



Washington Square Academy

Student Code of Conduct & WSA Disciplinary Procedures

2025-2026

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I. Introductory Statement

Washington Square Academy is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. While our primary purpose is to help students grow academically, we also work hard to promote students' social and emotional development. WSA staff members can be relied upon to consistently treat all students equitably and with respect. We expect students to similarly behave respectfully not only toward staff but also toward their peers. When conflicts arise, we encourage the relevant parties to seek resolution promptly, directly, and politely, always with the assumption that the other party is acting in good faith. As and when student behavior is such that the school is required to take disciplinary action, key considerations are the student's sense of dignity and self-worth. With the combined efforts of all members of our school community, and in accordance with the standards, rules, and procedures articulated below, WSA is and will continue to be a place where all students have the opportunity to thrive intellectually and emotionally.

It should be noted that this document contains broad information about our overall expectations of students and the likely consequences where those expectations are not met. This document does not, however, address every potential scenario that could arise. WSA therefore reserves the right at all times to act as it reasonably sees fit to protect the well-being (physical, social, emotional, and academic) of the student body as a whole.

Students and parents should sign on the last page to indicate that they have read this Code of Conduct and that they understand and agree to its terms.

II. Student Rights

We believe that all students are entitled to the following:

- A. A rigorous, engaging, high-quality education
- B. A calm, productive, learning environment unimpeded by disruptions from peers
- C. Physical safety
- D. Respect, support, and encouragement from adults and peers

- E. Frequent opportunities to consult with teachers, counselors, and administrators at appropriate times
- F. A voice in their own education
- G. Opportunities to demonstrate their creativity and to explore their interests
- H. Notification of, and input into, school rules and procedures
- I. Free speech, assembly, press, and association (in accordance with the First Amendment of the *United States Constitution* and Part 1, Article XVI of the *Massachusetts Declaration of Rights*), on the understanding that such expressions are not libelous, obscene, likely to promote illegal activity, or disruptive to the running of the school
- J. Useful, timely, and informative feedback on their work products
- K. Regular updates on their progress toward meeting academic goals

III. Student Responsibilities

In school as in all areas of society, rights are accompanied by responsibilities.

A. General Student Responsibilities

- a. Act in accordance with the maxim of reciprocity, otherwise known as the Golden Rule: *Treat others as you want to be treated yourself.*
- b. Demonstrate respect for the authority and expertise of all school staff members.
- c. Demonstrate kind, respectful, friendly, polite, and supportive behavior toward peers.
- d. Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves; never intentionally harm other students.
- e. Demonstrate a commitment to the successful day-to-day operation of the school.
- f. Take ownership of their own education.
- g. Establish goals for themselves; exercise self-discipline in their efforts to meet those goals.
- h. Consistently show respect for the diversity of peers and staff with regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, primary language, disability, special needs, age, and economic class.
- i. Use school-appropriate language and behavior at all times.
- j. Never engage in bullying of any kind, physical or verbal. Students who see someone being bullied should intervene by telling the person doing the bullying to stop

and/or or should immediately report the situation to school personnel. See Section IV, below, for more information.

- k. Represent themselves in a manner they will be proud to look back on at the end of the school year—and beyond.
- l. Consistently demonstrate good manners.
- m. Keep personal digital devices (phones, tablets, laptops) stowed away at all times during the school day. In the event of a compelling need for a student to use a digital device (for example, to contact a parent on an emergency basis), the student must first request permission from a member of WSA staff, stowing the device away again quickly after the compelling need has been met.

