

## Bullying and Cyber Bullying

The Board of Directors of Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy has approved the following anti-bullying policy.

**MICHIGAN  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Anti-Bullying Policy  
Adopted by the MGLVA Board of Education on April 23, 2015**

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education recognizes that a school that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all students promotes good citizenship, increases student attendance and engagement, and supports academic achievement. To protect the rights of all students and groups for a safe and secure learning environment, the board of education prohibits acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence. Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interferes with both a school's ability to educate its students and a student's ability to learn. All administrators, faculty, staff, parents, volunteers, and students are expected to refuse to tolerate bullying and harassment and to demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil. It is especially important for adults to model these behaviors (even when disciplining) in order to provide positive examples for student behavior.

"Bullying" or "harassment" is any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e., cyberbullying, through the use of internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (pda), computer, or wireless handheld device, currently in use or later developed and used by students) that is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress and may be motivated either by bias or prejudice based upon any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based upon association with another person who has or is perceived to have any distinguishing characteristic. Bullying and harassment also include forms of retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation under this policy. Such behaviors are considered to be bullying or harassment whether they take place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle or at any time or place where a child's imminent safety or over-all well-being may be at issue.

“Bullying” is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- is directed at one or more pupils;
- is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities by placing the pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress; and,
- is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

“Harassment” is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- is directed at one or more pupils;
- is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,
- is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

The scope of this policy includes the prohibition of every form of bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying/harassment, whether in the classroom, on school premises, immediately adjacent to school premises, when a student is traveling to or from school (portal to portal), or at a school-sponsored event, whether or not held on school premises. Bullying or harassment, including cyberbullying/ harassment, that is not initiated at a location defined above is covered by this policy if the incident results in a potentially material or substantial disruption of the school learning environment for one or more students and/or the orderly day-to-day operations of any school or school program.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education expects students to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity,

and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students, school staff, volunteers, and contractors.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education believes that a comprehensive health education curriculum, within a coordinated school health framework, helps students attain knowledge and skills vital to school success, a productive workforce and good citizenship. Critical skills include anticipating consequences of choices, making informed decisions, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts, and developing cultural competency.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education recognizes that in order to have the maximum impact, it is critical to provide a minimum of annual training for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with pupils on school policies and procedures regarding bullying and harassment. Training will provide school employees with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the necessary skills to fulfill them.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education believes that standards for student behavior must be set through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of the school district, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline and their ability to respect the rights of others. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff, parents, and community members.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education believes that the best discipline for aggressive behavior is designed to (1) support students in taking responsibility for their actions, (2) develop empathy, and (3) teach alternative ways to achieve the goals and solve problems that motivated the aggressive behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to *prevent* discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to develop self-discipline and make better choices in the future.

Since bystander support of bullying and harassment can encourage these behaviors, the district prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students *not* to be part of the problem; *not* to pass on the rumor or derogatory message; to walk away from these acts when they see them; to constructively attempt to stop them; to report them to the designated authority; and to reach out in friendship to the target. Periodic classroom meetings should be conducted to teach bystanders how and when to respond to bullying and harassment incidents. Informal classroom discussions and activities designed to provide awareness and

increase student connectedness promote a positive shift in peer norms that will support empowered bystanders. When bystanders do report or cooperate in an investigation, they must be protected from retaliation with the same type of procedures used to respond to bullying and harassment.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education requires its school administrators to develop and implement procedures that ensure *both* the appropriate consequences *and* remedial responses to a student or staff member who commits one or more acts of bullying and harassment. The following factors, at a minimum, shall be given full consideration by school administrators in the development of the procedures for determining appropriate consequences and remedial measures for each act of harassment or bullying.

#### *Factors for Determining Consequences*

- Age, development, and maturity levels of the parties involved
- Degree of harm (physical and/or emotional distress)
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behavior(s)
- Incidences of past or continuing pattern(s) of behavior
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred

*Note:* In order to ensure students' perception of fair and impartial treatment, a student's academic or athletic status is *not* a legitimate factor for determining consequences. Consequences must be perceived as fair and impartial.

