



**STUDENT HANDBOOK
2023-2024**

**CORNERSTONE ACADEMY
607 HARVARD
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60304
312-600-0953**

WWW.CORNERSTONECHICAGO.ORG

2023-2024 Cornerstone Academy Academic Staff

Mr. Jeffery Fields, Principal	jfields@cornerstonechicago.org
Mrs. Cassie Eng	ceng@cornerstonechicago.org
Mrs. Veronica Fields	vfields@cornerstonechicago.org
Mr. Delano Lee	dlee@cornerstonechicago.org
Ms. Amber Rosenbaum	amberrosenbaum@cornerstonechicago.org
Mr. Bill Seitz	wfseitz@cornerstonechicago.org

Mission and Values

Our mission is to provide a supportive Christian education for students who may benefit from personalized attention as they work toward a high school diploma while developing tools for self-sufficiency and a Christian life ethic.

Our values

1. **Recognize** that each student is a valuable individual with unique physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs.
2. **Create** an optimal physical environment conducive to learning for socially, economically, and/or educationally vulnerable students.
 - a. Provide small classes and individualized instruction.
 - b. Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion through celebrating and welcoming people of every race, gender, and economic status.
3. **Promote** academic growth through constant assessment and elimination of gaps in students' needs, and through individualized teaching materials and styles.
4. **Foster** personal growth and life-long learning through ongoing practices and role modeling.
 - a. Foster cooperative partnerships between students, families, and the school.
 - b. Practice mutual respect between students and staff to promote enhanced self-esteem.
 - c. Promote student career development contributing to an enhanced sense of personal success.
 - d. Guide students in the development of Christlike character and a Christian ethic.
 - e. Prioritize professional development for staff to develop strong role models for life-long learning.

Communicating With Cornerstone Academy

1. Email, Phone, Letter

Direct communication between school staff, parent/guardians, and students is done via email, phone calls, letters, and texts. Messages left for Cornerstone staff will be returned as quickly as possible.

2. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube

Frequently throughout the month we share the lives of Cornerstone on our [Facebook](#), Instagram [@cornerstoneacademychi](#), and [YouTube](#) accounts.

3. Website

Our website, www.cornerstonechicago.org, is the go-to place for shared language and information about Cornerstone Academy.

4. Newsletter

The principal will send out a monthly newsletter with important information.

ACADEMIC POLICIES, REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

ADMISSIONS

Admissions

Cornerstone Academy typically only accepts applications for students 15 years of age and older, who also have usually gone to another high school first.

Steps:

1. Application Packet
2. Parent/Guardian and Student Scheduled Interview Visit
3. Acceptance Letter/Tuition Information
4. Tuition Agreement Signed
5. Student Assessment Star Math/Reading
6. Student Orientation

Records Request

Certified copies of transfer student records are required within 14 days of enrollment.

Birth Certificates

The Missing Children's Records Act, the Missing Children's Registration Law, and the State Board of Education rules require that public and non-public schools maintain certified copies of birth certificates for each student enrolled. Such documentation must be submitted within 30 days of enrolling.

Health Forms

In compliance with Illinois state law, a physical examination, up-to-date immunizations, and dental examinations (for 9th graders, by May 15th) must be done prior to the first day of school. If a student is transferring from out-of-state, they must get a new physical from a doctor in the State of Illinois as well as a vision exam (transfer students only, by October 15th). All physicals, immunizations and out-of-state transfer student vision exams are due by October 15th. Students will be excluded from school until those records are provided.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Cornerstone Academy is not designed as a typical high school; all students must be full-time students and take part in the Work-Study program. To graduate from Cornerstone Academy, students must have at least 20 credits, including these required courses:

Mathematics: 3 credits (1 year must be algebra, 1 year must include geometry content)

English: 4 credits

Writing: 2 credits must be part of an English course and 1 year another course

Social Studies: 2 credits, including 1 year U.S. History (or a ½ credit in U. S. History and a ½ credit in Government)

