

LPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
Policies and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation
For parents and students

Creating a safe environment where students can take learning and social risks has always been a core value at Learning Prep School. Learning Prep is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and address all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. Learning Prep School expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The following definitions have been provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and will be used by Learning Prep. It is a violation for anyone, including another student, to bully or intimidate a student through conduct or communication as defined below.

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

Bullying: Bullying is defined in M.G.L. c. 71 370 as the severe or repeated use of written, verbal or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture by one or more student directed at another student that has the effect of:

- Causing physical or emotional harm to the other student or damage to his or her property;
- Placing the other student in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- Creating a hostile environment at school for the bullied student;
- Infringing on the rights of the other student at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school

Bullying may include indirect, direct and repetitive: tripping, hitting, shoving, spitting, punching, pinching, blocking an entrance/exit or passageway, excluding or leaving others out, spreading hurtful or untrue stories, abusive name-calling, harassment, threats or trying to scare someone, threats to control another student or their friendship with someone else, disrespect for a student's family members, disrespect for the property of others and/or the disrespect of someone's race, ethnic group, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means such as a cell phone, the Internet or a social networking site. It includes but is not limited to email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. Cyberbullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another

person as the author of posted content or messages. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of 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 enumerated above.

Hostile Environment as defined in M.G.L. c. 71 370 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, witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, pre-voc instructors, administrators, counselors, therapists, school nurses, custodians, advisors to extracurricular activities and support staff.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated. It is important for students to make it clear to others (parents, counselor, teacher) when a particular behavior or communication is unwelcome, intimidating, hostile or offensive.

What Bullying is not: It is important to understand that conflict is not automatically synonymous with bullying. Arguing, bantering, verbal abuse, ignoring, roughhousing and fighting, while potentially serious forms of conflict are not necessarily instances of bullying. Bullying is characterized by intention, repetition and a power imbalance. Not every conflict meets these criteria. Whether it is a case of bullying or conflict, all incidents should be reported to LPS staff.

Protocols for Reporting Bullying

An LPS staff member is mandated to report immediately to the Dean of Students (Susan Smith Powers for Elementary/Middle Schools and Laura Carney/Meredith Sullivan for 8th Grade and High School) or Designee any instance of bullying or retaliation that the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports of bullying 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 shall be recorded in writing on an Incident Report Form for Bullying ("the form"). Reports may be given over the phone to the Dean of Students or a counselor and will then be recorded in writing. Parents, guardians and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Reports may be made anonymously by voice mail to the Dean of Students or by downloading "the form" from the LPS website and sending via U.S. Mail. However, no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The *Incident Report Form for Bullying* will be available in the HS Resource Room, through the Transportation Coordinator, the Elementary/Middle School office, the Dean of Students' offices and will also be posted on the LPS parent website. A copy will be included in the beginning of the year packet.

Investigation and Safety

All reports will be given to the Dean of Students or Designee who will immediately assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the identified target and/or to protect the identified target from possible further incidents. The report will then be fully investigated including interviewing the target and any possible witnesses. The Dean of Students or Designee will preserve confidentiality during the investigation process and maintain written documentation of the investigation. All precautions will be taken to protect students who report or witness bullying or retaliation and students who provide information during an investigation from bullying or retaliation

The target's counselor will follow-up with the student on an ongoing basis to ensure continued safety and notify the Dean of Students if needed.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Dean of Students or Designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determination

The Dean of Students or Designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Dean of Students or Designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or on benefiting from school activities. The Dean of Students or Designee will 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. Parents or guardians will be notified about the results of the investigation and if bullying or retaliation has been identified what action is being taken to prevent further occurrences.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Dean of Students or Designee may choose to consult with the students' teachers and or counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social, emotional or learning issues(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional interventions or social skills development.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Dean of Students or Designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this and the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Dean of Students or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. At any point during an investigation, if the Dean of Students or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the local law enforcement agency will be notified. If the Dean of Students or Designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action

If the Dean of Students or Designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of the identified facts, the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the LPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

Bullying and Retaliation Prohibited: Bullying in any form or for any reason is absolutely forbidden. In addition, retaliation against a student who has brought a bullying complaint to the attention of school staff or who has cooperated in an investigation of a complaint under this policy is also prohibited and will not be tolerated by Learning Prep School.

Acts of Bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school ground and property immediately adjacent to school ground, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, while student is waiting to be picked up for transport to or from school or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by Learning Prep, and
- (ii) 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 Learning Prep, if the acts created 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 a school

Students whose behavior is found to be in violation will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include detention (incident report in Elementary School), suspension and police notification. If, during a bullying investigation or at any other time, it is found that a student is being or has been discriminated against by another student, a staff person, or an administrator, under the anti-discrimination statutes the are enforced by the Office of Civil Rights, a report will be made to the Office for Civil Rights and Learning Prep School will further investigate and bring consequences to any individual found guilty of discrimination. All students are responsible for adhering to the current rules and regulations set forth by the state of Massachusetts.