

## Jackson Charter School Bullying Policy

*Date of Original Adoption: February 15, 2017*

*Revised: November 2, 2022, May 10, 2023, and October 7, 2025*

### **Purpose**

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve, and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. 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 violence. It is the goal of Jackson Charter School to create a learning environment where students are protected from bullying so they feel safe and supported in their efforts to succeed academically and develop emotionally into responsible, caring individuals.

Jackson Charter School asks every student, with the support of his/her parent(s), guardian(s), and the adults at the school, to commit to the following principles, which will apply to everyone on school property and at school-related activities and events:

- I will not bully others.
- I will try to help anyone I suspect is being bullied.
- I will work to include students who are left out.
- If someone is being bullied, I will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

### **Scope**

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and this policy is consistent with the Illinois School Code. This policy protects students at Jackson Charter School against bullying and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender-related identify or expression, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Jackson Charter School recognizes the particular vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those who identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any expression protected by

the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Section 3, Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Jackson Charter School will reevaluate the Bullying Policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization, student, staff and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.

Bullying is prohibited during the following scenarios:

1. During any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity;
2. In school, on school property, on school buses or other Board-provided transportation, and at designated locations for students to wait for buses and other Board-provided transportation ("bus stops");
3. Through the transmission of information from a Jackson Charter School computer or computer network, or other electronic equipment;
4. When communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses, or other transportation provided by Jackson Charter School, including bus stops and school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
5. When it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with the intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on transportation provided by Jackson Charter School.
6. When it is a Student Code of Conduct ("SCC") violation that occurs off campus but most seriously disrupts any student's education.

## **Definitions**

**"Bullying"** means any severe or pervasive (repeated over time) 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 predict to have one or more of the following effects:

1. Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school.

Bullying 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.

Bullying behaviors may also qualify as other inappropriate behaviors listed in the SCC. When deciding whether inappropriate behavior constitutes bullying, administrators should consider the student's intent, the frequency or recurrence of the inappropriate behavior, and whether there are power imbalances between the students involved. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the student's intent and power imbalances.

**“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.”

**“Retaliation”** means any form of intimidation, reprisal including but not limited to the submission of knowingly false bullying allegations, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation is prohibited and will result in the imposition of appropriate interventions/consequences according to the Bullying Policy and the SCC.

**“Peer Conflict”** means disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate and developmentally appropriate. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in social competency, learning personal boundaries and peaceably resolving conflict, and to model appropriate social interactions. These interventions are designed to prevent peer conflict from escalating to bullying.

**“Restorative Measures”** refer to a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline that are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, contribute to maintaining school safety, protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students’ behavioral health needs.

## **Intervening to Address Bullying**

### ***Responsibilities of Jackson Charter School Employees and Contractors***

All Jackson Charter School employees and contractors, including security officers, lunchroom staff, and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

1. Intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved;
2. Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Executive Director/Designee ([ewrenn@jacksoncharterschool.org](mailto:ewrenn@jacksoncharterschool.org)) as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, on the Jackson Bullying Complaint Form (Appendix A); and
3. Cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Executive Director.

### ***Responsibilities of Students, Parents, and Guardians***

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Executive Director as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Jackson employee or

contractor in person or by completing Appendix A and submitting it to the Executive Director. Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Executive Director. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

## **Investigation**

1. The Executive Director shall select a designee, knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, to perform the investigation.
2. Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated within five school days of a receipt of a report and completed within 10 school days, unless the Executive Director grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Executive Director shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved.
3. The investigation shall include:
  1. Identifying the perpetrator(s), target(s), and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
  2. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged perpetrator and target. The alleged perpetrator and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews shall also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders.
  3. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and whether the target's education was affected.
  4. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety, and assigning school staff to create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety for the target and other students who have been impacted.
1. When appropriate, preparing a Misconduct Report identifying his/her recommendation for individual consequences.
2. Comprehensively documenting the details of the investigation.
1. When the investigation is complete, the Executive Director shall ensure the investigation report is attached to the Incident Report in PowerSchool.

## **Notification**

On the same day the investigation is initiated, the Executive Director shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in PowerSchool. When the investigation is complete, the Executive Director shall notify the parents/legal guardians of all students involved in the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardian of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Executive Director to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside of the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying (see “Referrals” section below).

If the investigation results in the imposition of consequences, the Executive Director may advise the parent/guardian of students, other than the perpetrator, that the SCC was followed. He/she may not advise them of the specific consequence rendered, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law (e.g., Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, “FERPA”).

When communicating incidents of bullying to the target’s parent/guardian, the Executive Director should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied after coming out as gay, the Executive Director shall not disclose the student’s sexual orientation to the parent/guardian without the student’s permission, unless there is a legitimate, school-related reason for doing so.

If a target is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student’s individual needs and revise the IEP accordingly. For example, if the student’s disability affects social skill development or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the Executive Director shall ask the student’s IEP Team to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to develop the student’s skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying.

If the student who engaged in bullying behavior is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine if additional supports and services are needed to address the inappropriate behavior and consider examining the environment in which the bullying occurred to determine if changes to the environment are warranted. For example, the IEP Team should consider a behavior intervention plan for the student or review a current behavioral intervention plan and revise if necessary. The Executive Director shall comply with the Procedural Safeguards for Discipline of Students with

Disabilities/Impairments when considering interventions and consequences for students with disabilities.

### **Assigning Interventions and/or Consequences**

Many peer conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of a Misconduct or Incident Report. If, however, a conflict is ongoing and meets the definition of bullying, the investigation procedures in the Bullying Policy must be followed.