B. Student Responsibilities in the Classroom

- a. Abstain from disruptive behavior that imposes upon, endangers, distracts, or deprives others of their rights to an education.
- b. Make learning a priority and avoid allowing themselves to be distracted by others.
- c. Be in their assigned place with appropriate materials, ready to work at the beginning of each class.
- d. Do their best work as often as they can; be gentle on themselves when they can't
- e. Follow teacher instructions, class rules, and expectations at all times.
- f. Participate fully, respectfully, and enthusiastically in each lesson and its associated activities.
- g. Use digital devices (phones, tablets, laptops) only as directed by WSA staff. When teachers allow students to use digital devices to access online educational websites, students must stay focused on those sites; students should not abuse the situation as an opportunity to visit other websites or to engage in activities unrelated to the lesson. When teachers direct students to put away their devices, students must comply promptly.
- h. Demonstrate a commitment to the overall success of each class
- i. Be willing to ask for help from teachers and/or peers; actively seek opportunities to provide help to others.

C. Student Responsibilities for the Health and Safety of Themselves and Others

- a. Students are prohibited from consuming or possessing drugs or medications of any kind other than those prescribed by a licensed medical practitioner. In order to

- possess and/or consume prescription medications on WSA grounds, students and/or parents/guardians must notify school medical personnel in advance.
- b. Students are prohibited from selling drugs or medications of any kind, prescription or non-prescription, to other WSA students, on or off school grounds.
 - c. For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, alcohol is classed as a drug.
 - d. Students are prohibited from possessing weapons of any kind on school grounds.
 - e. Overall, students should be mindful of their own and of others' physical, mental, and emotional health. Students should also know that all human beings sometimes make poor decisions; that some of those decisions might inadvertently cause physical, mental, and/or emotional harm to self or others; and that the way to put things right when things go wrong is to inform a trusted adult.

IV. Bullying

A. Definition and Types of Bullying

- a. According to Massachusetts General Laws, bullying is “the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff...of a written, verbal or electronic [online] expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school” ([Massachusetts G.L. c. 71, § 370](#)).
- b. [The United States Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) ([stopbullying.gov](#)) notes that bullying typically involves a power imbalance: “Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others.”
- c. [HHS](#) notes that bullying might take place during, before, or after school hours; on or off school grounds; traveling to or from school; and/or on the internet.
- d. [HHS](#) identifies three types of bullying: Verbal, Relational, and Physical:

- i. *Verbal bullying* is “saying or writing mean things” which may include “teasing, name-calling, making inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, and threatening to cause harm.”
 - ii. *Relational bullying* involves hurting someone’s reputation or their relationships with others. This type of bullying may include “leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, embarrassing someone in public.”
 - iii. *Physical bullying* “involves hurting a person’s body or possessions” and may include “hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone’s things, making mean or rude hand gestures.”
- e. The [*Anti-Bullying Alliance \(ABA\)*](#) describes a fourth type of bullying: *Cyberbullying* (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk). This involves the use of technology to engage in verbal and relational bullying and/or to threaten physical bullying. Cyberbullying can involve the following platforms, actions, and/or devices:
- i. Using text messaging apps to write mean things about other students; leaving other students out of texting groups in an effort to isolate them
 - ii. Making “prank” phone calls; leaving abusive phone messages
 - iii. Taking or sharing photos and/or videos with the intent to humiliate or embarrass another student
 - iv. Sending “prank” or abusive emails; sending anonymous emails with the intent to hurt or do harm
 - v. Using chat room or instant messaging apps to be mean to, or to exclude, another student
 - vi. Creating a website for the purpose of humiliating, embarrassing, upsetting, or harassing another student
 - vii. Creating a false profile in someone else’s name

B. How Bullying Harms the Person Being Bullied, the Person Doing the Bullying, and the Witness to the Bullying (per [HHS](#))

- a. People who are bullied “can experience negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues.” Effects may include the following;

- i. “Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.”
- ii. Damage to physical health
- iii. Decreased academic achievement
- iv. Decreased school attendance; increased likelihood of dropping out
- b. People who commit acts of bullying also experience adverse effects on their socio-emotional and physical health. Children and adolescents who bully are “more likely to
 - i. Abuse alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults
 - ii. Get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school
 - iii. Have criminal convictions and traffic citations as adults
 - iv. Be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults”
- c. Children and adolescents who witness acts of bullying are “more likely to
 - i. Have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
 - ii. Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
 - iii. Miss or skip school”

