

Appendix A:
Bullying Policy – Prevention and Intervention Plan
Introduction

The St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, as described below, is published in response to the recently enacted Massachusetts law (M.G.L., c. 71; sec. 37O) against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote a learning environment based upon Christian values. This plan articulates St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. comprehensive approach to addressing all forms of bullying, cyber bullying and retaliation.

This plan is consistent with past practices regarding the way in which St. Bernard's has traditionally dealt with matters of bullying. Simply stated, bullying in any form is not tolerated at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S.. Students who engage in bullying activities will encounter disciplinary consequences, including potential permanent removal from the school community.

The headmaster of St. Bernard's C.C.H.S., in conjunction with the principal, is responsible for the implementation and administration of the plan. Questions and concerns related to this plan should first be referred to the Principal's Office.

Definitions and Examples

Massachusetts Law, (M.G.L., c. 71; sec. 37O) utilizes the following definitions relative to bullying:

Aggressor: is a student who engages in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying: The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that:

- (i) cause 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. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying: 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, data or intelligence 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. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Hostile Environment: a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

Retaliation: is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Target: is a student against whom bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Examples of Bullying:

The following items are examples of bullying. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

- Unwarranted physical contact, including but not limited to hitting, punching, striking, pushing, or other undesired physical exchange
- Teasing or threatening behavior that puts the target in a state of emotional anxiety
- Deliberately excluding someone from an event, spreading rumors or other actions that negatively impact the emotional wellbeing of the target
- Hazing and/or sexual harassment

Examples of Cyber Bullying:

The following items are examples of cyber bullying. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

- Sharing a private email, text message or another electronic communication, or threatening to forward it with the intent to embarrass or ridicule the target
- Sharing and spreading unkind rumors about another person via Facebook, email, text message or other electronic means
- Threatening or insulting others through emails, instant messages, text messages, Facebook posts, or other means of electronic communication
- Posting, or threatening to post embarrassing or compromising pictures of the target online, without his or her permission
- Creating a web page, blog, wiki or other electronic forum in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as the author of posted content or messages, which results in emotional distress for the target.

Policy and Statement against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation

St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. is committed to maintaining a community in which the dignity and worth of each community member is revered and respected. St. Bernard's considers bullying, in all of its forms, to be a grave disciplinary infraction. Students who bully other members of the St. Bernard's community will be held accountable by the school's administration and therefore are subject to disciplinary action, including potential removal from the school community.

Also prohibited by this policy is any retaliation against any person who

- complains of bullying
- assists in a school investigation of bullying

Students are also strictly prohibited from interfering with an investigation of a bullying. Again, members of the St. Bernard's community will be held accountable by the school's administration and therefore are subject to disciplinary action, including potential removal from the school community. Bullying in all its forms or retaliation against a student who reports an instance of bullying will not be tolerated at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S..

Reporting and Responding to Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation

Students who are victims of bullying, or students, teachers, parents or community members, who witness acts of bullying, or are aware of acts of bullying, should immediately report these occurrences to an administrator or adult member of the St. Bernard's community. ***The Principal will be the primary contact*** regarding instances of bullying. The Administrators can be contacted using the following information:

Mr. James Conry: 978-342-3212, ext 227; email, james.conry@stb.echalk.com

Mr. Robert Blanchard 978-342-3212, ext. 222; email robert.blanchard@stb.echalk.com

However community members can also report bullying to any adult member of the St. Bernard's community, including the following individuals:

- Administrators
- Campus minister
- School counselors
- Teachers
- Coaches
- School nurse

While all individuals are strongly encouraged to be forthright with their reports, it is understood that in some instances an individual may report an incident anonymously. All reports of bullying, including those submitted anonymously, will be fully investigated by the school to determine their validity. Once validity has been established, corrective measures will be taken to reasonably ensure the safety of all community members. It should be noted that anonymous reports that, upon investigation, are not substantiated, will not result in disciplinary action.

As noted previously in this handbook, all students are expected to be truthful in all circumstances, including investigations of alleged bullying. Students who lie, or in any way deceive St. Bernard's personnel will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students:

Any student who is being bullied in any way should report this situation to the Principal, as soon as possible. In order to effectively respond to incidents of bullying, it must be stressed to the school community that timely and appropriate reporting must occur. Absent such reporting, it can be very difficult for school administrators to effectively and properly respond to bullying incidents. Therefore, students are required to report all instances of bullying and all instances of retaliation resulting from the filing of a bullying report, to the Principal. While all students are encouraged to openly report instances of bullying, anonymous reports can occur. To file an anonymous report, simply write a letter to the Principal and place the letter in the Principal's mailbox, located in the main office.

Parents, Families and Community Members:

St. Bernard's understands that parents and families are often the first to uncover incidents of bullying, both on and off campus. In response to this reality, St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. encourages all parents, families and community members to contact the Principal if they discover that bullying is taking place. Moreover, should parents, families or community members uncover that students are being retaliated against for reporting matters of bullying; this information should also be communicated directly to the Principal so that appropriate measures can be taken.

