



WSG Bullying Prevention Policy

The Washington School for Girls (WSG) is committed to providing a safe and healthy learning environment for all students. As such, WSG takes a strong stance against bullying, harassment, and intimidation, which are violations of the school's code of conduct. In accordance with our mission, WSG has established the following comprehensive bullying prevention policy that encourages students to practice positive communication and conflict resolution skills and to respect the dignity of all members of the school's community.


Beth Reaves
President

Definition of Bullying

As defined in the D.C. Youth Bullying Prevention Act (sect. 2), *bullying* includes any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct, whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

1. May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, marital status, family status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of intrafamily offense, place of residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
2. Can reasonably be predicted to:
 - a. Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;
 - b. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or
 - d. Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by an agency, educational institution, or grantee

Prohibition Against Bullying

Acts of bullying, including physical, verbal, and cyber harassment, are strictly prohibited. Enforcement of this prohibition includes incidents that take place:

1. On WSG grounds, including all property owned by and immediately adjacent to THEARC and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, where our two school campuses are located; at WSG-sponsored or related events on or off campus; on any vehicle used for school activities; at any transit stop at which students wait to be transported to WSG; or through

the use of any electronic devices owned or leased by WSG or used for school activities;
and

2. At a location or function unrelated to WSG, through the use of electronic devices, including those not owned or leased by the school, if the acts of bullying or cyberbullying create a hostile environment at WSG for the victim or witnesses, infringe on their rights, or materially and substantially disrupt the orderly operation of WSG.

Retaliation against a student, volunteer, teacher, or staff member who reports bullying, including providing information about or witnessing an act of bullying, is also strictly prohibited.

Reporting Incidents of Bullying

WSG requires all teachers, staff, and volunteers to report incidents of bullying or retaliation they witness or are made aware of. Incidents must be reported to school administrators or counselors, who will create a written report of the incident and initiate an investigation.

Students, parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying that they witness or are made aware of. Reports of bullying should be sent to either WSG Principal Brienne Wetzel at bwetzel@wsgdc.org or Assistant Administrator Kelley Lockard at klockard@wsgdc.org. Anonymous reports may also be made but disciplinary action may be withheld by WSG unless actionable information is provided or uncovered by investigation. Written and transcribed oral reports will be included in school records.

Information on how to report incidents of bullying will be communicated to students and family members during WSG orientation sessions and via mailings as deemed necessary by school administration.

Initial Response and Investigation

Prior to the investigation of a reported incident teachers will consult with school administrators and counselors to determine what steps should be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. Actions for protecting a victimized student and restoring a sense of safety include but are not limited to: changing seating assignments to reduce contact between students involved in the incident and designating a teacher or staff member as a “safe” person for the alleged victim. Following a thorough investigation, WSG will determine if further action is needed to protect the victim from additional incidents of bullying or retaliation.

All complaints and incidents of bullying are taken seriously and immediately investigated after the victim’s safety has been secured. The following parties may be notified of a bullying incident as deemed necessary by WSG:

- Parents/Guardians of victims, offending students, or if appropriate, witnesses to an act of bullying, if deemed necessary by school administrators
- Local Law Enforcement Agencies only if WSG suspects criminal activity or the basis for criminal charges, and all other available remedies have been exhausted

WSG will notify these parties only to the extent allowed by law and solely to ensure that the appropriate services are provided, including protecting the victim from further or recurring harassment. Parents who suspect their daughter may be the victim of bullying are encouraged to contact school administrators, including the Principal or Assistant Administrator.

School administrators and teachers are responsible for investigating reports of bullying and will initiate investigations within one school day of a reported incident or complaint. The primary contact for reports and investigations of bullying is the Principal, who can be reached at bwetzel@wsgdc.org.

All relevant parties including alleged victims, bullies, witnesses, staff, and parents or guardians may be interviewed as part of an investigation. WSG will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of all relevant parties, who will be informed of the consequences of and prohibition against retaliation. WSG will maintain written records of any investigations related to bullying incidents, and when necessary, will seek the advice of legal counsel.

WSG staff will conduct investigations with the goal of determining whether a reported incident involves victimization, an indication of bullying, or a conflict between students that can be otherwise resolved. If school administrators conclude that bullying has occurred, they will take the necessary steps to prevent a recurrence of the incident. They may also determine that additional support is needed to conduct a thorough and equitable investigation and will contact the citywide prevention coordinator.

Consequences and Disciplinary Action

WSG ensures that all consequences for bullying are applied consistently, fairly, and equitably, while allowing for flexibility to adapt for individual contexts. Disciplinary action is determined based on the nature of the incident, the disciplinary history of the student(s) involved, and the age and developmental status of the student(s) involved. Responses to acts of bullying include but are not limited to:

- Reprimand/Warning
- Disciplinary meeting with school administrators and parents
- Deprivation of WSG privileges
- Ban on participating in extracurricular activities at WSG
- Out of School Suspension
- Expulsion

If an incident or complaint does occur, disciplinary action is applied within one school day after an investigation by staff has determined that an act of bullying transpired. However, if the offending party has submitted an appeal (See Appeals and Student Rights section) within that timeframe, disciplinary action will be pending while a secondary investigation is underway.