C. The Responsibility of Those Who Witness Bullying to Intervene and Report

When WSA students witness someone being bullied, it is their responsibility to intervene whenever possible. Consider the Golden Rule (defined in Section III, above). We don’t want to be bullied ourselves, so we don’t bully others; similarly, we would want witnesses to intervene if we were being bullied, so we should ourselves intervene when we see it happening to others. Do not be a “Bystander,” which the ABA defines as “a person who does not become actively involved in a situation where someone else requires help...and in this way is understood to be a passive observer, an onlooker who watches something happening, but stays on the sidelines and doesn’t intervene or get help, even if someone needs it.” We recognize that it can take courage to act when we see someone being bullied. We might fear we’ll be associated with the person being bullied and then be bullied ourselves. We might fear loss of status within our social group. We might try to persuade ourselves that it’s none of our business. Or, we might want to help, know it’s our responsibility to help, but just not know how to. While recognizing that it’s not always easy to take action, we nevertheless expect WSA students to do so in the following ways:

- a. Strive to create and maintain an environment in which bullying is unlikely to happen:
- i. Students should be inclusive. For example, they should invite other students who seem alone to join conversations, activities, and groups.
 - ii. Students should serve as role models, consistently showing kindness, respect, and consideration for the feelings of others.
 - iii. Students should be aware of the needs and vulnerabilities of others, walking or sitting with or near students who have the potential to be bullied.
 - iv. Students should prioritize being kind and decent over being popular or otherwise attempting to increase their social standing in the school.
(Consistently and quietly being the kindest and most inclusive person in the school will, over time, earn a student the respect of everyone—and respect long outlasts popularity!)
 - v. Engage in ongoing self-education about the reasons people bully and the things that can be done to prevent it.
- b. A student who witnesses an act of bullying should use one or more of these strategies (per [ABA](#)):
- i. The student should, where possible, act as an individual or with others to defend the target of the bullying. The student should focus on the actions and/or speech of the person doing the bullying; the student should not focus, in the moment, on the person being bullied. Furthermore, the student should not show hostility or anger toward the person doing the bullying and should not attempt to humiliate or embarrass that person; instead, the student should calmly and reasonably point out to the person why the behavior and/or speech was problematic and should ask the person to stop. Defending the target of verbal bullying might include statements such as, “I don’t think that’s fair,” “We shouldn’t be so quick to judge others,” “Cut that out!” “Let’s just focus on [the work or activity at hand] rather than on each other, shall we?” “C’mon, don’t be like that,” or simply, “Hey, that’s not cool!”
 - ii. The student might quickly and very obviously change the subject. Both the one doing the bullying and the one being bullied will in all likelihood understand what the student is doing and why.

- iii. The student might question the bullying behavior, asking the person doing the bullying, “What was the point of that?” “Why did you need to say/do that?” “Don’t you think there’s enough unkindness in the world without you adding more?” “How can you say that when you know it’s not true/fair?” “Why be so mean-spirited?” or “Why would you think that’s appropriate right now?”
 - iv. The student might use humor to lighten the mood, cracking a joke about the situation (but not, of course, about the one being bullied or the one doing the bullying). The student should make it clear that it’s the situation that’s problematic or humorous, not the people.
 - v. The student should openly state an opposition to bullying. For example, they might say, “I believe it’s wrong to say things like that about people,” “It’s mean to exclude people,” or “I think that’s bullying, and you really need to stop.”
- c. After the bullying incident, the student should report the bullying as soon as possible to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, or school administrator). The student should not feel that in doing so they are being disloyal or are “ratting out” their peers. On the contrary: in reporting a bullying incident, a student is acting responsibly and with great kindness toward all involved parties. (See above with regard to the damage to the long-term health and success of the one being bullied *and* of the one doing the bullying.) If possible, the student should also do one or both of the following:
- i. Reach out privately to the target of the bullying to express support or concern; emphasize, if possible, the unfairness or inaccuracy of the statements or actions of the one who did the bullying (without putting down that person *as* a person).
 - ii. If it feels safe to do so, the student should reach out privately to the person who did the bullying to gently express their concern. There’s a good chance the person will stop the bullying if they know it is noticed and disapproved of by someone else. After expressing their disapproval, the student should consider asking about the well-being of the person who did the bullying (if this feels appropriate). Quite often, people engage in bullying because they are troubled by something, are having emotional problems, are experiencing

