

Bullying and Harassment Policies

Brightmont Academy expects courteous, cooperative, and respectful behavior from all students. Our campuses are focused on motivating students through positive interactions with others, managing their reactions to negative influences, and remaining on task.

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians.

Scope:

Bullying and Cyberbullying of any kind are strictly prohibited by both Brightmont Academy policy and Illinois state law. Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and this Policy is consistent with the Illinois School code. This Policy protects students against bullying and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race or ethnicity, color, religion, sex, national origin or immigration status, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity and gender expression), political belief or affiliation, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one of more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics. We recognize the vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those that identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any expression protected by the First Amendments to the United States Constitution or the Illinois Constitution.

Definition:

Bullying is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property
- Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by Brightmont Academy

Additional indicators of bullying are the following:

- An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person(s) engaged in the bullying behavior(s) and the targeted student(s); and /or student(s) were targeted based on prejudice or bias as defined below.

- The behaviors are severe or pervasive (repeated over time), or there is a high likelihood that behaviors will be repeated. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the severity and if other elements of bullying are present.
- The intent of the person(s) engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student(s).

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyberbullying is defined as through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation 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 system, photoelectronic system, or photooptical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog 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 if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" 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 effects enumerated in the definition of bullying above. Additional examples of cyberbullying include, but are not limited to flaming, outing, impersonation, cyberstalking, catfishing, harassment, trickery, denigration, trolling, and exclusion.

Additional Terms and Expectations

- **Personal Electronic Devices**
Brightmont does not condone any form of harassment or bullying (including cyber-bullying). Harassment (including cyber-bullying), bullying, or other inappropriate uses of Personal Electronic Devices and social media platforms will not be tolerated on campus. Students will immediately lose usage privileges and be subject to Brightmont repercussions and legal consequences for such inappropriate use. See reporting for more details.
- **Anti-Violence**
Brightmont Academy is committed to establishing and maintaining a learning community free of violence. Brightmont Academy has an established zero-tolerance policy for acts or threats of physical violence, coercion, or intimidation of any kind. Acts or threats of violence include conduct that is

sufficiently offensive to the point of altering campus environment conditions or creating a hostile or abusive campus environment. Examples of school violence include but are not limited to threatening, fighting, hitting, shoving, and throwing an object at another student, staff, or other person or persons on campus premises. Anyone who feels intimidated or threatened should immediately ask the perpetrator to stop and immediately report the matter to the Campus Director.

- **Anti-Harassment**

Brightmont does not condone any form of harassment or any form of inappropriate behavior. Brightmont Academy is committed to providing a learning environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Unwelcome actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, citizenship, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. Anyone who feels they have been harassed should immediately ask the perpetrator to stop and immediately report the matter to the Campus Director.

- **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment includes a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors. It may involve individuals of the same or different genders. Behaviors that constitute sexual harassment may include but are not limited to unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, sexual jokes or innuendos, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, comments about an individual's body, sexual prowess, sexual experience, practice, desires, sexual deficiencies, leers, whistles or touches, insults or obscene comments or gestures, or display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures. Anyone who believes that they have experienced any form of sexual harassment should immediately report the matter to the Campus Director. Members of Brightmont's Leadership team will gather information from the students, teachers, and staff involved in harassment accusations. In a case of an allegation of sexual misconduct such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or discrimination related to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, the Office of Student Protections and Title IX will be contacted for support.

Reporting

Responsibilities of Staff:

All Brightmont Academy staff who witness behavior or have knowledge of behavior that falls under the category of bullying are required to intervene immediately in a safe and appropriate manner to ensure the safety of all people involved. Staff must also report any witnessed occurrences to the Campus Director for further investigation within the same school day of the occurrence or within the same school day of when the staff was made aware of evidence of bullying. All staff will cooperate fully with the investigation of

the incident and implementation of any safety plan that might be developed by administration.

Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians:

Students who experience or observe possible harassment, discrimination, or cyberbullying must report their concerns without fear of reprisal as soon as possible to the Campus Director. Brightmont takes these matters seriously and will make every effort to ensure that complaints are investigated and resolved promptly, effectively, and confidentially.

Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to report this to the Campus Director as quickly as possible. Reports can be made by calling 630-917-0217 or emailing anna.vasquez@brightmontacademy.com

Anonymous reports will be accepted. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report however an investigation will be conducted.

Students, Parents and Guardians can get additional resources and support at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>.

Reprisal/retaliation or the submission of knowingly false bullying allegations is prohibited and will result in the imposition of appropriate intervention/consequences including but not limited to parent conferences, IEP review/revision, or suspension.