Science: 2 credits and coursework, including both biological and physical sciences

Misc. Courses: ½ credit in Bible; ¼ credit in Consumer Education; 1 credit in Cooperative Work; ½ credit

in Health

Electives: 6 ½ credits

Students must do the following to graduate from Cornerstone Academy:

1. Earn a minimum of 20 credits, including all required courses.
2. Have successfully held one staff-approved job for at least three consecutive months, working at least 12 hours per week on average, totaling 144 hours. This may be a paid job wherein taxes are being taken out, or it may be a volunteer job at, for instance, a hospital. The Work-Study Program does not fulfill this requirement unless the student has worked 175 hours or been hired for an additional three-month period over the summer. The main purpose in finding a “staff-approved” job is finding a job that will notably enhance the student’s resume, a job wherein the student works under someone they do not know and receives their approval. Successful completion of the job is obtained by verifying work dates and gaining a positive review by the supervisor.
3. Have passed a Chicago Geography competency exam demonstrating a working knowledge of Chicago’s transportation system and geography (Urban Survival Course).
4. Have performed 50 hours of community service at sites approved by the staff. Documentation of all service hours is required.
5. Have passed the U.S. Constitution exam and the Illinois State Constitution exam.

To participate in the graduation ceremony – though not yet earning a diploma – students must do all of the five above-noted requirements, except #2 (hold a job for three consecutive months). Plus, the student must turn in an acceptable draft of a graduation speech prior to the ceremony and have fulfilled all financial obligations with the school.

Driver Education

Individuals must secure this course through their local school district or privately.

Academic Probation

All new students are on an initial three-month probation. During this time, students must pass all of their classes and have good conduct during the first quarter they are enrolled at the Academy, or they may be dropped from the school. Thereafter, students may be placed on probation for academic, attendance, or behavioral reasons if the staff finds it necessary.

GUIDANCE

Advising

Each student will be assigned a staff adviser. Students receive daily/weekly assessments. Students will have the opportunity to discuss their academic concerns during advisory sessions with their staff advisers. When needed, advisory sessions may take place during the first 10 minutes of lunch. Students will not discuss their grades during class time. After advisory sessions, students must fill out an exit ticket and check the box/time marked for “Advisory”.

College, Trade School Information for Students

Representatives from colleges and trade schools come to Cornerstone Academy to speak to the Seniors’ Class.

Transcript Policy

The school sends out unofficial records of transcripts to students requesting them, within 10 days after receipt of written request.

Standardized Tests

The Seniors' Class encourages and helps students sign up for either the ACT or SAT tests. If a student is part of the Invest in Kids Act, they will (unless they are seniors) need to take the PSAT or SAT tests, depending on their year in school.

Support Services

The students' needs for support services such as individual counseling are assessed by school staff, and referrals will be made when deemed necessary.

ABSENCE/TARDY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following is a list of the Academy's attendance rules. (Refer to the Work-Study Program handbook for requirements specific to the work-study program.)