difficulties at home, and/or are themselves feeling insecure about their social standing in the school. It might even be the case that the person just did not realize their words or behavior came across as mean and that they will appreciate the student's feedback! As always, however, when a student is in doubt or feeling uncomfortable about a situation, the student should consult a trusted adult.

V. Academic Integrity

A. Why It Matters

WSA's primary goal is to provide young people with the education that will empower them to succeed and generally thrive throughout their lives as people, students, and professionals. Students are expected to be equal partners with WSA in their pursuit of these goals. This document has already articulated many of the ways student behavior and social interactions contribute to, or detract from, the educational process. An additional—and possibly the most important—way for students of all levels, kindergarten through graduate school, to work toward meeting educational goals is through academic integrity. Briefly defined, academic integrity involves thinking for ourselves, crediting others appropriately when we incorporate their work and ideas into our own, and showing intellectual courage. Only by committing themselves to these goals can students make progress toward becoming educated, well-informed, and intellectually-powerful people.

B. Core Values of Academic Integrity

[The International Center for Academic Integrity](#) describes six core values of academic integrity: Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, Responsibility, and Courage.

a. Honesty

Students should:

- i. Be truthful.
- ii. Give credit to the owner (e.g., a writer, musician, artist, speaker) of the work they are incorporating into their own work.
- iii. Keep their promises, following through on their responsibilities in academic collaborations.

- iv. Provide factual evidence to support their opinions, claims, and arguments.
- v. Aspire to be objective; consider all sides of an issue and be mindful of their own biases and preconceptions.

b. Trust

Students should:

- i. Strive to meet all academic expectations established by their teachers and themselves. When they are unable to meet those expectations (which happens to *everybody* at times!), students should be honest with their teachers and themselves about what got in the way. Students should not make up excuses! Doing so is entirely unnecessary and can break down trust between student and teacher. (Teachers are very good at knowing the difference between a fabricated excuse and the actual truth!)
- ii. Trust others (e.g., peer collaborators) as they want to be trusted themselves.
- iii. Show a commitment to understanding the points of view of others while also being willing to share their own points of view.
- iv. Be genuine and sincere.

c. Fairness

Students should:

- i. Be equitable in their treatment of others. While it's okay to have close friends and to want to spend time with them, students should commit themselves to interacting with and learning from as many different students as possible. Doing so will broaden their minds and help to improve communication and critical-thinking skills.
- ii. Keep an open mind. Be willing and able to change their minds about an issue when someone presents them with new ideas and information. Doing so will help students grow as people and as students.
- iii. Strive to be objective. That is, as much as possible students should base their ideas, beliefs, and opinions on verifiable facts rather than on their emotions, prejudices, thinking habits, and/or past personal experiences. Students should also recognize that when we like or admire someone, we tend to be easily influenced by them and to blindly adopt their opinions as our own. Students should avoid doing this and think for themselves instead!

