

HELP Anti-Bully Policy

I. Introduction

Homeschool Education Learning Partnership (HELP), a ministry of Woodland Valley Church, is a tutorial center, not a school. Although we only meet 2 days per week, while students are in our care, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As part of the socialization process, all students experiment with a range of behaviors as they learn about social skills. However, students sometimes push the limits of this range and engage in behaviors we would consider bullying.

Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment are detrimental to the learning environment, as well as student learning, achievement, and well-being. Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment affect not only students who are targets, but also those who participate in and witness such behavior. These behaviors must be addressed to ensure student safety and an inclusive learning environment. It is not our intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas or from engaging in civil debate. However, HELP does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that interferes with students' opportunity to learn, our educational mission, and the operation of HELP.

II. Prohibited Behavior

The following behaviors are prohibited:

- Bullying;
- Cyberbullying;
- Harassment;
- Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
- Making knowingly false accusations of bullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitutes bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

III. Bullying and Cyberbullying Defined

A. "Bullying," including "cyberbullying," is any severe or pervasive 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 predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- *Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to their person or property*
- *Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health*
- *Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance*
- *Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by HELP*

B. "Cyberbullying" is defined as 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, or text messaging device.

Examples of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or demeaning humor
- Behavior that is likely to harm someone by damaging or manipulating his or her relationships with others, including, but not limited to, gossip, spreading rumors, and social exclusion
- Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations
- Hate speech, such as the use of words or images to harass individuals or groups based on gender, gender expression, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of identity
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Cyberbullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, the following actions on any electronic medium:

- Posting slurs or rumors or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, disparaging, violent, abusive, profane, or sexually oriented material about a student on a website, an app, in social media, or any other electronic platform;
- Posting misleading or fake photographs or digital video 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 other student's electronic device or account to send e-mail, text messages, instant messages (IM), phone calls, or other messages on a social media website;
- Sending e-mail, text messages, IM, or leaving voice mail messages that are mean or threatening, or so numerous as to bombard the target's e-mail account, IM account, or cell phone; and
- Using a camera phone or digital video camera to take and/or send embarrassing photos or "sexting" photographs of other students.

Obviously, HELP cannot control the bullying behavior of students through the transmission of information from a computer or hand-held electronic device that is accessed at a non-HELP related location, activity, function, or program. If the off-site bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of HELP, parents of all parties will be contacted, and the HELP administration team will determine the appropriate consequences. This applies if a HELP administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred.

C. "Retaliation" means an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. "Retaliation" also includes knowingly falsely reporting an act of bullying.

IV. Reporting

Bullying or suspected bullying should be reported in person or in writing (including anonymously) to Kate Funk, Director of HELP, at 412-215-1503 or funk@zoominternet.net

- A. Students who are believed to have been bullied or are aware of incidents of bullying are strongly encouraged to report this behavior to Mrs. Funk.
- B. Parents and other adults who believe that an incident of bullying has occurred are encouraged to report this behavior to Mrs. Funk.
- C. Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an alleged incident of bullying are prohibited.

V. Responding:

The Director of HELP, Kate Funk, will:

- A. Promptly (usually within 24 hours) investigate and respond to allegations of bullying behavior;
- B. Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student(s) who was alleged to have bullied AND of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied that a report of an alleged incident of bullying has been made;
- C. Communicate to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student(s) who was believed to have been bullied the measures being taken to ensure the safety of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied and to prevent further acts of bullying;
- D. Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the students involved the findings of the investigation and actions to be taken

VI. Remediation

The Director of HELP, in consultation with the HELP Administration Team will:

- A. Identify the specific nature(s) of the incident.
- B. Apply disciplinary actions. In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior, HELP administrators will consider the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, and other relevant circumstances. The following is the order in which all bullying matters will be handled:
 - *First offense*: The HELP Director and/or a member of the HELP Administration Team will speak with student accused of bullying as well as a phone conversation with his/her parent letting them know of conversation with their child.
 - *Second Offense*: The HELP Director and/or members of the HELP Administration Team will have a personal meeting with the parent of and student accused of bullying.
 - *Third Offense*: Permanent removal of student who is bullying from HELP program.

VII. Assignment of Responsibility

A. The Director of HELP is responsible for:

1. Annually providing written versions of this policy and related procedures to students, parent(s) and guardian(s), volunteers, administrators, teachers, and school staff;
2. Posting this policy and related procedures on the school website;
3. Oversight, implementation, and enforcement of this policy and its procedures