Absence/Tardy Policies

1. **Cuts Limit.** Three cuts (unexcused absences) in a year and a student may be dropped from school.
2. **Part-Day Absences.** Missing one to three periods of school is considered a ½ day absence. Missing four or more periods is considered one full-day absence.
3. **Absent Limit in a Quarter.** After four absences in a quarter a student may be withdrawn from school or from a class and lose their credit with a grade of "WF" or "WP" (Withdrawn Failing or Passing) recorded on their transcript. In these cases, the principal, with other staff, will review the situation of all students who reached the above absence limit to determine whether or not credit should be given.
4. **Tardy Limit in 1st hour.** Over 150 late minutes in 1st hour class and the student may be withdrawn from that class. Once a student exceeds 100 late minutes in the 1st hour, they will be, till the end of the quarter, on Closed Lunch.
5. **Tardy Limit in 2nd hour.** Over 150 late minutes in 2nd hour class, once first hour class is lost, and the student may be withdrawn from the school.
6. **Closed Campus Policy.** The school is a closed campus. Lunch is only 30 minutes or 20 minutes if the student has a scheduled meeting with their advisor. If needed, advisory meetings with advisors will be held the first 10 minutes of lunch time. Students are not permitted to leave the school once the school day begins. If a student leaves campus without authorization, the student is considered truant and may be suspended.
7. **Reporting an Excused Absence.** Parents/guardians need to call in to report excused absences.
8. **Early Dismissal or Sickness.** A student must call their parent/guardian using the main office phone, and a staff member must speak to the parent/guardian about the need for an early dismissal.
9. **Absence from Suspension.** Absence during a suspension counts towards the four-absence limit per quarter.
10. **Family Vacations.** If a vacation is during school days, teachers at their discretion, may, but are not required to, provide assignments to the student prior to a family vacation.

GENERAL POLICIES

Student Hours

School hours for students are 8:15 a.m. - 2:35 p.m. Doors open at 8:15 am. Students who arrive before 8:15 a.m. will wait patiently until doors open. At dismissal, students will exit the building at 2:35 p.m.

Building Boundaries

The school shares building space with Boulevard Presbyterian Church. Unless expressly allowed by a teacher, students are not allowed on the Church side of the buildings. Specifically, students cannot go into Glory House's basement sanctuary or into Boulevard Church's halls, rooms, or sanctuary. **A student will be sent home suspended if found in any of these places without permission** Loitering or hanging around the building property is not permitted. The property extends from the school to the church. Once students pass the church or school, they are considered off property.

Building Culture

Doors open at 8:15 am. Students will not be allowed in the building before 8:15 a.m. Students turn in their phones as they enter the building quietly. Phones will not be used during school hours, or on school sponsored activities. Phones are returned when students leave the building for the day.

On Wednesday, students will be at Work-Study. Wednesday class assignments will be submitted using Google Classroom.

All students will honor one another and respect boundaries. Students are expected to keep their hands to themselves. No public displays of affection between students are permitted. Seeking a relationship other than a friendship is not permitted during school hours, or at any school-sponsored activities or events.

All students are required to join the morning meetings with staff, chapel guests, or other speakers. Students do not need to speak in order to participate.

Inclement Weather & Snow Days

Cornerstone Academy will assess weather conditions and make decisions on snow/cold/other inclement weather days. The Academy will make a decision independent of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) or District 200. Parent/Guardians and students will be notified by the Academy, via email, by 6:00 a.m.

Student Car Usage

If a student drives to school, they are not allowed to enter or use their car during school hours without express permission from the principal.

Visitors

Any visitor to the school must come to the Office upon entry to the building and sign-in. Visitors are discouraged from visiting during school hours unless approved in advance by the principal. Students are not allowed to bring guests to the school during the school day.

Student Eye Protection

The school complies with the requirements of the Eye Protection in School Act [105 ILCS 115]. Every student, teacher and visitor is required to wear an industrial quality eye protective device when participating in or observing any course which involves the use of hot molten metal, milling, sawing, turning, shaping, cutting, grinding or stamping of any solid materials; heat treatment, tempering or kiln firing of any metal or other metal or other materials; gas or electric arc welding; repair or servicing of any vehicle; caustic or explosive materials; chemical or combined chemical-physical laboratories involving caustic or explosive chemicals or hot liquids or solids.

Art Supplies

The school complies with the requirements of the Toxic Art Supplies in Schools Act [105 ILCS 135].

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Bullying Policy

Every student has the right to feel safe. It is the responsibility of the school staff to provide a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment in which learning can take place. No student should be subject to bullying, aggression, or violence. The school is committed to ensuring that a supportive, caring, inclusive, safe, and civil environment exists for students to learn and achieve academic success at the school.