Investigation Process

If an incident of bullying is reported or witnessed by Brightmont Academy staff, immediate support will be provided by the Campus Director to the affected student(s). An investigation will then be performed by the Campus Director and any designated officials. Additionally, any reported incidents will immediately be investigated.

- After an incident is witnessed or reported, the Campus Director will contact the parent/guardian of each student involved within 24 business hours promptly informing parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying. All communication will be delivered privately. Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights will be followed. Resources will be provided to the parent/guardian/student and Brightmont will identify appropriate staff that the student(s) can talk to if needed. The process will be consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights. Availability of counseling, other interventions, social-emotional skill building, community-based services and restorative measures will be provided.
 - If the incident has larger implications for the campus as a whole, communication may be shared with all students, parents, and staff regarding school policy and conduct expectations.

- o Communication will also be provided to the affected students and parents confirming the availability and means of contacting the Campus Director and designated officials for additional support.
- The Campus Director and designated officials will conduct the investigation and report findings to parents and students within 10 business days of the incident.
 - o All students and staff involved will be documented, including the students alleged to have been bullied, the students alleged to have engaged in bullying, and the students and staff that witnessed the occurrence(s).
 - o The investigation will take into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.
 - o Students and staff involved will be privately and individually interviewed by the Campus Director or designated official.
 - o Any connections to past events or continuing patterns of behavior will be investigated and noted as well.
 - o The investigation will involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the process.
 - o The effect of the incident(s) on campus culture and the broader implications will be considered to ensure the campus sustains a healthy and safe environment for students.
- Findings will be documented in the Incident Response Report and provided to students and their parents/guardians.
 - o Parents will be provided the opportunity to meet with the Campus Director after the report is provided to discuss any concerns or questions about the investigation, the findings or the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying. Student(s) will also be provided an opportunity to talk with the Campus Director.
- Brightmont Academy has a zero-tolerance policy for any act of reprisal or retaliation against a student or staff member who reports bullying. Any acts of reprisal or retaliation will result in additional investigation, a meeting will be held between the parents/guardians and Campus Director to develop a plan to ensure the behavior does not continue, and the student will be held to consequences per the Student Code of Conduct and appropriate intervention/consequences may include but are not limited to parent conferences, IEP review/revisions and suspension.
- Any allegation of bullying that is found to be false as a means of retaliation or reprisal will result in consequences per the Student Code of Conduct and appropriate intervention/consequences may include but are not limited to parent conferences, IEP review/revisions and suspension.

Determining an Appropriate Response and/or Actions

The goal of the response is to ensure that targeted students feel safe and welcome, and the student engaged in bullying behaviors understands the harm he/she caused and will learn to change his/her behavior.

Identify school risk factors and ensure a universal strategy for school climate improvement and social and emotional development.

Provide the targeted student with information on available services including support services and the identification of a safe person to talk to at the school.

Determine interventions and or consequences that address the root cause of the student's bullying behavior.

For incidents that impact the larger school community, provide opportunities in safe, structured environments for affected students, staff, and/or parents to speak about the incident, its impact, and what is needed to repair the harm.

Annual Review

Brightmont Academy will conduct an annual review of its bullying policy to determine if amendments are required to increase its effectiveness and assess the outcomes of the policy. A range of stakeholders including school personnel, parents, guardians, and students participate through surveys, interviews, and collaboration. Campus Director will report the following information to the Academic team:

- The frequency of bullying incidents over the past academic year.
- The frequency of victimization
- Trends in bullying incidents, including locations and types.
- Student and staff bystander intervention observed/reported.
- Bystander intervention or participation
- Student, family, and staff observations of campus culture and safety.

Potential results and findings from the annual evaluation will be posted on Brightmont Academy's website. Brightmont will then engage the stakeholders to determine if any changes are needed. Any changes will be updated and shared with all staff, students, parents/guardians and the website updated to reflect any changes as well.

About the Policy

This policy language is included in the **Brightmont Academy Student and Parent Handbook** for Illinois students, which is provided to and acknowledged by students and parents/legal guardians each school year (annually) and can also be reviewed online at <https://www.brightmontacademy.com>. All Brightmont Academy Illinois employees(including any new employees) will also be provided the policy as part of the

Employee Handbook and will receive new copies and notifications annually and training to review the policy annually. In addition, physical copies of this policy will be made available in the lobby of each Illinois Brightmont Academy campus, accompanying any other information currently being made available to staff, students, and families. This policy will be posted within the school setting where other policies or announcements may be posted.

The Student Bullying, Personal Electronic Devices, Anti-Violence, Anti-Harassment, and Sexual Harassment policies align with Brightmont Academy leadership and Board of Directors' policies of education, and all harassment prohibited by federal, state, and local law.

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