

# St. Vrain Community Montessori School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

## **Introduction**

St. Vrain Community Montessori School expects that all members of our school will treat each other with civility and respect. As stated in our mission, SVCMS will “Educate the Whole Child within an Authentic Montessori Program in a public, charter school.” When we take a Whole Child view of students, we are concerned about not only their cognitive development, but also their emotional growth, social skills and physical condition. For the Whole Child development to occur, students must learn in an environment where they feel emotionally and physically safe. The SVCMS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the recently enacted Colorado laws against bullying. It makes clear our Montessori philosophy concerning nurturing and promoting our Peace Curriculum and spells out our school’s approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation.

It is important that this plan be well understood by all members of the SVCMS community. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the plan. Questions and concerns related to this plan may be referred to the Head of School.

## **Definition**

Bullying is repeated, targeted aggression conducted by an individual (aggressor) or a group (aggressor) against other(s) (targets). It is unwarranted and purposeful written, verbal, non-verbal, electronic or physical behavior (act or gesture) that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.

Cyber-bullying is willful and repeated harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital electronics. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages and internet postings. Unwarranted contact may take place in, or occur on, social networks, chat rooms, blogs or cell phone text.

Bullying behaviors fall into two basic categories, direct or indirect. Direct bullying behavior is more physical or verbal in nature than indirect bullying behavior. The following behaviors fit this category:

- Punching, poking, pinching, shoving, hitting
- Choking, biting, spitting
- Ganging up or cornering
- Calling names or insults, threatening
- Playing mean or embarrassing tricks or telling cruel jokes
- Touching, propositioning, or assaulting in sexual ways
- Taunting and teasing about race, religion, disabilities, or social status.

Indirect bullying behavior is more emotional or passive-aggressive in nature than direct bully behavior. The following behaviors fit this category:

- Isolating, rejecting, excluding, or blackmailing
- Ranking or rating
- Giving hateful looks
- Using indecent gestures
- Passing insulting or humiliating notes
- Writing hateful graffiti
- Spreading hurtful rumors or gossip
- Manipulating peer relationships
- Demanding servitude, money or property.

### **Scope**

This plan is intended to address bullying behavior, whether direct or indirect, including cyber-bullying, on the part of students enrolled in the school at the time of the incident.

The scope of this plan covers any activity (whether initiated within the classroom, on the school grounds or else) that has a demonstrated, adverse impact on a targeted child.

It will apply to the use of electronic devices as well as the use of school or non-school computers, programs or networks.

### **Relationship to mission of the school**

Montessori schools hold at the center of their mission the belief that each child develops to his/her full potential in a safe and nurturing environment. As a Montessori community we promote respect for ourselves, respect for others and respect for the environment.

Our vehicle for this is the Grace and Courtesy curriculum, which guides children from a very young age and encourages each person to grow into an independent, thoughtful and caring member of the community. In addition to Grace and Courtesy, our students our children are given developmentally appropriate Peace Education at all Levels (Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, with a foundation in self peace and peace within their community.

In Primary, our Peace Curriculum is used to offer concrete representations in the areas in the four petals of peace. These include developmentally appropriate lessons in self-peace, peace within the community, peace among the world's people and peace with our earth.

As students enter the Elementary program, these themes are built upon as students begin their exploration of the Montessori values of freedom and responsibility, which tie personal freedom to the willingness to take responsibility for one's words and actions.

They also begin the Cosmic Education curriculum, which introduces the child to the world beyond their own neighborhood and their own ideas through the Great Lessons.

They continue their work in Peace Education by learning and honing conflict resolution skills using a Six Steps to Problem Solving approach.

In Upper Elementary, students are given the opportunity to give voice to the struggles of pre-adolescence through groups run by faculty, staff and with the addition of outside resource expertise.

This progression allows children to grow into ethical, independent thinkers who are willing to stand for what is right and to take action when necessary.

We use the Montessori curriculum to create a learning environment in which students are provided with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to speak with the intention of bringing clarity, to respect and acknowledge diversity and difference, and to offer compassion and support to others in need.

### **Reporting**

The school has an open reporting system where any concerned person may report an incident of bullying or cyber bullying. Part I of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form* will be filed at that time and the alleged incident will be investigated by appropriate school personnel.

We will embrace a school culture that encourages students, teachers and parents to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior, as defined above, both experienced and witnessed. We are committed to addressing these incidents, and empowering students to be part of the solution.

Designated school personnel will respond to the reporting party within 24 hours. Insofar as is legally allowed by state law, confidentiality will be maintained with respect to the parties involved in the report, however the party reporting the incident will be notified that it has been investigated and results will be shared as appropriate.

Importantly, reporters and targets will not be subject to any retaliatory action because they have initiated a complaint.

