

SAINT MARY'S ACADEMY BULLYING PREVENTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Saint Mary's Academy (SMA) believes that it is the mission of the Academy to encourage all students to develop to their fullest potential within the Christ-centered, challenging, academic school community. SMA students learn acceptance and appreciation of others within a nurturing family environment fostered by a sincere love of God.

It is essential that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established and maintained where students can achieve the highest academic standards and where no student shall be subjected to the interruption of their ability to learn by the disruption or violence of bullying, cyber bullying or retaliation. SMA finds that bullying, cyber bullying or retaliation is unacceptable behavior which interferes with the Academy's ability to educate its students in a safe and respectful environment.

SMA is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying and retaliation. SMA promotes learning and endeavors to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior which could impede the learning process.

SMA expects all members of the Academy community to respect and value each student's unique differences. SMA will work to create a safe and supportive environment for all students in vulnerable populations and provide these and all students with skills, knowledge and strategies to prevent and respond to bullying.

SMA will not accept any unlawful or disruptive behavior including bullying or retaliation on the Academy grounds, at any Academy related programs or events or in the SMA community. SMA will promptly address all reports of alleged bullying or retaliation to restore safety to all SMA community members. SMA will support this commitment throughout the SMA community including the Academy curriculum, instructional programs, Staff development, extracurricular activities and parent involvement.

The following Bullying Prevention Plan will be SMA's approach to address bullying, SMA is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies and the entire SMA community to prevent violence and promote harmony, respect and civility.

Therefore, SMA recognizes the Diocese of Springfield's Catholic Schools Office Bully Prevention Plan in conjunction with and in addition to the Saint Mary's Academy Bullying Prevention Plan. The SMA Plan was formulated and based on a needs assessment of the current Academy student population as well as the Academy's stakeholders – Principal, teachers, staff and parents of SMA students. The Saint Mary's Academy Bullying Prevention Plan will be reviewed

bi-annually and posted on the Academy website as well as included in the Conduct section of the Parent/Student Handbook.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this SMA Bullying Prevention Plan the following definitions will apply:

Target: will indicate any member of the SMA community to whom harassment, abuse or retaliation is directed or perpetrated

Aggressor: will indicate any member of the SMA community who engages in bullying or retaliation, by any means

Bullying: will indicate any member of the SMA community exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more persons - Bullying implies an imbalance of power or strength – the Target, who is bullied, has difficulty or the inability to defending themselves

SMA recognizes and accepts the Diocese of Springfield Catholic Schools Office definition of Bullying and additionally those included in the SMA Policy on Bully Prevention. SMA finds that the act of bullying consists of abusive conduct relative to acts, omission, or both, that a reasonable person would find hostile, based on the severity, nature and frequency of the conduct and without regard to the method of delivery such as verbal, written or electronic. Abusive conduct may include, but is not limited to: repeated infliction of verbal abuse, including the use of derogatory or unwanted remarks of sexual, religious or racial nature; insults and epithets; verbal, emotional or physical conduct of a threatening, intimidating or humiliating nature; social exclusion; spreading of rumors or falsehoods; the sabotage or undermining of an individual's work or performance; attempts to exploit an individual's known psychological or physical vulnerability; stalking and cyber stalking or physical acts of violence. A single act normally will not constitute abusive conduct but an especially severe and/or egregious act may meet the standard.

Cyber Bullying: For the purposes of the SMA Policy on Bully Prevention whenever the term Bullying is used it is to denote either Bullying or Cyber Bullying.

Cyber Bullying will indicate any member of the SMA community who bullies through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by telephone, wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical systems, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.

Cyber Bullying shall also for the purposes of the SMA Policy include but not limited to the creation of a web page, twitter, Youtube video, or any social networking site, video or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as the author of a posted content or message if the impersonation creates any of the conditions in the definition of bullying.

Cyber Bullying shall also include the distribution or posting of material by electronic means to one or more persons if this distribution or posting meets any of the conditions in the definition of bullying.

Hostile environment: will indicate that bullying has caused the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insults sufficiently severe or pervasive as to alter or limit the ability of the Target to perform their designated tasks in the Academy setting.

Plan: will indicate the SMA's steps to intervene and prevent bullying

Retaliation: will indicate any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a member of the SMA community who reports an alleged bullying event, witnesses bullying or provides information during an investigation of bullying

School Grounds: will indicate any property of the SMA community which houses a school building or facility that is used by SMA for a school sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training

Staff: will indicate any educators, faculty, administrators, school nurse, counselors, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular activity directors, support staff, paraprofessionals, after school and before school program directors at SMA

LEADERSHIP

The leadership within the SMA community has worked together to develop and implement the SMA Bullying Prevention Plan in efforts to promote a positive climate in the academic setting. The SMA Plan has been developed in consultation with the Diocesan Schools Administrators, the Diocesan Catholic School Board, pastors and parent representatives. SMA feels its primary role is to teach students civility and promote understanding of and respect for diversity. The Principal and Staff working under the oversight of the Pastor are responsible to understand and implement current bullying prevention research and strategies. The Principal will endeavor to involve the SMA community in developing, implementing and reviewing the Bullying Prevention Plan.

PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT

The Principal shall receive reports on all alleged or confirmed bullying incidents from students, parents and members of the SMA community. All faculty, staff and auxiliary personnel at SMA will report any and all incidents involving bullying to the Principal in a timely manner. The incident report form will be used for all reports, investigations and resolution plans will be recorded on this form.

As part of the regular review of the SMA Bullying Prevention Policy and Plan, SMA will collect school wide data using The School Climate Bullying Survey yearly and other measures to assess bullying behaviors and relevant aspects of the Academy climate to help guide intervention efforts.