Harassment or bullying is regarded as a serious matter and will not be tolerated. Please see the Cornerstone Academy Policy on Bullying (2023) in attached Appendix A for specific information on the school's bullying policy.

Behaviors Leading to Disciplinary Consequences

1. Excessive tardiness
2. Eating or drinking items other than water in the classrooms
3. Possession of non-school authorized electronic equipment during school hours (e.g., cell phones, earbuds, iPod)
4. Use of profane or obscene language
5. Trying to form a relationship other than friendship
6. Inappropriate display of affection
7. Misconduct or creating a disturbance (in a classroom or elsewhere)
8. Dress code violations
9. Roughhousing; running
10. Leaving the class without permission
11. Any action or behavior a teacher judges to be unacceptable

Any of these behaviors can result in a meeting with parent/guardians or suspension.

Behaviors that Can Lead to Immediate Suspension and/or Expulsion

1. Defiance of authority
2. Fighting, including threatening a student with physical harm, verbal abuse and/or sexual harassment. Students who threaten, intimidate, harass, or provoke another student may be suspended, expelled, and/or referred to court authorities. Harassment by electronic communication may constitute a Class 4 felony.
3. Sexual harassment
4. Stealing

5. Damaging school property or damage to the personal property of a school student or teacher (restitution will be required before the student will be readmitted)
6. Possession of weapons which may endanger a person or property
7. Bomb threat (appropriate authorities will be informed)
8. Setting off a false fire alarm
9. Deliberately causing injury to, or actions considered to threaten, a school employee, student, or person associated with the school
10. Gang-related behavior (clothing, jewelry, drawings, etc.)
11. Drug/alcohol use, possession, or association
12. Any action or behavior, in or out of school, which is judged by the principal to bring discredit to the school, or which involves a negative influence on the reputation of the community of the school
13. Any action behavior the school administration judges to be unacceptable

Safety and Security

Cornerstone Academy is monitored by two video cameras. One camera is outside. The other camera is inside the building. Students are only allowed to enter and exit the entrance on Harvard Street. The only exceptions will be in case of emergency.

Grievance Process for Suspensions and Expulsions or Other Issues

1. A parent or guardian may appeal a suspension or appeal for a hearing to resolve other major disciplinary issues. When a parent or guardian is advised of a student's suspension or has another complaint, they request a review of the suspension or other issue. To request such a review, a written request must be made for a hearing to the principal. The written request must be received within three calendar days after receiving notice, by phone or letter, of the suspension and must state the specific reasons for making the request. Upon request, the school board or a person or persons designated by the board shall review such action of the principal.

2. When a student is alleged to be involved in an infraction leading to expulsion, the principal will give verbal or written notice of the allegation to the student and the student's parent or guardian. The student will have an opportunity to respond to the principal concerning the allegation. If the principal determines, after hearing the student's response, that the allegation must be considered further, the principal may require the student to meet with one or more board members, who will consider the allegation. If the board member or members decide the allegation should be considered further, a hearing may be scheduled, at which an inquiry into the alleged infraction will be made. The involved student's parents/guardians will be given proper notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing. One or more board members designated by the board will conduct this hearing, and it may involve witnesses, advocates, and parents/guardians.

Again, the intention of the student, the context of the infraction, the degree of involvement, and the harm done will be taken into consideration. Similarly, the student's attitude and willingness to make restitution; the parents'/guardians' willingness to cooperate; and the student's and parents'/guardians' willingness to enroll the student in a corrective program may become mitigating circumstances.

Battery Against School Personnel

In the event there is a student attack on a teacher or other school personnel, upon receiving a written complaint, the principal or his or her designee shall report the incident of battery committed against a teacher or other school personnel to the local law enforcement authorities immediately after the

occurrence of the attack and to the Illinois State Police's Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting Program no later than three days after the occurrence of the attack.

