

Catholic Memorial School

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program 2011-2012 Academic Year

OVERVIEW

It is the goal of Catholic Memorial to develop students into responsible citizens in the traditions of the Catholic Church and the Christian Brothers. To this end, our bullying prevention and intervention program is designed with two overarching goals in mind: to foster mature behaviors in students which make behaviors of harassment undesirable and unacceptable in our school culture, and to identify behaviors which might lead to bullying before such behaviors manifest into incidents.

According to Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, "An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools", bullying is defined as 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) 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 herself or damage to his or her 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. Bullying shall include cyberbullying." (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O)

Cyberbullying is defined as "bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but 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. Cyberbullying 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. Cyberbullying 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 of posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying." (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O)

Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, and repeated behavior.

I. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is any student who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Bullying is defined as 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 the victim that causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property, places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property, creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include but is not limited to electronic mail, internet communications, instant messaging, posting on social networking sites, or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying includes creating a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identify of another person, the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, or the distribution by electronic means or communication of messages that meets the definition of bullying above, whether distributed directly or creating a posting that may be accessed by one or more persons.

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

Retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is strictly prohibited.

School grounds are any property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by Catholic Memorial for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction, or training.

Staff includes educators, faculty, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

Target is any student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

II. LEADERSHIP

Leadership at all levels of the Catholic Memorial community has played a critical role in developing and implementing this Plan in the context of other School and community efforts to promote a positive School climate. The Plan has been developed in consultation with the Board of Directors, President, Principal, Administration, Faculty, Staff, and other stakeholders in the Catholic Memorial community.

Notice and a public comment period by families of students currently attending the Catholic Memorial was provided before the Plan was adopted. We all have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. The Principal and designated members of the Staff, working under the oversight of the Board of Directors and the President of Catholic Memorial are collectively responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to Bullying. It is also the responsibility of the Principal and such designees to involve representatives from the greater School and local community in developing, implementing and periodically reviewing the Plan.

A. Assessing needs and resources. The Plan is intended to be the blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of Bullying within the context of other healthy School climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and the staff, have assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on Bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This “mapping” process has assisted the School in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the School has revised policies and procedures; established partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

Prior to developing this Plan, Catholic Memorial surveyed students and faculty on school climate issues through the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory. We collected and analyzed building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of Bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in School buildings, on School Grounds, or on School buses), and identified behaviors and areas of concern that informed our strategies that included adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-School support services.

B. Planning and oversight. The Principal, Vice Principals, and Head Teacher of the Middle School, in consultation with guidance counselors and the school psychologist, are responsible for 1) receiving reports on Bullying; 2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or School-wide data on Bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to Targets and Aggressors; 4) planning for ongoing professional development; 5) planning supports that respond to the needs of Targets and Aggressors; 6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the School will use; 7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key Staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) amending student and Staff handbooks and codes of conduct; 9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and 10) reviewing and updating the Plan.

C. Priorities.

- The School expects that all members of the School community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.
- The School is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from Bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of Bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.
- The School will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the School community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to Bullying.
- We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of Bullying or Retaliation, in our School, on School Grounds, or in School-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of Bullying and Retaliation and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the Target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our School community, including curricula, instructional programs, Staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.
- This Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing Bullying, and the School is committed to working with students, Staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of Bullying and Retaliation. The Principal, working under the

oversight of the President and Board of Directors, is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

III. POLICY

POLICY ON HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION

Harassment in any form or for any reason is absolutely forbidden. This includes harassment by students, staff members or anyone else in connection with the School. It is also a violation of the policy for a person to condone the harassment by inciting, encouraging or otherwise giving support or approval to the harassment. In addition, retaliation against an individual who has brought harassment or other inappropriate behavior to the attention of the School or who has cooperated in an investigation of a complaint under this policy is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the School. Persons who engage in harassment or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary actions, including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension, termination/expulsion, or other sanctions as determined by the school administration.

POLICY ON BULLYING AND CYBER-BULLYING

Bullying and Cyber-Bullying are strictly prohibited on school grounds, on property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs whether on or off school grounds, at school bus stops, on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by Catholic Memorial, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by Catholic Memorial, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by Catholic Memorial, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of school.

IV. MEASURES DESIGNED TO PREVENT BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Cultivating responsible student behavior is the foundation of our anti-bullying program at Catholic Memorial School, and involves the collective efforts of all faculty, administration, staff, parents, students, contractors, and volunteers.

The following preventative measures exist:

- Behavioral expectations set through student orientations for all grade levels.
- On-going professional development periodically through the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC), Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association and other organization.
 - A school-wide assembly on bullying.
 - A full day faculty staff, coach, and volunteer workshop.
 - Parent workshops.

