study at AMSA on account of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or 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. Nothing in the Plan prevents AMSA from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person’s membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school policies.
In addition, nothing in the Policy is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37 ½, or 37H3/4, or other applicable laws or school policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.