- iv. Take responsibility for their actions and refrain from blaming others for their own mistakes or failures. Students should be honest with others *and with themselves* about the causes of those mistakes and failures. At the same time, students should not beat themselves up about their mistakes or failures either. We all make mistakes and fail at things at times—and that’s okay! Indeed, it’s only by making mistakes and/or failing at something we tried hard to succeed at—and then by reflecting on what went wrong and creating a plan for doing better next time—that we are ever able to grow.

d. Respect

Students should:

- i. Be active listeners, going out of their way to truly hear what people are saying, considering not only the words people speak but also their backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences.
- ii. Seek feedback on their work, and then reflect on, and try to learn from, that feedback. Students should be able to accept criticism of their work without taking it personally.
- iii. Show empathy toward others—the ones they share the WSA community with (fellow students and staff) as well as the ones they hear and read about in their academic lessons. Be mindful that everything taught in class—the historical events, the math concepts, the grammar lessons, the laws of physics, the novels and poems—usually came into being only through significant struggle and in some cases sacrifice by actual human beings, just like ourselves.
- iv. Respect others for their differences—and make that respect obvious. Sometimes we are troubled by, or uncomfortable with, people who are different from ourselves. We might be tempted to reject or avoid such people. However, *all people* have something they can teach us. It’s our responsibility to learn from other people no matter who they are or how different they may be from us—physically, academically, or emotionally, or in terms of their dress, speech, or mannerisms.
- v. Recognize that their words and actions have consequences—not just for themselves but for those around them. WSA students should recognize their own roles and responsibilities in creating and maintaining a rigorous

academic community, one in which everyone is able to intellectually thrive. When students create distractions for other students, they deprive them of opportunities to grow academically.

e. Responsibility

Students should:

- i. Know and follow all school rules. Each one of them exists for a very good reason.
- ii. Be mindful of personal boundaries: establish and communicate their own boundaries and respect those of others.
- iii. Conduct themselves with decency and dignity to the extent that others see them as role models. This is especially important when students are around students younger than themselves. Younger students look to older students to learn appropriate behavior. Be sure to teach them well.

f. Courage

Students should:

- i. Be willing to take intellectual risks. Remember that the process of education is as much about learning why something might be wrong as it is about learning why it's right. Students should not strive for perfection, academically (or really in any way!), as perfection is impossible to achieve. Instead, students should be bold and creative in their thinking while always searching for fact-based truths. Students should engage in class discussions freely and in good-faith without fear of providing a wrong answer or interpretation. Students should ask questions without fear of being thought silly. Every question asked sincerely and in good faith is a great question!
- ii. Speak out when they see someone commit an act of wrongdoing—even when others remain silent. Show their support for others who speak out against wrongdoing. The history books contain numerous accounts of people who spoke out against wrongdoing when everyone else stayed silent—and who changed the world for the better as a result.
- iii. Have the courage to submit *only* their own work. Don't hide behind the work of others. When students do refer to the work of others, they should give them credit for the time, effort, education, and expertise they put into producing that work.

C. Plagiarism and Other Forms of Cheating

- a. Plagiarism can be defined as the use of words and/or ideas of another person in our own work without giving credit to that other person. Like other schools (as well as colleges and professional workplaces), WSA takes academic integrity seriously. Students who commit plagiarism will receive no credit for their work. Where the plagiarism is deliberate and repeated, students may lose credit for the course. [Purdue University's Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) offers a variety of resources that can help students avoid plagiarism. Students should review these resources, including the [OWL's one-page summary](#) of plagiarism: what it is, what it isn't, and how it can be avoided.
- b. Other forms of cheating that result in a loss of credit include the following (from [OWL](#)):
 - i. Giving or receiving answers by use of signals, cell phones or any other method during a test
 - ii. Copying someone else's work—with or without their knowledge—during a test
 - iii. Doing class assignments for someone else; allowing someone else to do assignments for you
 - iv. Turning in a written paper that has, in part or in its entirety, been purchased from a commercial research firm, obtained from the Internet, and/or generated by Artificial Intelligence
 - v. Obtaining an unauthorized copy of a test in advance of its scheduled administration
 - vi. Using unauthorized notes during an exam
 - vii. Collaborating with other students on assignments when it is not allowed
 - viii. Obtaining a test from the exam site, completing and submitting it later
 - ix. Altering answers on a scored test and submitting it for a regrade
 - x. Stealing class assignments from other students and submitting them as one's own
 - xi. Destroying or stealing the work of other students
 - xii. Using Artificial Intelligence to complete academic tasks except as explicitly directed by a teacher

