

In cases where it becomes necessary to implement our policy, we follow a defined set of steps. Depending on the circumstances, certain steps may be skipped, or we may escalate to the next step if the situation requires it.

- **Separation from the activity:** The student is temporarily removed from the activity but placed in an area where they can still observe and stay engaged.
- **Removal from the classroom:** The student is sent out of the classroom. A staff member will accompany them, or if additional support is needed, assistance can be called for.
- **Office Referral:** If the situation persists, the student is sent to the office as a final step for further intervention.
- In extreme instances of a child being unable to regain control, or posing a serious danger to others, parents will be called to remove the child for the remainder of that school day.
- In persistent cases of dangerous or out-of-control behavior, a series of conferences will occur with parents, staff, and administration to resolve the difficulties and establish lines of communication.
- In the very serious cases of a child leaving the school grounds or building without permission, a child bringing a weapon on school grounds, recurrent biting or other dangerous and inappropriate behavior, or bullying other students, parents will be notified immediately and will be expected to meet with staff and administration.
- In any of these cases, a student may be suspended or dismissed from the school. (*Exception for the Toddler Program: Bridging Process will be initiated.)
- A separate and detailed Social Media Policy has been approved by the Board of Directors.

Bullying Prevention Policy

MPA Board of Directors Approval Date: November 29, 2021

Date of Most Recent Review/Re-evaluation: September 25, 2026

Policy Authority: 105 ILCS 5/22-110

Purpose and Statement of Policy

Montessori Private Academy (MPA) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive learning environment in which every student is able to learn, participate, and thrive.

Acts of bullying, which are contrary to State law and MPA policy, will not be tolerated by Montessori Private Academy. Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, 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 these actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited.

Students shall not be subjected to bullying:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity;
2. While at school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops while waiting for a school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment; or
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school, when the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the school.

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 I of the Illinois Constitution.

This policy is intended to comply with **105 ILCS 5/22-110** and applicable Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requirements.

Definition of Bullying

The following definition is provided by **105 ILCS 5/22-110**:

"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 a student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or 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 student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by MPA.

Bullying may take various forms, including, without limitation, harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, posting or distributing sexually explicit images, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Bullying does not require that the behavior be repeated if a single severe act or conduct meets the definition above.

"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, photoelectronic 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 in this Section. Cyber-bullying also includes the posting or distribution of an unauthorized digital replica by electronic means if the posting or distribution creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Digital replica" has the meaning given to that term in the Digital Voice and Likeness Protection Act.

Reporting Bullying

Any students that feel they have been the victim of bullying should immediately notify their classroom teacher and/or the Head of School by calling the main office number at (815) 332-8101. If a staff member receives an alleged report of bullying, it should immediately be brought to the attention of the Head of School. If a person wishes to make an anonymous report, they can call the main office number or they may do so by sending their written account to

Complaint Manager:
Blake Johnson, Head of School
blake@montessoriprivateacademy.com
Montessori Private Academy
8101 Sayer Road
Rockford, IL 61108
815-332-8101

Parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged bullying incident will be promptly notified consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights. Parents or guardians of all students will be notified within 24 hours after the Head of School is made aware of the students' involvement in the incident and discussing, as appropriate, the availability of specialized services, other interventions, and restorative measures. MPA shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period. Parents and guardians of all students involved will be given the opportunity to meet with the Head of School to discuss the investigation, the findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

"Restorative measures" means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that

- (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community,
- (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety,
- (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate,
- (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society,
- (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and
- (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

- (vii) increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

MPA's Bullying policy is consistent with other school policies. After the first offense of bullying, parents will be expected to meet with staff and administration to open the lines of communication and discuss a resolution. Subsequent acts of bullying may result in the student being suspended or dismissed from the school.

Any student who engages in reprisal or retaliation against a fellow student who reports an act of bullying will be subject to disciplinary or remedial action. In addition, any student who is found to have falsely accused another student of bullying will also face remedial or disciplinary action.

If, through the course of an investigation, MPA determines that a reported act of bullying is not within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction, the victim will be provided with information on services that are available in the community, such as counseling and support services.

MPA will routinely evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the Bullying Policy by monitoring the frequency and types of bullying that may have occurred, as well as areas of the school where these acts may happen. All students, staff, and families are strongly encouraged to provide their observations of safety at MPA. The information developed as a part of this evaluation process will be provided to staff, Board Members, parents, guardians, and students on a regular basis. This will be reviewed annually with input and engagement from a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians.

The MPA Board of Directors and the Head of School shall post this policy on the school's website and publish it in the Parent Student Handbook and the Employee Handbook.

www.montessoriprivateacademy.com

Student Personal Devices

To support a focused learning environment and protect the privacy of students and staff, students must store personal electronic devices in their designated cubbies, backpacks,