

# Pathway Academy Bullying Prevention and Response Policy

## Purpose

Pathway Academy is committed to providing all students with a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. Bullying, including cyberbullying, interferes with students' ability to learn and thrive and is strictly prohibited. This policy outlines the prevention strategies, reporting procedures, investigation protocols, and consequences related to bullying.

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## Definition

Bullying is defined as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power. Bullying may include verbal, written, or physical conduct, including expression through electronic means, that:

1. Physically harms a student, damages their property, or places them in reasonable fear of harm.
2. Is severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.
3. Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or operation of the school.
4. Infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school.

**Cyberbullying** includes bullying through any electronic communication device, occurring either on or off campus, that interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts school operations.

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## Scope

This policy applies to conduct that:

- Occurs on school property or at school-sponsored activities.
  - Occurs on a school vehicle or during school transportation.
  - Occurs off campus or online if it substantially disrupts the school environment.
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## Prevention and Education

Pathway Academy will proactively:

- Provide annual staff training on bullying identification, prevention, and intervention.
  - Deliver age-appropriate bullying prevention lessons to students.
  - Promote a culture of kindness and respect through classroom expectations, advisory programs, and school-wide initiatives.
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## Reporting Procedures

Any student, staff member, or parent may report bullying:

- **Orally or in writing**, using an optional Bullying Report Form available online or in the front office.
- **Anonymously**, without fear of retaliation.

All staff members are required to report suspected bullying to campus administration within 24 hours of learning about the incident.

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## Investigation Procedures

Upon receipt of a report:

1. An investigation will begin within **2 school days** and conclude within **10 school days** unless extenuating circumstances require more time.
2. All parties (target, alleged bully, witnesses) will be interviewed and evidence reviewed.
3. Parents of the alleged victim will be notified by the **third business day** after the incident is reported.
4. Parents of the alleged aggressor will be notified within a **reasonable timeframe** after the initial investigation begins.

The school will determine whether the behavior meets the definition of bullying and whether disciplinary or restorative actions are warranted.

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## Response and Consequences

Students found to have engaged in bullying will face disciplinary actions based on the severity of the behavior. Options include:

- Counseling or restorative practices
- Loss of privileges
- Detention or in-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- **Expulsion** (in extreme cases defined under “Reasons for Expulsion”)

No disciplinary action will be taken against a student who used **reasonable self-defense** in response to bullying.

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## Support and Counseling

Students involved in bullying—victims, witnesses, or aggressors—will be referred to the school counselor and offered support services. A list of counseling and mental health resources will be posted publicly and available upon request.

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## **Protection Against Retaliation**

Retaliation against any person who reports bullying or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Such behavior will result in disciplinary action.

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## **Coordination with Law Enforcement**

Incidents involving physical harm, threats, harassment, or assault may be reported to law enforcement at the discretion of school leadership or when legally required.

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## **Review and Notification**

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually and updated as needed.
- Posted on the Pathway Academy website and in the Student Handbook.
- Communicated to students, parents, and staff at the start of each school year.