SCHOOL OF EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND LEARNING

Policy Name: Bullying Policy	
Originate Date: 08/25/2010	Revised Date: 1/19/2024 Reviewed/updated 10/07/2026
Approved By: Administration	Policy Number: SE-PPBBP28

(105 ILCS 5/27-23.7) The General Assembly finds that **a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve**. Bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with students' ability to learn and participate in school activities. The General Assembly further finds that bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Because of the negative outcomes associated with bullying in schools, the General Assembly finds that school districts and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools should educate students, parents, and school district or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school personnel about what behaviors constitute prohibited bullying.

Policy

According to Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7-23.10), Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in all school districts and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools. No student shall be subjected to bullying:

(1) during any school-sponsored education program or activity;

(2) while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities; or

(3) through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.

(4) through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed through a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This item (4) applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

"Bullying" includes “cyber-bullying” and means 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:

(1) placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or

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students' person or property;
(2) causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
(3) substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
(4) substantially interfering with the students or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

"Bullying," as defined above, 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.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying 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, photo electronic system, or photo optical 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 as defined above. Cyber-bullying may also include the creation, distribution, or use of a digital replica, including AI-generated images, audio, or video that falsely depicts or impersonates another individual, when such conduct meets the criteria for bullying outlined in this policy.

"Digital Replica" means a newly created, electronic representation of the identity of an actual individual created using a computer, algorithm, software, tool, artificial intelligence, or other technology that is fixed in a sound recording or audiovisual work in which that individual did not actually perform or appear and that is so realistic that a reasonable observer would believe it is a performance by the individual being portrayed and no other individual.

"School Personnel" means persons employed by, on contract with, in the S.E.A.L. schools, including without limitation school and school directors, leadership, coordinators, teachers, support specialists, counselors/social workers, occupational, speech and physical therapists, school nurses, health office assistants, lunch personnel and maintenance staff.

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Bullying is contrary to State law and this policy is consistent with subsection (a-5). Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Procedure for Reporting Bullying

- A student who experiences bullying as defined above is encouraged to immediately report the incident orally or in writing to a trusted staff member. If preferred, a student may also leave an anonymous note in their counselor's mailbox or leave an anonymous voicemail on the school's main line (Lombard- (630) 953-1222, Romeoville- (630) 226-0004, Elgin- (224) 642-1350).
- Reports of bullying or harassment can also be sent to info@seal-il.com. Any information sent to this address will be reviewed by a member of S.E.A.L. Administration and directed to the proper Clinical Team Member.
- The initial report shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Procedure for Prompt Investigation

- The trusted staff member will then report the incident to the building's Clinical Coordinator(s) and Program Coordinator(s) who will investigate and make a determination of next steps regarding communication with the guardians and counselors of the involved students, additional supports, disciplinary action, and restorative measures. The Clinical and Program Coordinators are the designated point people for bullying investigations at S.E.A.L. due to the nature of their work revolving closely around building therapeutic rapport, understanding interpersonal relationships, and implementing the behavioral program across all ages of students.
- The Clinical Coordinator(s) and Program Coordinator(s) will promptly notify the remaining campus coordinators, which includes the campus Principal, and in some cases, the Leadership Team/Administration as well should the severity of the case require additional counsel. The team will make reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report was received. Coordinators should take into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.
- As part of the investigation, the primary investigating Coordinator will ensure that parents or guardians of all involved students are promptly informed of the incident and ongoing investigation. This includes notifying parents or legal guardians of any threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying within 24 hours of the investigating Coordinator becoming aware of the student's involvement in

the incident.

Parents or guardians will also be offered the opportunity to discuss the incident as it relates to their student only. Due to the vast geographical areas served by each S.E.A.L. campus and the potential limitations of meeting in person, these discussions may take place via phone or video conference.

The investigating Coordinator will ensure that all parent or guardian communications comply with federal and Illinois state laws regarding student privacy rights. At no time will S.E.A.L. staff discuss a student with an adult who is not that student's legal parent or guardian.