### **Protocol**

The following process will be the school's response to reported incidents of bullying behavior:

1. The Head of School is apprised of the situation. The student(s) involved will be addressed by the school personnel to whom the incident was reported. If the incident is reported to a volunteer, the volunteer will report the incident to their supervisor, who shall be a member of the faculty or staff.
2. The appropriate school personnel will speak privately with the student(s) to determine the severity and intent of the situation. Factors used to determine this will include age, maturity

level, special needs, degree of harm, surrounding circumstances, nature or behavior(s), past incidences, pattern of behavior, relationship between the parties and the context in which the alleged incident occurred. As is appropriate in a school serving children the ages of those served by SVCMS, incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children involved.

a. If the findings reveal lack of intent to bully, the student will be directed to complete mediation with the other student(s) involved. Appropriate school personnel will facilitate this until it is sufficiently resolved. The parents of all parties will be contacted prior to or at dismissal on that same day.

b. If the findings reveal intent, the process will continue. At this time *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form* will be passed to the Head of School.

3. The student(s) will be taken directly to the Head of School where the school personnel will review the situation. The Head of School will begin an investigation. This may include further information gathering involving appropriate resources as needed (i.e. student file, past incident reports, etc) as well as speaking with, other students, faculty or staff. All investigative meetings/conversations will be held outside of the classroom in a private location. Notes will be taken and Part II of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form* will be completed.

4. The parents of the student(s) will be called and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the situation and the consequences as relevant to the severity of the incident.

a. The student(s) will not reintegrate into the school population until such time as this meeting occurs.

5. At the time of the parent meeting the following steps will be taken:

a. The student(s) will explain what has happened and any background leading to the incident.

b. Appropriate school personnel will acknowledge the integrity with which the student approached the situation and their willingness to take responsibility for their actions.

c. The parents will be given time to respond.

d. The Head of School will state the consequences to be agreed upon by all parties.

e. The meeting will be recorded and signed by all present, reflecting agreement to the terms set within the meeting.

f. Part III of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form* will be completed and signed.

6. Prior to returning to the classroom, mediation facilitated by the Head of School or designee will occur. Amends will be made for the incident. The safety of the targeted student will be openly discussed at this meeting as well as a vehicle for on-going communication. This will be

documented and signed by all present reflecting agreement to the terms set within the mediation.

7. Follow up will include, but not be limited to the following:
  - a. All student(s) involved will have regular check-in sessions with their guides and the Head of School or designee.
  - b. There will be a follow up session with the whole class (or classes) to discuss and reinforce the community values.
  - c. The Head of School or designee will meet with the involved personnel to debrief the incident, identify additional resources for the student(s), the guides(s) or the school and refine the system.
  
8. Copies of the Incident Report, all meeting reports, and the mediation agreement will be filed according to the school's system.

**Please note:** If reasonable suspicion exists that a criminal act may have been committed, the Head of School will report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

### **Prevention**

Our school relies on the following to support student growth and prevent incidents of bullying:

1. Safe Learning Environment- Students are in an academic environment that supports inquiry, and both independent and collaborative exploration. The materials and instruction are differentiated to provide students at all levels with satisfying work. Through a combination of self-directed and teacher-directed learning, students are engaged in high level, non-competitive tasks that absorb their attention and build their confidence. As a result of these aspects of the Montessori Method, students are less likely to engage in negative behaviors.
  
2. Teacher Observation- Observation is a fundamental tool of all Montessori educators and is used to evaluate student progress and inform instruction. Observations allow guides to monitor the social, emotional and behavioral development of each student and foster effective learning, identifying when additional support may be needed.
  
3. Emphasis on Community- Authentic Montessori schools allow for independence and foster collaboration. Daily, students sit together as a whole class to reflect on what they are learning, both academically and socially. Class agreements are made that are often reviewed or referred to during this time. This supports students in making decisions that have a positive effect on their peers.
  
4. School Culture- Teachers are not an authority over children, but instead co-creators of the school and classroom environments. As a result of the multi-age grouping, students have the same teacher for multiple years and are able to develop rapport and trust. Supportive

relationships serve as the basis for strong behavioral health and provide students with the comfort to confide in adults.

5. Parents as Partners- Parents in the school are partners in supporting their children's growth and development. Regular communication is encouraged in order to address any emerging difficulties. In this way issues do not accumulate and high-level incidents are prevented.

**Implementation Date**

This plan will take effect during the 2012-2013 school and be implemented with fidelity on an on-going basis.

**Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan**

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Head of School and reviewed at the close of any incidents. It will be revised as necessary to reflect the scope and severity of issues which arise.

In addition, training protocols and prevention plans will be updated at least once every two years. Input will be solicited from teachers, parents, the Board of Directors, and the School Accountability Committee (SAC) to determine necessary plan modifications.

Draft to BOD 9/13/12 for September Work Session Discussion