Schools must respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Appropriate responses and consequences are outlined in the SCC. Jackson Charter School avoids the use of punitive discipline when possible (detention, suspensions, and expulsions), and if any other method or consequence can be used with fidelity.

When an investigation determines that bullying occurred, the Executive Director shall explain the consequences in a non-hostile manner, and shall impose any consequence immediately and consistently. The Executive Director shall keep communicating and working with all parties involved until the situation is resolved. Some key indicators of the resolution include:

- The perpetrator is no longer bullying and is interacting civilly with the target.
- The target reports feeling safe and is interacting civilly with the perpetrator.
- School staff notice an increase in positive behavior and social-emotional competency in the perpetrator and/or the target student.
- School staff notice a more positive climate in the areas where bullying incidents were high.

### **What Not To Do:**

- Solicit an apology from the perpetrator to the target, use peace circles, victim/offender conferences, or any form of mediation that puts the perpetrator and target in contact with one another in an immediate attempt to resolve the bullying. Restorative measures may be helpful to repair relationships between the perpetrator and target, but only if used after other interventions have balanced the power differential between the perpetrator and the target.

- Dismiss bullying as typical student behavior or assume it is not serious.

## **Referrals**

- Interventions with bullies should not focus on feelings, but changing thinking. The Executive Director may refer students who bully to positive-behavior small-group interventions (for anger management, trauma, or social skills), social work, counseling or school psychological services within the school, if necessary, to reinforce the behavioral expectation they violated and increase their social-emotional competency.

The targets of bullying need protection from bullies, but may also need support and help in changing their own behavior. The Executive Director shall ask a school mental health professional to refer these students to individual or group therapy where they can practice assertiveness and coping mechanisms, or social work, counseling, or school psychological services available within the school.

## **Consequences for Employees of Jackson Charter School**

When it is determined that an employee was aware that bullying was taking place but failed to report it, the employee will be considered to have violated the Bullying Policy. The Executive Director shall consider employee discipline for such violations, making reference to any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **Notice and Dissemination of Requirements**

The Executive Director shall post the Bullying Policy on the schools website, in the school building, and disseminate and present this Bullying Policy to school staff as a form of staff professional development.

## **Training and Professional Development**

### ***Staff***

Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all Jackson Charter School employees, contractors, and volunteers to implement the Bullying Policy. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:



1. Developmentally-appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them;
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying;
3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly vulnerable to bullying, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying; and
4. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

### ***Student Internet Safety Education***

Each school staff incorporates into the school curriculum a component on Internet safety to be taught at least once each school year to all students. The Executive Director, along with the Director of Climate and Culture and the Director of Data and Instruction, shall determine the scope and duration of this unit of instruction and topics covered. At a minimum, the unit of instruction shall address:

1. Safety on the Internet;
2. Appropriate behavior while online, on social networking websites, and in chat rooms; and
3. cyberbullying awareness and response.

The age-appropriate unit of instruction may be incorporated into the current courses of study regularly taught. Jackson Charter School shall satisfy the documentation requirements established by the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure compliance with this curricular requirement.

### **Policy Measurement and Evaluation**

Jackson Charter School is committed to ensuring that this policy is effectively implemented and will therefore measure and evaluate its impact and effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

### ***Measurement***

To measure the effectiveness of this policy, the school will take into consideration a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data. Factors included in the measurement will include, but are not limited to:

1. The frequency of victimization incidents.
2. Observations of safety at school by students, staff, and families.
3. Identification of specific areas within the school where bullying occurs.
4. The types of bullying utilized, such as verbal, physical, cyberbullying, etc.
5. Bystander intervention or participation in bullying incidents.

Quantitative data will include the number of reported incidents of bullying, attendance records, and dropout rates, which can be indicators of a hostile environment.

Qualitative data will include feedback from students, parents, and staff members, obtained through regular surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one meetings.

The school will also track the responsiveness to reported incidents, including the time it takes to address each case, the actions taken, and the outcomes achieved.

### ***Evaluation Process***

The evaluation process will be carried out annually under subsection (d) of this Section and will be aimed at reviewing and re-evaluating the policy. An independent committee composed of school staff, parents, and possibly external professionals specializing in child psychology and education policy will oversee this process.

The committee will analyze the collected data, observe trends, identify areas of concern, and make recommendations for policy modifications as needed. They will also consider the policy's alignment with any changes in state or federal laws.

The results of the evaluation, along with relevant data and information already collected by the school for other purposes, will be made available on the school's Internet website. If an Internet website is not available, the information will be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

The school will use this evaluation process not only to measure compliance with the bullying policy, but also as a tool to promote continuous improvement, ensuring that

Jackson Charter School is always striving to provide a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Jackson Charter School remains committed to reviewing and updating its bullying policy as necessary, ensuring it remains effective and relevant. Feedback and suggestions from all members of the school community are always welcome, further promoting transparency and collaboration in maintaining a safe and supportive environment for every student.

## Appendix A

### Jackson Charter School

### Form for Reporting Bullying and Retaliation

NOTE: The reporter may remain anonymous, but no discipline will be imposed solely based upon an anonymous report. Please submit this report to the Executive Director, Dr. Ebony Wrenn, at [ewrenn@jacksoncharterschool.org](mailto:ewrenn@jacksoncharterschool.org).

#### Victim or Target Information

Name & Title of Person Reporting: .....

Relationship to Victim/Target: .....

Phone Number: ..... Email Address: .....

#### Incident Information

Name(s) of student(s) accused of engaging in bullying behaviors OR description (if name(s) unknown):  
.....

Location of Incident:  
.....

Date and Time of Incident:  
.....

Approximate Dates, Times, and Frequency of Prior Incident(s):  
.....

Describe What Happened and who was Present in as Much Detail as Possible:  
.....

*\* Continue description on backside of this document.*