While WSG considers bullying to be a major violation of our code of conduct, we do not endorse the punitive strategies associated with “zero-tolerance” bullying policies.

Students and their families are made aware of WSG’s bullying prevention policy and consequences during orientation at the start of the school year.

Counseling and Referrals to Services

In order to ensure that single acts of bullying do not become recurring problems, WSG provides on-site counseling and referrals to outside services for all students involved in a bullying incident.

WSG employs two certified social workers who provide individual, group, and family counseling on campus as well as referrals to outside services if needed. Students involved in an

incident of bullying, including the victim, bully, and witnesses, will attend individual counseling sessions as deemed necessary by school administrators. For severe and/or persistent bullying incidents, students may be referred to outside services. Information regarding the incident and investigation will be provided by either a counselor or a school administrator. Relevant information such as the type of service needed, the reason for the referral, and the expected outcome of the particular services provided. If outside agencies are contacted, the student's parents or guardian will be contacted and asked to provide written consent. If consent is not obtained, on-site counseling services will be provided or continued in conjunction with any disciplinary action applied.

Other Services

If a student is determined to have participated in an act of bullying, WSG will provide remedial, non-punitive services to help the student learn more constructive behaviors and skills. Remedial services may include workshops on life skills, conflict resolution, positive communication skills, problem-solving, emotional control and anger management, and peer-to-peer relationship building. The goal of these services is to restore a sense of safety within the WSG community and empower students to resolve personal conflicts and incidents of bullying without aggression or violence.

Appeals and Student Rights

Students who are dissatisfied by the outcome of a bullying investigation may submit an appeal to the school administration. Appeals must be received within 30 days of the initial determination. A secondary investigation will be conducted no more than 30 days after an appeal is received. School administrators may extend this deadline by 15 days only if they set forth in writing the reasons that an extension is needed. If an appeal is submitted, WSG will inform the student of their right to seek additional redress under the DC Human Rights Act.

Policy Writing

Policy development and future changes will incorporate feedback and input from the community, including parents of students and community stakeholders. WSG has an open-door policy that encourages parents and community members to actively participate in school events and to provide feedback about our programs.

In addition, WSG welcomes input from current and former students, who can provide valuable insight regarding efficacy of school policies. School administrators will seek support from student leaders from 7th and 8th grade to assist with implementation and anti-bullying awareness through peer outreach and role modeling.

Publication and Contact Information

This policy will be made available on WSG's website and will be made available to parents and community members upon request. It will also be available as necessary for contracts and grant agreements with outside agencies. Additionally, the policy will be communicated to students and parents during school orientation sessions.

School administrators, particularly the Principal Brianne Wetzel and Assistant Administrator Kelly Lockard, will be responsible for coordinating and enforcing WSG's bullying prevention policy. All questions, comments, and concerns regarding this policy should be directed to either bwetzel@wsgdc.org or klockard@wsgdc.org.

Prevention Leadership

Policy development, implementation, and execution are the responsibility of WSG's Principal and Assistant Administrator. However, consultation and support for activities related to bullying prevention will be provided by the following entities: the Head of School, teachers, counselors, and Board of Directors.

School administrators will also be responsible for coordinating professional development training on bullying prevention for all staff to ensure compliance with policy rules and DC law. Other responsibilities regarding policy implementation include:

- Receiving and recording incidents of bullying
- Responding to incidents of bullying and addressing the needs of all parties involved
- Managing data collaboration and collection in cooperation with the District citywide prevention coordinator
- Coordinating community engagement efforts
- Regularly reviewing and updating the policy and related procedures

Resource Mapping

WSG will conduct an annual resource mapping process in consultation with community stakeholders. This process will identify:

- Current resources for supporting WSG's prevention strategies
- Gaps in the current bullying prevention services
- Plan of action for filling these gaps and better meeting community needs
- Potential partnerships with outside agencies to increase resources for addressing bullying risk factors and behavior

Policy Evaluation

WSG conducts annual reviews of all school policies. All future policy changes to bullying prevention strategies will be developed in consultation with community stakeholders and will be made in order to fill service gaps and strengthen current successful strategies. This process will also include an evaluation of prevention goals and outcomes.

School Culture and Prevention

WSG is committed to establishing a school culture of respect and safety. As a result, WSG incorporates bullying prevention into our academic curriculum, professional development, and code of conduct. Both students and staff are expected to create a positive and respectful learning environment and to participate in bullying prevention workshops and trainings as needed.

Active parent and community engagement is an essential part of WSG's inclusive and collaborative structure. Accordingly, WSG regularly communicates with parents and guardians of students about available presentations and workshops, including bullying prevention education and training. Potential topics include: anti-bullying activities at home, dynamics of bullying and impact on youth, internet safety and cyberbullying, and available administrative and legal resources to bullying.