#### *Factors for Determining Remedial Measures*

##### *Personal*

- Life skill competencies
- Experiential deficiencies
- Social relationships
- Strengths
- Talents
- Traits
- Interests
- Hobbies
- Extra-curricular activities
- Classroom participation
- Academic performance

##### *Environmental*

- School culture
- School climate and lack of connectedness
- Student-staff relationships and staff behavior toward the student
- Level of consistency in staff responses to bullying or harassing behaviors
- Level of consistency in application or severity of consequences given to students
- Staff-staff relationships witnessed by students
- General staff management of classrooms and other educational environments
- Staff ability to prevent and de-escalate difficult or inflammatory situations
- Social-emotional and behavioral supports
- Social relationships
- Community activities
- Neighborhood culture
- Family situation
- Range and number of opportunities for student engagement, involvement, and recognition for achievement (beyond academics and athletics)

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student or staff member who engages in one or more acts of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, in the case of a student, or suspension or termination in the case of an employee, as set forth in the board of education's approved code of student conduct or employee handbook. School employees will also be held accountable for bullying or harassing behavior directed toward school employees, volunteers, parents, or students.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying and harassment shall vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance, and must be consistent with the board of education's approved code of student conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to: *correct the problem behavior*, *prevent another occurrence* of the behavior; and *protect the victim* of the act. Effective discipline should employ a school-wide approach to adopt a rubric of bullying offenses and the associated consequences. The consequences and remedial measures may include, but are not limited to, the examples listed below:

#### *Examples of Consequences*

- Admonishment
- Participation in a guided reflection process designed to teach alternative behavior
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Loss of privileges
- Referral to disciplinarian
- Out-of-school suspension
- Legal action
- Expulsion or termination

## *Examples of Remedial Measures*

### *Strategies for Individual Behavioral Change:*

- Framing the aggressive behavior as a failed attempt to solve a real problem or reach a goal. The adult assists the misbehaving student to find a better way to solve the problem or meet the goal.
- Restitution and restoration
- Transformative conferencing/restorative justice practices
- Supervised peer support group
- Corrective instruction or other relevant learning or service experience
- Supportive discipline to increase accountability for the bullying offense
- Supportive interventions, including participation of an Intervention and Referral Services team, peer mediation, etc.
- Behavioral assessment or evaluation, including, but not limited to, a referral to a Child Study Team, as appropriate
- Behavioral management plan, with benchmarks that are closely monitored
- Involvement of school disciplinarian
- Student counseling
- Parent conferences
- Student treatment
- Student therapy

### *Strategies for Environmental Change (Classroom, School Building, or School District):*

- Activities or strategies designed to help the student who engaged in bullying or harassment reflect on the offending behavior, maintaining an emotionally-neutral and strength-based approach
- School and community surveys or other strategies for determining the conditions contributing to harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- Change process to improve school culture
- School climate improvement/improvement in conditions for learning and instructional pedagogy (incorporation of brain-compatible strategies)
- Adoption of research-based, systemic bullying prevention programs
- Modifications of schedules
- Learning Coach/Parent supervision during online sessions
- General professional development programs for certificated and non-certificated staff
- Professional development plans for staff in key disciplinary roles
- Disciplinary action for school staff who contributed to the problem
- Parent conferences
- Referral to family counseling
- Increased involvement of parent-teacher organizations
- Increased involvement of community-based organizations

- Increased opportunities for parent input and engagement in school initiatives and activities
- Development of a general bullying/harassment response plan
- Peer support groups
- Increase communication with and involvement of law enforcement (e.g., school resource officer, juvenile officer)
- Engage in community awareness events and planning sessions

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education requires the principal and/or the principal's designee at each school to be responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy.

Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action *may not* be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education requires the principal and/or the principal's designee to be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In so doing, the principal and/or the principal's designee shall conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The investigation is to be completed within three school days after a report or complaint is made. The parents of the students involved shall receive written notice from the school on the outcome of the investigation (in compliance with current privacy laws and regulations). All reports on instances of bullying and/or harassment must be recorded by the school for annual data review.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment or cooperates in an investigation. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of bullying or harassment. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a *person* found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a *school employee* found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements.

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy board of education requires school officials

to annually disseminate the policy to all school staff, students, and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of harassment and bullying that occur on school property, at school-sponsored functions, or on a school bus. The chief school administrator shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on harassment and bullying with students and staff.

The school district shall incorporate information regarding the policy against harassment or bullying into each school employee training program and handbook.

*Updated April 23, 2015 State Board of Education Model Anti-Bullying Policy*

### Where to go with Questions or Concerns

Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy staff recognizes that life at school does not always run smoothly. As problems arise, school personnel and parents must collaborate to seek solutions. Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy staff also realizes that parents and students do not always know what to do or where to seek out answers. Parents often give up and become frustrated if problems remain unsolved. Please follow these procedures for general information or for assistance in resolving a problem:

**Step 1:** All concerns and issues should first be directed to the student's teacher. If a Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy teacher cannot resolve the issue (e.g., materials and computer issues) he or she directs the parent/responsible adult to the appropriate contact for assistance. The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy teacher will monitor the concern to ensure resolution.