Investigations Regarding Student Social Networking

A high school may not request or require a student to provide a password or other related account information in order to gain access to the student's account or profile on a social networking website. However, a high school may conduct an investigation and may require a student to cooperate in an investigation, if there is specific information about activity on the student's account on a social networking website that violates a school rule or policy. In the course of an investigation a high school may require the student to share the content that is reported, in order to make a factual determination. A student's failure to cooperate in such an investigation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

High schools are required under the law to notify its students and parent/guardians of this policy, by publishing it in the school's disciplinary rules, policies, or handbook, or communicating it by similar means. See Right to Privacy in the School Setting Act [05 ILCS 75/1, et al.].

Alcohol and/or Drug Use

No student shall possess, transfer, sell or use, including being under the influence of, any alcoholic beverage, intoxicant, inhalant, non-prescription drug, narcotic, cannabis, opioids, so-called "speed," tranquilizers, "look-alike" drugs or any controlled substance while on school premises or attending any school-sponsored activity. The term "drugs" and "alcohol" as used herein include all controlled substances under the Controlled Substances Act, Illinois Revised Statutes, 720 ILCS, 570/100-603, "Cannabis" under the Cannabis Control Act, Illinois Revised Statutes, 720 ILCS, 550/1-19, and any "look-alike" substance as defined in Illinois Revised Statutes, 720 ILCS, 570/404. The term "possession" and/or "use" shall include possession or use by a student who has consumed or is under the influence of or reasonably appears to have consumed or to be under the influences of, any of the mentioned substances, whether prior to entering or while attending school or any school-sponsored event. All federal, state, and local laws can be enforced.

1. Upon receiving any report from any school personnel regarding a verified incident involving drugs at the school, a school authority shall report the drug-related incident immediately to both the Oak Park Police and to the State Police [105 ILCS 5/10 - 21.7; 105 ILCS 5/10 – 27.1A & B]. Any student found in possession of alcohol, any controlled substance, or drug related paraphernalia, or any student found to be under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance during school or any school-related function (including lunch), may be expelled or may face the following procedures:
 - a. Suspension from school. The student will not be allowed back until a conference is held between parents/guardians and the principal; and/or
 - b. Academic & Disciplinary Probation.
2. Any student who is found selling or dealing in alcohol or any controlled substance or related paraphernalia on school owned or leased property or any school related function will be expelled. Local authorities and Illinois State Police will be contacted.
3. Any student found in violation of this policy for a second offense may be immediately expelled.

Gang-Related Activities

Possessing or wearing articles of clothing, jewelry, and/or possessing or displaying other materials or wearing objects that depict gang symbols or indicate gang involvement, drawing, displaying, or promoting gang symbols, or engaging in activity or conduct that may indicate gang involvement is all prohibited and may lead to suspension or expulsion.

Weapons

It is a violation of the school's policies for a student to possess a weapon on school owned or leased property or at any time in connection with school-related activities. Included within the prohibitions of this Policy are the possession, sale, distribution, manufacture, receipt, seeking the sale or use of any firearm (or look-alike), knife, martial arts device, brass knuckles or other knuckle weapon, MACE, pepper spray, fireworks, or other objects which, in the school's discretion, may reasonably be considered to constitute a weapon.

The Oak Park Police, and the Illinois State Police, in the case of possession of a firearm, will be immediately contacted. The State police are contacted on the School Incident Reporting System (SIRS) found on IWAS. Violations of these Weapons Policies may result, at the school's discretion, in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Dress Code

School administration reserves the right to decide acceptability of students' clothing.

Polo shirt or button-down shirt. Shirts must have a fold-down collar and buttons.

Khaki-colored, khaki-style pants or cargo pants. The school does not allow jeans, shorts, sweats, yoga pants, leggings, or camouflage. Pants must be worn at the waistline.

Belt: Boys must wear a belt in order to keep pants up at their waist.