VI. Disciplinary Procedures

A. Discipline By WSA Teachers

- a. Teachers will attempt to resolve most violations of this Code of Conduct directly with students at the earliest possible opportunity. Violations of the Code that involve threats to the health and safety of a student or staff member will be referred immediately to WSA's Head of School.
- b. A teacher may require a student to remain after school (with notice to parents and/or guardians) to engage in constructive discussion about the student's conduct and to establish guidelines for future conduct.
- c. Teachers may require students to engage in acts of restitution. See Section C.c., below, for examples.
- d. When attempts to resolve Code violations one-on-one between the teacher and student are unsuccessful, the teacher may ask to meet with parents/guardians and/or guidance counselors at a mutually-convenient time.
- e. When teachers feel that their attempts to resolve concerns about student Code violations have been unsuccessful, they will refer their concerns to WSA's Head of School. Teacher referrals will be made in writing. Copies of the referral will be shared with parents/guardians and guidance counselors.

B. Discipline By Non-Teaching WSA Employees

Upon witnessing a student's violation of this Code, a non-teaching WSA employee may refer the matter to the teacher supervising the student at the time of the violation or to WSA's Head of School.

C. Discipline By the Head of School

- a. When WSA's Head of School receives referrals about student Code violations from teachers and/or non-teaching employees, the Head of School will arrange an informal conference at a time convenient to all participants. The administrator may invite parents/guardians to attend the conference; however, parent/guardian inability to attend will not delay the conference or affect the nature of the disciplinary action deemed appropriate by the aHead of School as the outcome of the conference.
- b. Disciplinary action is within the discretion of the Head of School and may include one or more of the following: after-school detention; loss of school privileges (e.g.,

attendance at field trips, extra-curricular activities, lunch or recess with peers); the adjustment of class seating arrangements; the adjustment of class schedules; periodic check-ins with the Head of Schools and/or guidance counselors; student restitution; suspension; permanent dismissal from WSA.

- c. Student restitution may include one or more of the following: apology letter from the student to the affected member of the WSA community (student, teacher, or other staff member); a reflective essay on the causes, nature, and/or impact (on self and others) of the Code violation; a research-based essay on the causes, nature, and/or impact (on self and others) of the Code violation; attendance at a (parent/guardian-funded) behavioral management program off school grounds and out of school hours; community service.
- d. For most Code violations, suspension or permanent dismissal from WSA will be the consequence only if the student had previously been given notice (in writing, with a copy shared with parents/guardians) that the next Code violation may result in suspension or permanent dismissal of the student from WSA.
- e. If a student is dismissed from WSA during the course of the school year due to one or more Code violations, the student's parents/guardians forfeit all monies paid to WSA toward deposits, tuition fees, and/or field trip fees, per the Student Enrollment Contract.
- f. Some Code violations, however, may result in immediate suspension or dismissal. These include violations that present a serious threat to the health or safety of students or staff or that provide a significant impediment to other students' ability to obtain an education. Violations that may warrant immediate suspension or expulsion may also include the following:
 - i. Possession of a weapon on school grounds
 - ii. Possession of drugs on school grounds
 - iii. The sale of drugs or weapons to other students on or off school grounds
 - iv. An assault of another student or a staff member on or off school grounds

D. Student Voice

Students cited for committing Code violations will be given the opportunity to politely and calmly present their own perspectives and versions of events to the relevant teacher and/or to the Head of School. Students should know that, even though they may have

violated the Code, they will nevertheless be treated by all administrators, teachers, and other staff members with kindness and respect.



Date: 6/15/25

Jenny Ho, Head of School, Washington Square Academy