



Intercultural Montessori Language School

Addressing Bullying and Bias-Based Behaviors

Date Adopted: August 29, 2022

Purpose

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Bullying and bias-based behaviors are directly contrary to this and can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interfere with their ability to learn and participate in school activities.

Intercultural Montessori Language School (the “school”) believes that it is essential to discourage students from engaging in behaviors that diminish a student’s ability to learn. It is essential to provide all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment. Efforts to stop bullying and bias-based behavior must involve the entire school community.

Scope

Bullying and bias-based behaviors are contrary to a number of local, state, and federal laws and statutes. This Policy protects Intercultural students against interpersonal harm from bullying and bias-based behaviors. Intercultural recognizes the particular vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those who 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 Amendment to the United States Constitution or Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Intercultural will re-evaluate this Policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying or bias-based behaviors occurs; the types of bullying or bias-based behaviors utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The information developed will be made available on the school’s website.

Bullying and bias-based behaviors are prohibited:

- (1) during any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity;
- (2) in school, on school property, on school buses or other school-provided transportation, and at designated locations for students to wait for buses and other school-provided transportation (“bus stops”);
- (3) through the transmission of information from a school computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment;
- (4) when communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other school-provided transportation, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
- (5) when it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on school-provided transportation;

Definitions

“Bias-Based Behavior” is any physical, verbal, nonverbal, or other act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a member or perceived member of a protected category within the school community that is of a discriminatory or harmful nature.

“Bullying” means any physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students, and meets all of the following criteria. *Note: if the behavior or part of the behavior is bias-based or targeted at a member of a protected category, please see the response to bias-based behaviors guidelines.*

- 1) An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person(s) engaging in the bullying behavior(s) and the targeted student(s).
- 2) 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.
- 3) The intent of the person(s) engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student(s).
- 4) The behavior has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:
 - a. placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
 - b. causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
 - c. substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
 - d. substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

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” means using information and communication technologies to bully. This definition includes cyberbullying by means of technology that is not owned, leased, or used by the school when an administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred. This Policy does not require a school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

“Discrimination” is treating an individual less favorably because of their actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories.

“Harassment” is any unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, visual, or physical conduct that is based on an individual's actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories, as defined in the Final New Comprehensive Non-discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct And Retaliation Policy, that is persistent, pervasive, or severe and objectively offensive and unreasonably interferes with, limits, or denies an individual's educational or employment access, benefits, or opportunities. Unwelcome conduct may include, but is not limited to, bullying, intimidation, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, assaults or threats, touching, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, messages sent via email, text or social media, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, conduct of a sexual nature, or any other sex-based conduct.

“Microaggressions” are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their actual or perceived Protected Category membership such as race, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Adapted from Wing Sue, Derald. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," 2010).

“Protected Categories” are an individual’s actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and pregnancy related medical conditions), race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, age (40 and above), immigration status, marital status, registered domestic partner status, genetic information, political belief or affiliation, military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance, or regulation.

“Peer Conflict” means disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate. Conflicts arise when two or more students with relatively similar observed or perceived power have differences in opinion or perspectives. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in respectful communication, personal boundaries, and peaceful conflict resolution.

“Racial Discrimination” is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, community, national or ethnic origin which has the impact of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, of a right to an equitable educational experience and fundamental freedoms in the social, economic, cultural, political, and linguistic aspects of school, school and district life (Adapted from United Nations, 2019).

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation or adverse action or change to educational program or activity taken against a student for having made a complaint or report of bullying or bias based behaviors whether made internally or externally with federal, state, or local agency, or for participating, aiding, or refusing to participate in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to a report or complaint of bullying or bias-based behaviors.

“Restorative Practices” means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline that are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, contribute to maintaining school safety, protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students’ behavioral health needs. Restorative practices are ways of proactively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done. After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about, and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better.

Preventing Bullying and Bias-Based Behaviors

The Intercultural Head of School and staff shall work to develop safe and supportive school environments that prevent bullying and bias-based behaviors through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- Teaching all students social and emotional skills and establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.
- Establishing predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm. Ensure all students, staff, and stakeholders know how your school plans to respond to bullying and harassment.
- Committing to welcoming and inclusive practices that center belonging, affirm cultural differences, and address and support the transformation of bias-based harm.

Addressing Allegations of Bias-Based Behavior

Intervening to Address Bias-Based Behavior

School staff who witness or become aware of bias-based behaviors must immediately take the following steps:

1. Establish the safety of everyone involved.
2. Denounce the bias-based behavior as unacceptable to the values of Intercultural.
3. Notify the Head of School.

