

Saint John School
Boston, MA 02113
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
2011-2012

I. Introduction

Saint John School acknowledges that its purpose for existence is rooted in the mission of the Church. In fulfilling its role within the educational mission of the Church, the School must share and live out, through Catholic Christian tradition, the message of Jesus Christ and be committed to providing an integrated Catholic educational environment that permeates all aspects of its daily life and operations. Each child must be challenged to reach his/her full potential by fostering in each child a love of learning and by providing an environment that also fosters respect and understanding of one another. In this regard, it is essential that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established where students can attain the highest academic achievement and where no student shall be subjected to Bullying, Cyber-Bullying or Retaliation. Bullying, Cyber-Bullying or Retaliation or other similar disruptive or violent behaviors constitute conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and the School's ability to educate its students in a safe and embracing environment. The School's Faculty and Staff are expected to demand that all students behave appropriately and treat others with civility and respect. Bullying, Cyber-Bullying and Retaliation are not to be tolerated.

Accordingly, the School hereby promulgates this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the "Plan") as required by the Archdiocese of Boston Bullying Prevention Policy (the "RCAB Bullying Prevention Policy").

At Saint John School, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect. It is the policy of Saint John School to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

The Plan is consistent with the broader protections at Saint John School against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that appear in our behavior contract and Faculty/Staff personnel Handbook.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with the Pastor, School Board, School Faculty and Staff. The Principal, the Pastor, the School Board, 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 important that this Plan be well understood by all members of our school community. The Principal is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to the Plan may be referred to the Principal or to a faculty member.

II. Policy Against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation

Saint John School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited on school grounds and at school sponsored events, activities, functions, field trips, and programs. Bullying and cyber-bullying are also prohibited on school buses, and other vehicles used by the school and through technology or an electronic device owned or used by the school.

In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned by the school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Definition of the Law

“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) 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 the victim’s property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at the school for the victim; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school. For the purposes of this policy, 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 webpage 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 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Bullying shall be prohibited: (i) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to the school grounds, at a school sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or electronic device owned, leased by a school district or school and (ii) at a location, activity function or program that is not school related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school district or school, 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 a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited.

Cyber-Bullying means 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:

- wire
- radio
- electromagnetics
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, Be mindful of your digital footprint, including the use of social media (Facebook, My Space, etc.) instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-Bullying shall also include 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.

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

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

Plan is a bullying prevention and intervention plan established by a school.

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 to alter the condition of a 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.

School Grounds mean property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, faculty, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, and athletics coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

III. Training and 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 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.

- B. Ongoing Professional Development. Professional development programs on social/emotional development and school climate have been conducted with faculty and staff and are ongoing. These programs include the Responsive Classroom, the Second Step/Steps to Respect curriculum and the Bully Guard program.
- C. Written Notice to Staff. At the beginning of each School year, the Principal will provide written notice to the School Staff of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB) Policy and the Plan. Relevant sections of the RCAB Policy and the Plan relating to the duties of School Staff shall be included in the Faculty/Staff personnel Handbook.

Legal Definitions and School Policy

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Saint John School's policies in order 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 school reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act or gesture, if the school determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under the law.

IV. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-bullying

From the earliest grades at St. John School, students learn that as members of our school community they have a right to be treated with respect and civility. Our curriculum emphasizes respect for differences, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. When necessary, parents are notified and asked to reinforce standards for membership in the Saint John School community.

Grades 1-8 parents and students will sign a behavior contract each September and this is kept on file in the school office. Students also sign a contract on the acceptable use of technology at Saint John School.

Religion classes, assemblies, programs and social justice classes (middle school) focus on peer relationships and empower students to take action if they feel targeted or if they witness other students engaging in bullying or cyber-bullying. The Second Step/Steps to Respect curriculum K-8 is taught by the classroom teachers.

The administration and faculty recognize that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extends to corridors, lunch, recess, carpool, buses and the like. The school strives to ensure that ample adult supervision is provided on school premises, at lunch and at recess, and at school sponsored events.

V. Reports of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, Retaliation

Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying or otherwise relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying prohibited by this policy is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Principal or faculty member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible.

A parent of a student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying is strongly urged to promptly notify the Principal or faculty member. Furthermore, any parent who has him or herself witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward to the Principal or member of the faculty. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy.

Any member of the faculty or staff of Saint John School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyber-bullying in violation of this policy or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to the Principal. There are to be no exceptions. A member of the faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs him/her of an allegation of bullying or cyber-bullying, or retaliation. Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. The school also urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances when an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the school takes its policy against retaliation seriously. Also, while the school cannot promise strict confidentiality, because information must be shared in order to conduct an investigation, the school releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation only on a legitimate need-to-know basis.

VI. Responding to a report of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, or Retaliation

A. Preliminary Considerations. When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Principal or a faculty member, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps are needed to protect the well-being of the students and to prevent the disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during the investigation.

B. Obligation to Notify Parents. It is the policy of Saint John School to notify parents of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made.

C. Investigation. The following is an outline of the procedure that is pursued once a complaint has been brought to the attention of the principal or a faculty member. An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the principal. That investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student

who is the target of the alleged bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident.

D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-Up. Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken as the school deems appropriate, the Principal will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this plan has been violated, the Principal will determine what disciplinary action (according to the behavior contract) and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented.

The goal of an investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being repetition of the incident and to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Section 51A of the Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified.

Upon the completion of the investigation, the Principal who conducted the investigation will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student or students against whom the complaint was made and their parents to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, to inform the parties of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents.

VII. 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. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the HSO.

B. Notification requirements. The School will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of this Plan and the School's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents in hard copy and electronic formats. The School will post this Plan and related information on its website.

VIII. Relationship to Other Policies and Laws.

Nothing in this Plan prevents the School from taking action it deems necessary or appropriate to remediate discrimination or harassment the School deems harmful, offensive or incompatible with its goals and mission. In addition, except as expressly stated herein, nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to set forth any requirement, commitment, or limitation on the authority and discretion of the School generally, or specifically as to the authority of the School to take disciplinary action or other action under Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 71, Section 370 (d)(v), other applicable laws, or School policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

IX. Conclusion

This Plan is intended (1) to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students, (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in Saint John School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

X. Student-Parent Contract

Parents/Guardians:

I, the undersigned, have read and agree to uphold the guidelines as stated in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for the 2010-2011 academic year. I understand the regulations and guidelines of the school and agree to abide by and support the contents of this Plan. I understand that failure to comply with the school's policies will result in disciplinary action at the discretion of the principal.

Students:

I, the undersigned, understand the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and agree to do my best to make the right choices at school.

Date

Student Name (print full name)

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Address

City, State, Zip code

Telephone

E-mail

Parent Comments:
