

## **Personal Conduct Guidelines**

The following guidelines for student conduct are aimed at protecting the health and safety of all students and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect that fosters emotional, social, and academic learning.

1. Students and adults will be courteous in speech and manner.
2. All members of the school community strive to treat each other, the school and personal property, with consideration and respect.
3. Every teacher is concerned with the wellbeing of every student, and every student is expected to listen to any faculty member who finds reason to speak to him or her.
4. All adults will take great care to model respectful behavior.

## **Addressing Problematic Behavior**

With the appropriate support and guidance, experiencing problematic behaviors in themselves and in others can provide students with the opportunity to learn self-expression, self-advocacy, and conflict-resolution skills. MCWS takes a developmental approach to working with behaviors that are not consistent with our guidelines for personal conduct, responding to the different needs of students across the grades. Serious breaches of conduct are addressed in another section of this policy.

### **Early Childhood**

Early Childhood teachers work to educate students in polite manners, in differentiating between private vs. public activities, and in practicing healthy boundaries. Persistent inappropriate or undesirable behavior is addressed with parents in order to determine a supportive response for all concerned.

### **Grades 1-4**

In the early grades, many problematic behaviors are approached as an expression of the unmet needs of the student and are seen as opportunities to teach needed skills. Discipline is handled primarily by the teachers through stories, daily rhythms, and regular communication with parents. Often, a consequence or task will be given to help right the situation caused by the student's action.

### **Grades 5-8**

In the middle school, discipline is based on the principles of restorative justice. Incidents of problematic behavior are recorded in the Green Book, which provides the opportunity for reflection and accountability. When a student engages in problematic behavior, the following steps are taken:

1. The student goes to the office and records his/her name, the name of the teacher who sent him/her, and a description of the problematic behavior.
2. The entry is reviewed by the teacher with the student on the same day that the entry was made.
3. The teacher and student discuss alternatives to the problematic behavior.
4. If necessary, the student and teacher agree how amends will be made to the community.

5. A summary of the discussion will be noted and signed by the student(s), teacher(s), and Pedagogical Director.

After a student's second entry into the Green Book in one year, his/her parents will be notified. After a third entry, a parent conference will be called and the student will be required to complete four hours of purposeful work at the discretion of the school. Rather than being punitive, this work is intended to reconnect the student with the community and allow the student to contribute his/her strengths to its betterment. Students who participate in afterschool activities, either at MCWS or elsewhere, will not be allowed to participate until their purposeful work has been completed.

### **Grades 9-12**

In the high school, problematic behavior is addressed using the principles of restorative justice. When problematic behavior is observed, the teacher and/or other high school faculty discuss alternatives to the problematic behavior with the student and agree how the student will make amends to the community, which may include performing service work on behalf of the community. Rather than being punitive, this work is intended to reconnect the student with the community and allow the student to contribute his/her strengths to its betterment. If problematic behavior is determined to be chronic, a parent conference will be called and other options will be considered.

### **Restorative Circles**

Restorative circles are another tool that might be used to address antisocial behavior, interpersonal conflicts, or misunderstandings. By providing a space to respectfully listen to all perspectives (and teaching the skills to do so), restorative circles facilitate students' ability to understand one another's perspectives, develop empathy, and proactively create positive social outcomes.

Restorative circles are not used to address serious breaches of conduct, bullying, or harassment. They can, however, be a part of the community healing process once such acts have been addressed.

### **Addressing Serious Breaches of Conduct**

Behavior that raises the risk of serious harm to people or property requires immediate disciplinary action. These behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Possession of a knife, weapon, or other similar object;
- Rumored or actual use or possession of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs;
- Willfully harming one's self or others
- Willfully defacing or destroying property;
- Threatening to do any of the above.

When such breaches of conduct occur or are strongly suspected to have occurred, one or more of the following steps will be taken:

1. The student will be removed from regularly scheduled activities.

2. The student's parents will be notified of what has taken place. Parents may be asked to pick their child up immediately.
3. The parents will be contacted within one day to arrange a meeting at the school, which will include appropriate members of the faculty. The student and/or the Branch Chair and/or the Pedagogical Director may also be present at the meeting.
4. The student may not be allowed to attend classes, sports, or after school programs, depending on the severity of the offence and age of the student, until after the meeting has taken place and a plan for the student's re-entry into the school is made.
5. Serious breaches of conduct may result in suspension or expulsion from the school.

**Bullying and harassment are particular breaches of conduct and are dealt with in the following way:**

In applying this policy to behavior suspected to be bullying or harassment, the school considers the developmental stage of the children involved. Younger children sometimes display behavior that in older children would be considered bullying or harassment but can be within the range of what is considered 'developmentally normal' at such a young age. All teachers are dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of all students and will address undesirable behaviors in developmentally appropriate ways. These interventions focus on teaching children socially acceptable behaviors, distinguishing between public and private activities, developing healthy boundaries, and resolving conflicts. If undesirable behavior of an aggressive or sexual nature persists, the teachers and Pedagogical Director will work with parents to determine an appropriate course of action. Specifically, this policy does not apply to the Early Childhood program.

Maine Coast Waldorf School is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that is caring, respectful, and safe for all community members (students, parents, faculty, and staff). It is our intention and expectation that community members treat each other with empathy and understanding.

Relationships at MCWS are based on the virtues of compassion, honesty, and integrity. Any behavior that that proves counter to these virtues is considered disruptive and will be addressed.

Specifically, MCWS prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender or gender expression, marital status, veteran status, disability, or any other classification protected by law. The school considers harassment based on any of these characteristics to be a form of serious misconduct that undermines the integrity of the community. All members of the MCWS community have the right to learn and work in an environment free from all forms of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment and assault. Any member of the community found to be engaging in harassing conduct will be subject to discipline according to the school's policy.

This policy addresses bullying, harassment, and retaliation. Other difficult social dynamics or disruptive behaviors that are not considered bullying, harassment, or retaliation are addressed in the school's code of conduct. This policy applies to bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment that occur off of school grounds when these acts have a disruptive impact on the school or the ability of students to participate fully in the life of the school.

## **I. Defining Bullying, Harassment, and Retaliation**

### *Bullying*

*(The following is substantially based on and consistent with the Maine Department of Education's policy.)*

#### **Definition:**

Physical or verbal conduct, including written or electronically transmitted material, committed by a person or a group and directed toward one or more persons that:

- A. Can reasonably be predicted to have the effect of:
  1. Physically harming a student or damaging a student's property;
  2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her property;
  3. Substantially disrupting the instructional program or the orderly operations of the school; or
- B. Interferes with the rights of a student by:
  1. Creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment;
  2. Disrupting a student's academic performance or ability to participate in services, activities, or privileges provided by the school; OR
- C. Is based on actual or perceived characteristics of an individual, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender or gender expression, marital status, veteran status, disability, or any other classification protected by law.
- D. Bullying includes "cyberbullying," which is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device, including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging device and personal digital assistant.

Examples of bullying behavior may include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated or pervasive sarcasm, ignoring, taunting, name-calling, mocking, or using demeaning humor;

- Behavior intended to harm a person by damaging or manipulating his/her relationships with others such as gossip, spreading rumors, and social exclusion;
- Non-verbal threats and/or intimidation, including aggressive, menacing, or disrespectful gestures;
- Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions, or other individuals, whether transmitted verbally or in writing;
- Stealing or hiding books, backpacks, or other possessions;
- Stalking; and
- Acts of physical aggression, including hitting, tripping, kicking, scratching, and spitting.

Examples of “cyberbullying” may include, but are not limited to:

- Posting slurs or rumors or displaying a defamatory, inaccurate, disparaging, violent, abusive, profane, or sexually oriented material about a student in any online platform;
- Posting misleading or fake photographs or digital footage of a student on websites, or creating fake websites or social networking profiles in the guise of posing as the targeted student;
- Impersonating or representing another student through the use of that student’s electronic device or account;
- Any electronic communication or phone calls that are threatening, or so numerous as to bombard the targeted student’s electronic account or phone;
- Taking or sending embarrassing or sexually explicit photos or videos;
- Asking another student to send sexually explicit photos or video.

### *Harassment*

*(The following is substantially based on and consistent with the Maine Department of Education’s policy.)*

#### Definition:

Physical or verbal conduct, including written or electronically transmitted material, committed by a person or a group and directed toward one or more persons that is based on perceived or actual characteristics and creates a hostile learning environment.

Harassment may target a person or group based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender or gender expression, marital status, veteran status, disability, or any other classification protected by law.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile learning environment. Requests for sexual favors, pressure to engage in sexual activities, sexual touching, and sexual or gender-based jokes, comments, gestures, drawings, graffiti, text messages and photographs are all examples of sexual harassment. Sexual assault is also a form of sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Making sexual comments or jokes, including those based on gender-stereotypes
- Spreading sexual rumors
- Rating other people based on sexual attractiveness
- Using explicit or derogatory words to comment on a person's body
- Using sexually explicit language within earshot of those who do not wish to hear it
- Writing notes or sending electronic messages that are sexual in nature
- Name calling on the basis of sexual behavior or orientation
- Touching another person in an inappropriate way or impeding another person's movement; assault.

### *Retaliation*

In order to encourage community members to bring acts of bullying and harassment out into the open so that they can be addressed, MCWS will address any acts of retaliation against those who come forward.

MCWS will not punish or retaliate against any person for coming forward to report an incident of bullying or harassment. The school will not limit the activities of those who come forward, nor will there be any consequences, academic or otherwise, for those who make a report in good faith.

Furthermore, MCWS will address any acts of student retaliation against those who come forward. No student or group of students will be permitted to mistreat a student who reports bullying or harassment, and immediate disciplinary action will be taken if this occurs.

## **II. Procedures for Reporting Acts of Bullying, Harassment, and Retaliation**

School employees are required to report to the Pedagogical Director incidents of bullying, harassment, or retaliation that have been reported to them or that they have witnessed. All other community members who experience or witness an act of bullying, harassment, or retaliation are strongly encouraged make a report to the Pedagogical Director or another school employee. Reports can be made verbally (in person or over the phone) to any faculty member or in writing by filling out the Bullying and Harassment Reporting Form and mailing it to the school or placing the form in any faculty member's mailbox (forms are available in classrooms and in any branch office). To make an anonymous report, leave your name off of the form.

If you are unsure whether a behavior constitutes bullying, harassment, or retaliation under the school's policy, the Pedagogical Director, Director of Counseling, or Director of Educational Support can help you make a determination.

False reports of bullying and harassment are rare. In order to protect all community members, any person who can be proven to knowingly file a false report will be subject to serious disciplinary action, including possible suspension and expulsion. Except in these rare cases, there will be no disciplinary action for making a complaint.

MCWS complies with all state laws regarding the mandated reporting of child abuse.

### **III. Procedures for Investigating Acts of Bullying, Harassment, and Retaliation**

In order to ensure consistency and fairness, the Pedagogical Director oversees all investigations of reported bullying, harassment, and retaliation. When the Pedagogical Director receives a report of bullying, harassment, or retaliation, the following steps will be taken:

1. **Within 24 hours, the Pedagogical Director will:**
  - a. Assemble an investigative team at his/her discretion and begin the investigation.
  - b. Notify parents of involved students as appropriate.
  - c. When required by law, notify state and local law enforcement.
2. **Members of the investigative team will interview all parties involved and review pertinent information.** Students, teachers, parents, and staff may be asked to participate in the investigation as determined by the investigative team. Student records from previous schools or from prior incidents may be reviewed as part of the investigation.
3. **When the investigation is complete, the Pedagogical Director, in consultation with the investigative team, will make a final determination as to whether or not a report has been substantiated.**

A report is substantiated when there is reasonable evidence that an incident is more likely than not to have occurred.
4. **The Pedagogical Director will notify parents and students of the outcome of the investigation within one school day of the conclusion of the investigation.**
5. **Each step of this process will be documented and kept on file by the Pedagogical Director.**

Please note: confidentiality cannot be guaranteed during the investigation process. However, the school is committed to carrying out investigations in a discrete, respectful manner and will uphold requests for confidentiality whenever possible. MCWS complies with all state laws regarding mandated reporting of child abuse.

In some cases, steps may be taken to ensure the wellbeing of students during the investigation. Any member of the community being investigated for serious acts of harassment or assault may be placed on temporary leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

### **IV. Procedures for Following-Up on Acts of Bullying, Harassment, or Retaliation**

Once a determination has been made as to whether or not a report has been substantiated, one or more of the following steps will be taken:

1. **Disciplinary Action**

MCWS takes incidents of bullying and harassment seriously and will respond to substantiated reports with appropriate disciplinary action, determined by the investigative team. Serious and/or repeated violations of the bullying and harassment policy may result in suspension or expulsion from the school.
2. **Safety Plans and Conduct Plans**

Once appropriate disciplinary action has been taken, the investigative team will work with all parties involved to develop a safety plan for the “target” (optional) and a conduct plan for the “aggressor” (mandatory). The safety plan is meant to address ongoing concerns of the “target” and also to ensure that no retaliatory action is taken against him or her. The conduct plan clearly defines the expectations for the student’s continued involvement in the community and offers support and education to help the “aggressor” meet these expectations.

3. **Whether or not a report is substantiated, restorative action may be taken to support students and strengthen the school community.** Restorative action may include: the use of restorative circles; class meetings; presentations, workshops, and/or trainings, and counseling.