Shoes. Shoes must be worn. Gym shoes or street shoes are allowed. Shoes must have a back. Flip-flops and slides are not allowed.

Sweaters/sweatshirts/light jackets. Sweaters, sweatshirts, and light jackets may be worn in the school. Hooded items, however, are not permitted to be worn inside during class.

Head Coverings. No hats or other head coverings are permitted, including scarves, headbands, and bandanas. Head coverings will be confiscated and can be retrieved by a parent/guardian.

Distractive Clothing. Any clothing or jewelry that is determined by a teacher to be distracting to the learning process or atmosphere is not permitted.

Fridays. If a student pays \$1.00, he or she can wear jeans. Shirts must have a fold-down collar and buttons, or if wearing a Cornerstone Academy shirt or sweatshirt.

Medication

It is the Cornerstone Academy policy that no medication will be given by school personnel unless these regulations are followed:

1. Prescription medications must be supplied in the original pharmacy container.
2. The container must be identified with the following information: student name, medication name, doctor's name and phone number, and pharmacy's name and phone number.
3. The disease/illness, the benefits of the medication, and the side effects shall be noted on the Medication Release form.
4. Parent/guardians must sign the school's Medication Release form.
5. Non-prescription medication must also be supplied in the original container and must be accompanied by written instructions from a physician and consent from parent/guardians.

Medication, Undesignated Person Administration

The school and school personnel incur no liability for injuries occurring when administering asthma medication, and epinephrine auto-injectors, an opioid antagonist, or a glucagon. Parent/guardians must sign an agreement form stating this.

The school does not allow the undesignated administration of asthma medication, epinephrine auto-injectors, an opioid antagonist, or a glucagon.

COMPUTER USE AND INTERNET ACCESS

All use of the Internet shall be consistent with the school's goal of promoting educational advancement by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. This Policy does not attempt to state all required or proscribed behavior of users. The failure to follow the terms of this Policy for Computer Use and Internet Access may result in the loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

Purpose and Goals of Internet Access

1. Acceptable Use

Access to the Internet must be for the purpose of education or research and be consistent with the educational objectives of the school.

2. Privileges

The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right; inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges. The principal will make all decisions regarding whether or not a user has violated the Authorization and may deny, revoke, or suspend access at any time; his or her decision is final. Electronic communications and downloaded material may be monitored or read by school officials.

3. Unacceptable Use

Students are responsible for their actions and activities involving the network. Some examples of unacceptable uses include:

- a. Engaging in activities not related to educational purposes or which are contrary to rules, policies and/or guidelines of the school.
- b. Accessing, retrieving, viewing, or distributing any material in violation of any federal or state law or regulation or school policy or rules, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Improper use of copyrighted material;
 - ii. Improper use of the system to commit fraud or with the intent to commit fraud;
 - iii. Improper use of passwords or access codes; and/or
 - iv. Disclosing the full name, home address or phone number of any student, employee, or volunteer.
- c. Accessing, retrieving, posting, transmitting, or viewing obscene, profane, abusive, or indecent materials that are inconsistent with the objectives and/or teachings of the school.

- d. Unauthorized downloading or copying of software, regardless of whether it is copyrighted, shareware, or freeware without authorization from the principal.
 - e. Harassing, threatening, intimidating, or degrading an individual or group of individuals.
 - f. Acts of vandalism, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Deleting, examining, copying, or modifying files, data, email, or voice mail belonging to other users, and/or attempts of the same;
 - ii. Attempts to breach security codes and/or passwords; and/or
 - iii. Destruction, abuse, or modification of computer hardware and/or software, including changes to preferences; and/or attempts of the same.
 - g. Sending nuisance electronic mail or other online messages such as chain letters, pyramid schemes, or obscene, harassing, or other unwelcomed or inappropriate messages.
 - h. Using technology resources for personal, financial, or commercial gain, product advertisement, political lobbying, or the sending of unsolicited junk mail, or chain letters.
 - i. Using, transmitting, or posting images of administrators, employees, students, parent/guardians, or any other person without specific permission.
 - j. Using the network to identify, imply or infer any gang activity.
 - k. Establishing network or Internet connections to live communications, including voice, instant messaging, video, and/or chat, without specific permission from the principal.
4. **System Security and Reliability**
Using the network in any way that would disrupt its use by other users or be dangerous to the integrity of the local area network is prohibited.
5. **Websites**
Any website created by a student using the website technology system must be part of a school-sponsored activity, or otherwise be authorized by the principal.