Workshops and presentations will also be open to other community members, who are interested in educational opportunities.

Student Code of Conduct

All students at WSG are expected to contribute to and support, through their actions and words, a safe and positive learning environment. As such, students must:

- Treat all students, teachers, staff, and volunteers at WSG with respect
- Respect the property of WSG, teachers, staff, volunteers and other students
- Abide by all classroom and school rules

In addition, there is a no fighting policy at WSG. It is understood that if students fight one another, they may be subject to expulsion from WSG. In order to prevent this from happening, there is no hitting (play or otherwise), pushing, hitting or pushing back, or any other physical contact that may be construed as violent. All parent/guardians and students must sign this policy in order to attend the school.

Training and Professional Development

Teachers and support staff are required to participate in training on WSG's bullying prevention policy and procedures for responding to and reporting an incident. Staff tasked with conducting investigations into an incident of bullying will receive additional training on the procedures described in "Initial Response and Investigations" section of this policy.

Training will be provided by the opening of WSG's academic school year following the publication of this policy. Support for staff training may be provided by the citywide prevention coordinator at WSG's request.

Ongoing professional development to help teachers, staff, and volunteers build the tools and knowledge needed to prevent, identify and respond to incidents of bullying will be provided, as needed, throughout the year. WSG will ensure that employees have regular access to professional development opportunities and resources that cover:

- Dynamics of bullying interactions
- Age and developmentally appropriate strategies for identifying, preventing, and responding constructively to incidents of bullying
- Populations that may be at high risk for bullying
- Internet safety and cyber-bullying

Anti-Bullying Curriculum

In order to prevent bullying both in and out of the classroom, WSG incorporates social and cognitive skills development into a comprehensive academic curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes positive and nurturing relationship-building and the development and practice of self-control and other skills, including:

1. Self-Regulation (i.e. impulse control, listening and learning skills, empathy training, and focusing attention)
2. Perspective-Taking (i.e. respect for others' similarities and differences and recognition of the feelings of others)
3. Emotion Management (i.e. recognizing and understanding of one's own feelings, strategies for coping with strong emotions, and anger/stress/anxiety management)
4. Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution (i.e. strategies for solving problems and reducing stress, goal setting, positive communication, and negotiation and compromise)
5. Friendship Building (i.e. cooperation, respect, inclusivity, participation, and teamwork)

Students have the opportunity to utilize the skills they learn during extracurricular programming and service-learning projects. In addition, students have the opportunity to voice their concerns during an open school assembly every morning.

Data Collection and Collaboration

Data on incidents of bullying and related information will be collected by WSG and reported to the citywide prevention coordinator as necessary. In order to protect the confidentiality of students, identifying information of all parties involved will be redacted from reports sent to outside agencies. School administrators will work with the citywide coordinator to determine which metrics will be most helpful in building effective bullying prevention strategies.

Other measures of successful policy implementation may include: number of staff participating in bullying prevention training, number of prevention workshops provided to youth, number of at-risk youth receiving counseling or outside treatment, incident details that determine which students are at risk and where they are most at risk, and student and family surveys on safety at WSG.

Reporting to the Citywide Coordinator

WSG will provide an annual report of bullying prevention and relevant incident metrics to the citywide prevention coordinator. The report will include the aggregate incidents of bullying and any other information as deemed necessary or appropriate by the Mayor.

Copies of WSG's report prepared for the Mayor (via the citywide coordinator) will be available to the community, including students and families, by request. A copy will also be included in school records.

WSG will take every possible measure to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved in an incident. Reports provided to outside agencies will only provide data in the aggregate and will not include identifying information.

Identifying At-Risk Youth and Controlling At-Risk Areas

Faculty, staff, and volunteers at WSG are expected to actively seek out students who are at risk for involvement in bullying activities, including victims and bullies. In order to proactively prevent incidents before they occur, employees and volunteers will use the following factors to determine if a student is at risk:

1. Personality and Physical Traits
 - a. Victim: cautious, sensitive, insecure, physical weakness, passive
 - b. Bully: impulsive, dominant, lacking empathy, easily frustrated, aggressive, decreased interest in school or achievement
2. Parental Factors
 - a. Victim: over-protective parenting
 - b. Bully: overly-permissive parenting or excessively harsh discipline, lack of parental supervision/involvement
3. Peer Relationships
 - a. Victim: lacking close friends
 - b. Bully: exposure to models of bullying/positive attitudes towards violence

If specific areas on WSG's campus or adjacent grounds are identified by WSG as particularly prone to hosting incidents of bullying, school administrators will take steps to improve the safety and security of those areas. Potential safety measures include:

- Reducing student traffic in affected areas by altering schedules or activities
- Increasing supervision in these areas and training supervising staff to recognize bullying behaviors