Reporting Bias-Based Behavior

School staff who witness or become aware of must report any and all instances of bias-based behaviors to the Head of School.

Students who experience or witness bias-based behaviors are to report these to a school staff member. Alternatively, students can make reports directly to the Head of School in the following ways:

- Via Email: Submit complaints to chicago@interculturalmontessori.org
- Via Telephone: Submit complaints to 312-265-1514.
- In Person or By Mail: Submit complaints directly to Intercultural in person or via USPS mail to 114 S. Racine Ave Chicago, IL 60607

Steps for Investigating Biased-Based Behavior

- (1) Establish the present safety of everyone involved as well as plan for continued safety in the process.
- (2) Notify parents/guardians of all involved students.
 - a. Within one school day of receipt of a report of bias-based behavior, the Head of School to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students the occurrence of any alleged incident of bias-based behavior.
 - i. Notifications should be made privately to students directly involved and their parent/guardians.
 - ii. When incidents have a larger impact on the school community, the Head of School shall provide clear communication to students, staff, and parents to reinforce school-wide expectations of a climate centering belonging, respect, and affirmation of cultural difference.
- (3) Document all allegations of bias-based behaviors
 - a. School staff who witness or become aware of must report any and all instances of bias-based behaviors to the Head of School.
 - b. Conduct an investigation as directed by the Head of School.
 - c. After the Head of School is notified of biased-based behavior, the Head of School will review the report, determine if it will be accepted as an investigation, and if applicable, the type of investigation as well as provide guidance for student support:
 - i. School-Based Investigation: When the Head of School deems an investigation is able to be carried out at the school, the Head of School will conduct a school-based investigation. School-based investigations are led by the Head of School and school administrators. The Head of School will provide the school guidance. The school **will not conduct an investigation** unless directed to do so by the Head of School.
 - ii. Resolution Timeframe: Investigations will be completed promptly although some investigations take weeks or even months, depending on the nature, extent, and complexity of the allegations, availability of witnesses, police involvement, etc.
 1. School-based investigators will make a good faith effort to complete the investigation process, not including appeals, within ten (10) calendar days which can be extended as necessary for appropriate cause by the school administrator with notice to the parties as appropriate.
- (4) Make a determination whether allegation of bias-based behavior is substantiated or not and document determination.
 - a. School-Based Investigation: Head of School shall consider whether the behavior qualifies as an inappropriate behavior and will prepare a written outcome determination. The Head of School shall ensure the investigation and findings are documented.

- b. If any investigation determines a student engaged in bias-based behaviors and/or other inappropriate behaviors, the Head of School shall prepare a Misconduct Report.
- (5) Notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation.
 - a. School-Based Investigation: Upon the completion of the investigation, the Head of School will issue outcome letters to the involved students and their parent/legal guardian of the investigation status, findings, and next steps including but not limited to potential discipline by the Head of School for substantiated violations.
 - b. Regardless of the outcome of the investigation, Intercultural will take steps to prevent the recurrence of bias-based and discriminatory behavior, as well as all misconduct covered herein, and correct any discriminatory effects on all impacted parties as appropriate.
- (6) Consequences for Knowingly Making False Reports
 - a. False charges shall also be regarded as a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions..
- (7) Retaliation against an individual who either orally reports or files a written complaint regarding bias based behavior or who participates in or cooperates with an investigation is prohibited.

Addressing Allegations of Bullying Behaviors

Preventing Bullying

Head of School and all staff shall work to develop safe, supportive school environments that prevent bullying through:

- **Developing supportive school climate strategies**, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- **Teaching all students social and emotional skills** and establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.
- Establish predictable responses and **effective disciplinary practices** that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm. Ensure all students, staff, and stakeholders know how your school plans to respond to bullying and harassment.

Intervening to Address Bullying

A. Responsibilities of Intercultural Employees

All Intercultural employees who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

- (1) intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved;
- (2) report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Head of School as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours,
- (3) cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Head of School.

B. Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Head of School as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Intercultural employee in person, by calling Intercultural (312) 265-1514, or by emailing chicago@interculturalmontessori.org. Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Head of School. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

C. Steps for Investigating Bullying Reports

- (1) **Ensure safety.** The Head of School will provide immediate support to any targeted student(s) to ensure safety. Alleged behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression should be reported immediately to the Head of School.
- (2) **Notify parents/guardians of all involved students.** Within one school day of receipt of a bullying report, the Head of School shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications.