Procedure for Intervention and Remedial Action

- There should be no reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying. The Program Coordinator in consultation with the classroom staff, clinical staff assigned to the student's case, along with the Coordinator Team, Leadership Team, and Administration will determine consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation.
- The team will determine consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying.
- In addition to addressing remedial actions, S.E.A.L. is committed to following up with all involved parties, and will offer sufficient counseling services to all involved students from one of the school's Licensed (Clinical) Professional Counselors. S.E.A.L. is also able to provide resources for students or families who may seek counseling, support services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, and/or other programs outside of school such as community-based services, as a result of the bullying incident.
- Goals of remediation are to reduce the likelihood of future incidents and disruption, while taking into account the above services.
- A continuum of school-based services (non-exclusionary discipline) will include adaptive measures in accordance with the integrity of the S.E.A.L. learning environment and will not undermine the safety of the school.
- Remediation will serve to build and restore relationships with the student involved, as well as other peers, families and staff.
- If it is determined that an act of bullying falls outside of the scope of The School of Expressive Arts and Learning's jurisdiction and capability, proper local law enforcement may be contacted by S.E.A.L. Administration.
- If an act of bullying is believed to be a violation of the Illinois Human Rights Act,

(bullying based on race, religion, ethnicity, etc), student accountability and utilization of proper social services will be a top priority.

- In the case of a threatening electronic message that may impact the school environments or those present in the milieu, the team will evaluate the level of threat and may collaborate with local law enforcement to investigate the incident in order to keep all parties safe. Cyber communications that may impact a student in their home environment (rather than school environment) will likely lead to school personnel recommending guardians to contact their local police departments independent from the school's handling of the situation.

Policy Efficacy and Evaluation Process

- The School of Expressive Arts and Learning acknowledges that a policy alone is not enough to combat or prevent bullying in a school setting. S.E.A.L. is committed to creating a culture that fosters healthy development amongst our student body. Staff are encouraged to provide tools to our students to discuss healthy relationships, promote positive psychological health, and to show empathy and support to all students, whether a staff member perceives the student as the victim or the aggressor of bully behavior.
- Staff members are trained bi-annually in areas such as "Working with Students in a Therapeutic Day School," as well as in areas regarding student privacy, dignity, and identifying signs of depression or suicide.
- The School of Expressive Arts and Learning also relies on evidence-based Social Emotional Learning. According to the *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (CASEL), "Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions." An emphasis on SEL from our teachers and counselors, allows the School of Expressive Arts and Learning to foster a culture with reduced bullying and greater understanding of a student's emotional support needs.
- The School of Expressive Arts and Learning is also committed to training select clinical staff in trauma-informed therapy services, through attending annual conferences and certification programs.
- Following incidents of bullying, the Coordinator team will document the event as well as contribute to a record for identifying:
    1) the frequency of victimization
    2) student, staff and family observations of school safety

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3) areas of the school where bullying occurs
4) the types of bullying occurrences
5) actions, interventions or participation of bystanders
6) summary information

- The School of Expressive Arts and Learning will annually review and re-evaluate this policy to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the current policy. Additional data such as point sheets, communication logs, staff testimonies, etc. will also be incorporated into the investigation of the efficacy of the current policy.
- The content of this policy, annual evaluation findings, and a bullying data summary will be available at seal-il.com under both the Bullying Policy tab as well as the Student Handbook tab, and updated annually. The updated policy will be distributed to all current students/families in the fall enrollment form packet. Acknowledgement of receiving this policy will be confirmed in the Docusign system for each student.

The School of Expressive Arts and Learning acts in accordance with Illinois State Board of Education guidelines regarding bullying in the following ways:
(1) Providing ongoing training to all employees on preventing, recognizing, and handling bullying or potentially bullying situations. (2) Maintaining communication with families and outside agencies where necessary, when/if concerns are present regarding the bullying of or by students at our facility. (3) Enforcing immediate and appropriate disciplinary actions as consequence for any bullying behavior. (4) Providing students with education and counseling specific to avoiding bullying behavior related to both being the aggressor and/or the victim of bullying. (5) Actively incorporate the anti-bullying services and programs provided by local police districts and social services (stakeholders) through school in-service, school-wide participation in anti-bullying work-shops as provided by said organizations, and regular resources provided to families of S.E.A.L. students.

The employee has reviewed and understands the above policy.

_____ _____
EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE DATE

The School of Expressive Arts and Learning reserves the right to change or modify any of the information contained in this policy, at any time and in our sole discretion. Any changes or modification will be

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effective immediately upon posting of the revisions to S.E.A.L. employee drives.