- Training for students enrolled in the student leadership program.
- Train-the-trainer workshops for faculty and staff.
- Curriculum instruction on appropriate behavior in all disciplines.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation. Reports of Bullying or Retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the Principal or designee any instance of Bullying or Retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not School Staff members, may be made anonymously. The School will make a variety of reporting resources available to the School community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form (a copy of which is attached to this Plan as **Exhibit A**). Administration cannot take disciplinary action against a student based solely on an anonymous report. Anonymous reporting may be made by accessing the following form.

<http://www.catholicmemorial.org/students/feedback.aspx>.

Reports are sent directly to the Vice Principal of Student Affairs. Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report.

At the beginning of each School year, the School will provide the School community, including administrators, Staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of Bullying and Retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the Principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and Staff handbooks, on the School website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A Staff member will report immediately to the Principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be Bullying or Retaliation. The requirement to report to the Principal or designee does not limit the authority of the Staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with School policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The School expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of Bullying or Retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged Aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students,

parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a Staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of Bullying with a Staff member, or with the Principal or designee.

A. Responding to a report of Bullying or Retaliation.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of Bullying or Retaliation, the Principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged Target and/or to protect the alleged Target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the Target and/or the Aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a Staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the Target; and altering the Aggressor’s schedule and access to the Target. The Principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from Bullying or Retaliation a student who has reported Bullying or Retaliation, a student who has witnessed Bullying or Retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of Bullying or Retaliation.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the Target and the Aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to Another School. If the reported incident involves students from more than one School district, charter School, non-public School, approved private special education day or residential School, or collaborative School, the Principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal or designee of the other School(s) of the incident so that each School may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of Bullying or Retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal or designee has a

reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the Aggressor, the Principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on School grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in School, the Principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the Aggressor.

In making this determination, the Principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable School policies and procedures and consult with all appropriate resources, including school counsel.

- B. Investigation. The Principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of Bullying or Retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the Principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, Staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged Aggressor, Target, and witnesses that Retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee, other Staff members as determined by the Principal or designee, and in consultation with the School counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of Bullying and Retaliation will be consistent with School policies and procedures for investigations.

- C. Determinations. The Principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, Bullying or Retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the Target is not restricted in participating in School or in benefiting from School activities. The Principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or School counselor, and the Target's or Aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the Bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The Principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the Target and the Aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if Bullying or Retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of Bullying or Retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable Massachusetts and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal or designee cannot report specific information to the Target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the Target must be aware of in order to report violations.

E. Responses to Bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal or designee determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the School use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 71, Section 37O (d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the School's anti-Bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate School personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-Bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the School's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities may be governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with Massachusetts laws regarding student discipline.

If the Principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of Bullying or Retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the School environment to enhance the Target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where Bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or designee will contact the Target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Principal or designee will work with appropriate School Staff to implement them immediately.

Safety Concerns

The safety of the victim of a harassment report is paramount. Students who are perceived to be victims of bullying should expect to be counseled with their safety in mind. Steps to ensure their safety might include the following¹:

- Affirming the student's feelings, i.e. supporting the student's choice to report the incident.
- Asking the student what he has done already to stop the situation.
- Clarifying that the student is not at fault.
- Thinking carefully before giving advice.
- Reminding the student to always report aggression.
- Brainstorming solutions.
- Recruiting student allies.

VI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual Staff Training on the Plan.

Annual training on the Plan for all School Staff, and, in the discretion of the Principal, volunteers who have significant contact with students, will include Staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the Principal or his or her designee will follow upon receipt of a report of Bullying or Retaliation, and an overview of any Bullying prevention curricula to be offered at the School. Staff members hired after the start of the School year are required to participate in School-based training during the School year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

¹ MARC Administrator's Guide, Second Edition

B. Written Notice to Staff.

At the beginning of each School year, the Principal or his or her designee shall provide written notice to the School Staff of the Plan. Relevant sections of the Policy and the Plan relating to the duties of School Staff shall be included in the School employee handbook.

C. On-going Professional Development.

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for Staff to create a School climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of Staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to Bullying. Professional development may be informed by research and may include information on:

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent Bullying;
- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop Bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an Aggressor, Target, and witnesses to the Bullying;
- 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;
- information on the incidence and nature of Cyber-Bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to Cyber-Bullying.

Additional areas identified by the School for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in School or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.]

VII. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Based on the results of the investigation, the school will work to refer students and families for counseling and other services for Targets, Aggressors, and their families.

VIII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources. The School will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-Bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the School.

- D. Notification. The School will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the School's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The School will post the Plan and related information on its website.

IX. Relationship to Other Laws.

Consistent with Massachusetts and federal laws, and the policies of the School, nothing in the Plan prevents the School from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, Massachusetts, or federal law, or School policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the School to take disciplinary action or other action under Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 71, Section 37O (d)(v), other applicable laws, or local School policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

In no event should the Plan be construed in any way so as to limit or modify the obligation of mandated reporters to timely make required so-called 51A Reports where appropriate.

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