

## BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY AND PLAN FOR ST. AUGUSTINE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

### **Introduction**

The Diocese of Toledo and the Catholic Schools Office believe that all of our Catholic schools must be aware that their purpose is rooted in the mission of the Church and the message of Jesus Christ.

It is essential that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established where students can achieve the highest academic standards, where no student shall be subjected to bullying, intimidation or harassment.

Pastors, principals, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and any other school support staff, are to expect that all students and staff behave appropriately and treat others with civility and respect.

Bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated in any of our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Toledo.

### **A. Bullying by Definition:**

Bullying, harassment or intimidation means any of the following: Any intentional written, verbal, electronic (cyberbullying), physical act, or any other similar behavior that a student or staff member has exhibited toward another student which:

1. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property.
2. Places another student in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to property.
3. Creates a hostile environment at school for another student.
4. Infringes on the rights of another student at school.
5. Disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school or classroom and alters the conditions of another student's education.
6. Is a form of "retaliation" meaning any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports any misconduct, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
7. Is considered electronic bullying (cyber-bullying) meaning bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, or data of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by:
  - a) Wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.
  - b) The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

c) The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

**B. Bullying is Prohibited:**

1. On school grounds owned/ leased/used by a school or on property immediately adjacent to school grounds.
2. At any school-sponsored or related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds.
3. At a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, when there are possible ramifications for students or adults in the school.
4. At a school bus stop, on a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school.
5. Through the use of technology or electronic device owned, leased or used by a school.
6. Through the use of technology or an electronic device not owned, leased or used by a school if the act or acts in question:

- a) Create a hostile environment at school for the target.
- b) Infringe on the rights of the target at school.
- c) Materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**C. Prevention and Intervention Plan:**

1. Students, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular advisors, and all other school support staff may report bullying directly to the principal either in writing or verbally or they may choose to report an incident through the TIPS Reporting hyperlink found on the school webpage under the Parent/Student Information tab.
2. Reports of bullying, harassment, or intimidation may be made anonymously so that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
3. School personnel listed in item #1 above are obligated to report prohibited incidents of which they are aware to the school principal or other administrator designated by the principal.
4. In cases where the aggressor or target is not a student at St. Augustine School, information shall be disclosed to the principal or appropriate administrator of the public, private or charter school in which the student is enrolled.
5. The custodial parent(s) or guardian(s) of any student involved in a prohibited incident shall be notified.
6. The principal shall keep written documentation of all reported incidences, steps taken to investigate, and responses the report.
7. Every effort will be made to protect a victim from new or additional harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

8. Recommendations of referrals to appropriate outside counseling will be made for aggressors, targets and family members of students as needed.

9. Any student found guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that infringes on any student's rights will be disciplined, and the following actions may be taken:

- a. One-on-one counseling/mediation with the principal and/or designated school authority which shall include appropriate accountability for actions and instruction on appropriate behaviors
- b. Separation from peers within the classroom to the extent possible
- c. After-school detention
- d. In-school suspension
- e. Referral to an outside counselor for appropriate services at the expense of the parent
- f. Out-of-school suspension
- g. Expulsion, if necessary

10. A range of disciplinary actions may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation. The disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

11. Students deliberately making false reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying and for any student responsible for deliberately making a false report will be disciplined and the action steps found in #9 may be taken.

12. The Bullying Prevention Policy will be included in the Student Handbook and will also be posted on the St. Augustine School webpage under the Parent/Student Information tab. This link includes information on how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home to support the school and the dynamics of any and all forms of bullying.

13. The student handbook will be distributed to each family at the start of each school year and the current handbook will be available on the school webpage under the Parent/Student Information tab.

14. By signing the Handbook Affirmation included on the Student Information Form at the beginning of each year, we assure that families have read the handbook and all policies included therein.

#### **D. Plan Review and Updates:**

The plan shall be reviewed and updated preferably every year, but at least every two years and the principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of bullying prevention and implementation plan within the school.

#### **E. Training:**

Regular training on the plan shall be provided for staff, students, parents, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and all other school support staff.

Such anti-bullying training may include, but not be limited to:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents.
2. Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents.
3. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying.
4. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment.
5. Information on cyber-bullying emphasizing Internet safety.

**F. Publication and Notice:**

The plan shall be posted on the school's website and included in student and employee handbooks.

**G. Reporting:**

A member of the staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or to the staff member designated in the plan as responsible for receiving such reports.

**H. Minimum Required Actions:**

If the principal or his/her designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he/she shall:

1. Take appropriate disciplinary action as stated in the plan.
2. Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor and target and inform them of the disciplinary action and action to be taken to prevent any further acts.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or his/her designee informed of such incident shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

**I. Policy Questions and / or Concerns:**

If any staff member has questions concerning this policy, he or she is encouraged to contact the Catholic Education Office at 419-244-6711.