Faculty, Coaches, Staff and Moderators:

All employees of St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. have a responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of each student. Teachers, coaches and moderators have a duty to reasonably ensure that their individual classroom environment or meeting place is free from bullying activities. Employees who witness or suspect instances of bullying must immediately report this fact to the Principal. Employees must also report instances in which they believe a student is encountering retaliation due to the reporting of an alleged instance of bullying.

Investigation and Notification Procedures

Investigation:

The school will thoroughly investigate matters of alleged bullying in order to mitigate any and all concerns. Such investigations will likely include interviews with students, parents, faculty and other community members who are proximate to the alleged bullying incident. Relevant documents, including text messages, posts via electronic social media (Facebook, twitter, etc.), school policy documents, and other items will be considered, as appropriate, in any investigation of bullying. Investigations will be conducted in order to ascertain the validity of any bullying claim. Similar investigations will transpire in the case of an alleged incident of retaliation against an individual who reports an instance of bullying.

Notification:

All parties involved in an alleged bullying incident, including the student target(s), perpetrators, parents and guardians, will be notified by the school during the course of the aforementioned investigation. The goal of this policy is to end any confirmed instances of bullying so that all community members can coexist within a safe and respectful environment.

Disciplinary Consequences for Bullying or Retaliation:

It should be noted that St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. will utilize any and all available tools to effectively prevent and respond to instances of bullying, or instances of retaliation against a student who reports a bullying incident. These tools include the disciplinary measures of detention, suspension, probation and expulsion, as defined in the Student Handbook. The confirmed circumstances surrounding each incident, in conjunction with the stated policies of the Student Handbook, will ultimately drive any disciplinary action. However it should be noted that perpetrators of bullying or retaliation expose themselves to all potential consequences, including permanent removal from the school community. Moreover, should the situation include criminal conduct, the Headmaster or designated authority will notify local authorities, as appropriate.

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior than those outlined in M.G.L., c. 71; sec. 37O, may apply so that we may prevent inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying, as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "...repeated use..." of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, the St. Bernard's administration will likely discipline a student in a case of a single expression, act or gesture, if the Principal determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures.

Support for Those Impacted by Bullying

In cases where a student has been impacted by bullying or the reporting of bullying, counseling is available. Often times such counseling is mandated as a condition of remaining at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S.. St. Bernard's may also refer a student to an outside professional for the desired counseling. We believe that counseling can play an important role, as appropriate, in supporting those students impacted by bullying. Such counseling can also assist in maintaining a culture of respect throughout the school community.

Bullying Prevention Procedures

It should be noted that St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. is keenly aware of its responsibility to create a school environment in which the academic, social, moral and ethical development of all students can occur, to the fullest extent possible. In this way, St. Bernard's works to prevent bullying, as well as other educational disruptive behavior, from occurring both on and off school grounds. In an attempt to accomplish this goal St. Bernard's engages in the following:

Student and Parent Handbook:

Each year the St. Bernard's administration publishes and distributes (via the school's website) the annual Student Handbook. This document clearly articulates all of the policies and procedures governing the St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. community, including all policies related to the prevention of bullying and the prevention of retaliation against those who report an instance of bullying. The Handbook is updated before the start of school each year, and both students and parents must sign the Parent/Student Acknowledgement form, signifying their willingness to be governed by all school policies, as stated in the Handbook. Students who do not sign the contract are prohibited from enrolling at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S..

Opening of School Assemblies:

At the start of school each year, class-wide assemblies are held with all students. During these assemblies, the Headmaster and Principal reinforce the policies and procedures contained within the Student Handbook. Select policies are discussed at length, including the school's policy against bullying and the fact that bullying in any form will not be tolerated at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S..

Additionally, each year begins with a faculty and staff meeting, before classes commence. At this meeting, the administration reviews teacher expectations with all faculty members, including the responsibility of teachers to address and report instances of suspected bullying.

Response to Incidents:

At St. Bernard's C.C.H.S., the Principal in conjunction with the Headmaster, are responsible for responding to any and all instances that jeopardize the educational environment of the school. An alleged instance of bullying would certainly classify as an incident that would require a response from the Principal's Office. By responding to these incidents in a swift and decisive way, complete with appropriate disciplinary consequences for those deemed responsible, St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. is positioned to establish a culture of mutual respect. We believe that such an environment is essential to the educational growth of our students. Subsequently students, who threaten this environment, encounter disciplinary consequences consistent with their actions, including in some cases potential removal from the school community.

Concluding Statement

By creating this bullying policy and adhering to its stated principles, St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. continues to be well positioned to minimize instances of bullying and bullying related retaliation. We are also well positioned to respond to and address alleged and confirmed instances of bullying. While members of the St. Bernard's community have routinely enjoyed high levels of respect and appreciation, we realize that bullying can occur anywhere people interact with one another. Therefore we will continue to work to ensure that all students at St. Bernard's C.C.H.S. enjoy a school community free of bullying and disrespectful behavior.