- a. Notifications should be made privately to students directly involved and their parents/legal guardians.
 - b. Additionally, when incidents have a larger impact on the school community, the Head of School shall provide clear communication to students, staff, and parents to reinforce school-wide expectations and a climate of respect and inclusion.
- (3) **Document all allegations of bullying.** Within 2 school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Head of School will document the allegation as a general incident report and document all notifications made.
- (4) **Conduct an investigation.** The Head of School, who is knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, shall perform the investigation.
- Investigation of reported bullying shall be initiated within 5 school days of receipt of a report, documented within the incident report, and completed within 10 school days, unless the Head of School grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Head of School shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved.

The investigation shall include:

- a. Identifying all involved parties, including the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, alleged target(s) and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
 - b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with all involved parties. The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student(s) alleged to have engaged in bullying.
 - c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and the documentation of the behaviors on the targeted student's education.
 - d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.
- (5) **Make a determination whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not and document determination.** The Head of School shall consider whether the four elements of the bullying definition are met, or if all four elements of bullying are not present, whether the behavior qualifies as another inappropriate behavior. When the investigation is complete, the Head of School shall ensure the investigation and findings are documented. If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors and/or other inappropriate behavior, the Head of School shall prepare a Misconduct Report.
- (6) **Notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation.** Within one day of making a determination, the Head of School shall notify, in writing, the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Head of School to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying.

When communicating incidents of bullying to the targeted student's parent/guardian, the Head of School should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied after coming out as gay, the Head of School shall not disclose the student's sexual orientation to the parent/guardian without the student's permission, unless there is a legitimate, school-related reason for doing so.

If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors, the Head of School shall provide the Misconduct Report to the parent/legal guardians of the student who engaged in the behaviors. They may not advise them of specific consequences imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

D. Determining an Appropriate Response

The goal of the response is to ensure the targeted student feels safe and welcome, and the student engaging in bullying behaviors understands the harm they caused and changes their behavior.

- (1) **Identify school risk factors and ensure a universal strategy for school climate improvement and**

social and emotional development. Assess and address any issues in supervision, expectations, relationship-building, and emotional learning.

- (2) **Support the targeted student.** Assign school staff to create and implement a plan that will restore a sense of safety for the targeted student and other students who have been impacted. Determine any other interventions that may be appropriate.

If the targeted student has a disability, the school shall convene to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student's individual needs and revise the IEP accordingly. For example, if the student's disability affects social skill development or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the Head of School shall ask the student's IEP Team to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to reduce vulnerability to bullying.

- (3) **Determine interventions and/or consequences that address the root cause of the students' bullying behaviors.** Consider the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Identify opportunities to teach, build empathy, and repair harm. While suspensions may be necessary in some cases to ensure the safety of the targeted student, keep in mind that suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behavior.

If the student who engaged in bullying behavior is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine if additional support and services are needed to address the inappropriate behavior and develop the student's social and emotional skills. The team may also consider examining the environment in which the bullying occurred to determine if changes to the environment are warranted. For example, the IEP Team should consider a behavior intervention plan for the student or review a current behavior intervention plan and revise if necessary.

- (4) **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.**

Appeal

Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the school within 15 calendar days of notification of the Head of School's decision. The school shall render a final determination in accordance with the timeline and procedures set out in the anti-bullying appeal guidelines established by the school.

Consequences for Intercultural Employees

When it is determined that an employee was aware that bullying and bias-based and discriminatory behavior was taking place but failed to report it, the employee will be considered to have violated this Policy. The Head of School shall consider employee discipline for such violations, making reference to any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Notice and Dissemination of Requirements

The Head of School shall follow the requirements established by Intercultural in the school building as well as disseminating and presenting this Policy to school staff as part of pre-school-year professional development.

Training and Professional Development

Staff

Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all Intercultural employees to implement this Policy. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and bias-based and discriminatory behavior and to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them;
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying and bias-based and discriminatory behavior;
3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have

been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying; and

4. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Policy Evaluation:

The Head of School shall assist the Intercultural Staff with its evaluation and assessment of the policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, but is not limited to, factors such as:

1. The frequency of victimization.
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school.
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs.
4. The types of bullying being utilized.
5. Bystander intervention or participation.

The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that Intercultural already collects for other purposes.

This policy is fully consistent with Intercultural's other policies, and can be found on the school's website, parent handbook, and faculty/staff handbook.