APPENDIX A

CORNERSTONE ACADEMY POLICY ON BULLYING (2023)

Cornerstone Academy is committed to ensuring that a supportive, caring, inclusive, safe, and civil environment exists for students to learn and achieve academic success at the school. To this end, Cornerstone Academy will not tolerate bullying. We expect the behavior of our students, teachers, staff, and volunteers to demonstrate respect for others in all we say and do. However, we understand that at times unkind actions can occur. We expect that in these cases, all people mentioned above will speak up about the situation and not remain silent bystanders.

Bullying Defined

“Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward any student that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (1) placing a 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 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 on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, or association with a person or group with one or more actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic, is prohibited.

Bullying includes “cyber-bullying,” which means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including the distribution by electronic communication to more than one person or the posting of material on social media if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects outlined in the definition of bullying set forth above.

Any such behavior is considered bullying whether it takes place on or off school property, any school-sponsored function, or in any school-authorized vehicle.

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and the policy of the school. Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right of free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the U.S. or Illinois State Constitutions.

School Response

Bullying-related acts are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion. Law enforcement will be notified when criminal intent is obvious.

Level 1: Warning: When a minor incident occurs, the teacher will take the opportunity to help students understand how their actions relate to the school's definition of bullying and inform parents or guardians of their student's actions.

Level 2: Confer with parents and principal. Gather staff persons to discuss the situation.

Options for action at this stage include:

- Restorative measures
- Drawing up a behavioral contract
- Refer students for counseling or therapy
- Detention

Level 3: Suspension from school: After consultation with school personnel, the student may receive a suspension from school. A behavioral contract may be updated or established.

Level 4: Expulsion: When reasonable efforts to correct the inappropriate behavior have been exhausted, and after consultation with the Cornerstone Academy board, a student may be expelled.

The school requires the principal to be responsible for receiving the complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal. All other members of the school community, including students, parents or guardians, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reports may be made in-person to the principal or by email, other written communication, or by phone call to the principal, and may be made anonymously; however, no formal disciplinary action will occur solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The school will make diligent efforts to notify parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying within 24 hours after school administration becomes aware of it, utilizing the contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school.

The school requires the principal and/or the principal's designee to be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of the bullying policy. In so doing, the principal and/or the principal's designee promptly will conduct an investigation of each alleged incident. The school will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after a report or complaint is made. The school will involve appropriate school personnel, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process. Consistent with applicable federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the school will provide parents or guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The school prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the principal after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

The school prohibits any person from falsely accusing another of bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Communicating Bullying Policy

The school requires school officials to annually disseminate the policy to all school staff, students, and parents or guardians, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of bullying that occur on or off school property, at school-sponsored functions, or in a school-authorized vehicle. The principal shall develop an annual process for discussing the school's policy on bullying with students and staff. The school shall incorporate the information regarding the policy against bullying into handbooks available to students, parents and guardians, and staff.

Review and Evaluation of Bullying Policy

At least every two years, the school shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of the bullying policy and make any necessary and appropriate revisions. In conducting such review and re-evaluation, the Cornerstone Academy board, working with the principal, will assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the bullying policy, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of bullying; student, staff, and family observations of safety at the school; identification of areas of the school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The school board may also consider such other relevant data and information collected by or otherwise available to the board and/or the principal.

Adopted: August 22, 2023