**Step 2:** If the issue or concern is about the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy teacher, parents are advised to contact the Lead Teacher for that particular teacher (see School Directory).

**Step 3:** If the concern is not resolved at the teacher or lead teacher levels, parents/responsible adults are advised to contact the Head of School (see School Directory).

### Informal Complaint Process

Anyone may use informal procedures to report and resolve complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. At the building level, programs may be established for receiving anonymous complaints. Such complaints must be appropriately investigated and handled consistent with due process requirements. Informal reports may be made to any staff member, although staff shall always inform complainants of their right to, and the process for, filing a formal complaint. Staff shall also direct potential complaints to an appropriate staff member who can explain the informal and formal complaint process and what a complainant can expect. Staff shall also inform an appropriate supervisor or designated staff person when they receive complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, especially when the complaint is beyond their training to resolve or alleges serious misconduct.

Informal remedies include an opportunity for the complainant(s) to explain to the alleged perpetrator that the conduct is unwelcome, disruptive, or inappropriate either in writing or face-to-face; a statement from a staff member to the alleged perpetrator that the alleged conduct is not appropriate and could lead to discipline if proven or repeated; or a general public statement from an administrator reviewing the school harassment, intimidation and bullying policy without identifying the complainant, parent, guardian, or because Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy believes the complaint needs to be more thoroughly investigated.

### Formal Complaint Process

Anyone may initiate a formal complaint of harassment, intimidation or bullying, even if the informal complaint process is being utilized. Complainant(s) should not be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation. It cannot be predicted what will be discovered or what kind of hearing may result. Efforts will be made to increase the confidence and trust of the person making the complaint. Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy will fully implement the anti-retaliation provisions of this policy to protect complainant(s) and witness(es). Student complainants and witnesses may have a parent or trusted adult with them, if requested, during any school initiated investigatory activities. The Head of School or designated compliance officer (hereinafter referred to as the compliance officer) may conclude that the school needs to conduct an investigation based on information in their possession regardless of the complainant's interest in filing a formal complaint. The following process shall be followed:

1. All formal complaints shall be in writing. Formal complaints shall set forth the specific acts, conditions or circumstances alleged to have occurred that may constitute harassment, intimidation or bullying. The compliance officer may draft the complaint based on the report of the complainant, for the complainant to review and sign.
2. Regardless of the complainant's interest in filing a formal complaint, the compliance officer may conclude that the district needs to draft a formal complaint based on the information in the officer's possession.
3. The compliance officer shall investigate all formal, written complaints of harassment, intimidation or bullying, and other information in the compliance officer's possession that the officer believes requires further investigation.
4. When the investigation is completed the compliance officer shall compile a full written report of the complaint and the result of the investigation. If the matter has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the superintendent shall take further action on the report.
5. The Head of School or designee, who is not the compliance officer, shall respond in writing to the complainant and the accused within thirty days, stating that Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy intends to take corrective action; or that the investigation is incomplete to date and will be continuing; or that Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy does not have adequate evidence to conclude that bullying, harassment or intimidation occurred.

6. Corrective measures deemed necessary will be instituted as quickly as possible, but in no event more than thirty days after the Head of School's written response, unless the accused is appealing the imposition of discipline and the school is barred by due process considerations or a lawful order from imposing the discipline until the appeal process is concluded.
7. If a student remains aggrieved by the Head of School's designee's response, the student may pursue the complaint as one of discrimination pursuant to The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy Grievance Policy.

Students will be provided with age-appropriate information on the recognition and prevention harassment, intimidation or bullying, and their rights and responsibilities under this and other district policies and rule at student orientation sessions and on other appropriate occasions, which may include parents. Parents shall be provided with copies of this policy and procedure and appropriate materials on the recognition and prevention of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

### Grievance/Complaint Policy

#### Parent Complaint Response/Due Process Procedure

The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy is interested in achieving and fostering student/family satisfaction. The following procedure ensures that student/family grievances are addressed fairly by the appropriate people in a timely manner. Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy prohibits discrimination against students/ families on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin or religion.

The student and parent(s), custodian(s), or legal guardian(s) should address in writing any concern or grievance to the Head of School. The Head of School responds within ten (10) working days.

If the concern or grievance is not resolved by the Head of School, the parent(s), custodian(s), or legal guardian(s) may, within ten (10) working days of the Head of School's response, request a meeting (via phone or in person) with the Head of School to discuss the concern or grievance. The meeting request must be in writing. The Head of School shall investigate and responds within ten (10) working days. If the family's concern is not resolved at the meeting with the Head of School, the family may file a complaint with the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy Board of Trustees. The Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy governing body may address the complaint directly, or the family may file a complaint with the MI Secretary of Education (information can be found on the Michigan Department of Education website).