The Principal of SMA will track all alleged bullying and bullying incidents and maintain a confidential log of all events. This log will be kept locked in a confidential file. The Log will not be part of any student's permanent record and will be destroyed when the student graduates or transfers.

SMA will work with the Dioceses of Springfield Office of Catholic Schools to provide ongoing Professional Development for the faculty and staff on bullying preventative measures and strategies. SMA will offer trainings for any bullying prevention program prior to the implementation of the Program for all staff and faculty.

The Principal together with the Diocese will develop, approve and maintain a list of available local counselors and counseling services available to offer to students and families in need of assistance.

SMA will work to review available programs to prevent bullying that are evidence based with the intention of implementing a positive behavior intervention program to help SMA faculty and staff continue to maintain the safe nurturing environment that is SMA.

As previously stated SMA together with the Principal will review the Bullying Prevention Policy and Plan yearly while keeping abreast of current literature with regard to Bullying Prevention Practices and interventions and with appropriately revise policy, plan and practices to meet the current standards. The Parent/Student Handbook will reflect these changes at the beginning of each academic year. Changes to policy, plan and practices will also be updated regularly on the Academy website.

SMA faculty and staff will work together with the families of the SMA community to keep parents informed and educated on all relevant changes but also to keep parents knowledgeable and informed about the most current practices in Bullying Prevention.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying will be prohibited on the grounds of SMA or anywhere on property used or leased by SMA, or on property adjacent to SMA; at any SMA sponsored activity, function or program on or off SMA grounds; on any bus associated with SMA or carrying SMA community members; or in any vehicle associated with SMA or with any form of technology or electronics owned, leased or used by the SMA community.

Bullying will also be prohibited at any location, activity, function or program that is not SMA related or through the use of technology or electronic devices not owned, leased or used by SMA community members if the act or act in question infringes on the rights of the Target or disrupts the orderly process of education or creates a hostile environment at SMA for the Target.

Retaliation against any person, who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of an alleged bullying event, or who witnesses or who has reliable information about an alleged bullying event shall be prohibited at SMA.

To prevent bullying SMA will formulate and institute a Bullying Prevention Plan. The SMA Plan will be the responsibility of the Principal together with a consultative body representative of the SMA stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, staff and support personal, local law enforcement). The SMA plan will include:

A statement prohibiting bullying

Procedures for reporting bullying events for SMA students, parents and staff

A procedure for the anonymous reporting with the proviso that no disciplinary action will be taken against the reporter solely on the basis of the report

Description of response and investigation procedures

Procedure to promptly notify parents of a Target or an Aggressor of any alleged acts of bullying or retaliation, actions taken, law enforcement notifications

Procedure to address false accusations of bullying or retaliation

A list of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying including procedure for reporting alleged bullying incident to local law enforcement

Procedures to provide support and protection to the Target

TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

SMA will offer training and staff development on bully prevention on an ongoing basis. The Academy faculty and staff will continue to attend the annual Diocesan scheduled professional development days as well as scheduled SMA Professional Development Days focusing on a variety of locally identified areas of need and concerns by faculty and staff. The Principal of SMA will support professional development of the faculty and staff with educational components as part of their regularly scheduled faculty meetings. The Bullying Prevention Policy and Plan will be reviewed with the faculty and staff for their input, understanding and revision.

The goals of Professional Development will work to build the skills of faculty and staff of SMA to prevent bullying by creating a safe environment with respect for diversity and value of individual differences.

As required by the State of Massachusetts Act with Regard to Bullying at the beginning of each academic year all faculty and staff of SMA will receive a written notice of the SMA Bullying Prevention Policy and Plan. The School Employee Handbook will also contain sections of the Policy and Plan relevant to the faculty and staff.

The SMA Plan will also recognize the additional areas of Professional development identified in the State of Massachusetts Model Plan. These areas include the promotion and modeling the use of respectful language; fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and differences; building relationships and communicating with families; constructive management of classroom behaviors; using positive behavior intervention strategies; applying constructive disciplinary practices; teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management and empathy for others; engaging students in classroom planning and decision making and maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

In an effort to promote a positive climate at SMA and to address the needs of students and families who may be involved in bullying incidents SMA will develop a list of available counseling services which will be reviewed, approved and maintained by the Principal and the SMA Board of Directors. Determination of the need for counseling will be made by the Principal, at the family's request, based on previous incidents or for other miscellaneous circumstances following the completion of the bullying incident process for reporting, recording and resolution.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Reporting of bullying or retaliation may be made by the students, their parents, the faculty and staff, the Principal or others and may be written or oral. Any oral reports received should be transcribed to a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting form and kept in a confidential locked file. An SMA staff member would be required to report immediately to the Principal any instance of bullying or retaliation that the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents, or other individuals may be made anonymously.

SMA will make available copies of the Intervention Incident Reporting sheet in the Nurses Office, in the Main Office of the Academy, in each classroom and on the Academy website. At the beginning of each academic year copies of the Intervention Incident Reporting sheet will be included in each student's packet.

At the beginning of each academic year in the Summer Packet the Academy will provide written notice of the Bullying Prevention Policies and Procedures for reporting and responding to Bullying and Retaliation to the SMA community including students, parents, faculty and staff. In the Parent/Student Handbook there will be a description of the reporting procedures and resources including contact information for the Principal, this information will also be posted on the Academy website.

A staff member is required to immediately report any and all bullying or retaliation which they are made aware of or witness to the Principal. The staff member may respond to the incident within the discipline policies of the SMA.

SMA expects students, parents and others who witness or become aware of instances of bullying or retaliation involving a student report the incident to the Principal. Reports may be made anonymously. No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged bullying incident based solely on an anonymous report. Students, parents and others may request assistance to complete a written Intervention Incident Report. All SMA students will be provided practical, safe, private and age appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a faculty or staff member of SMA or with the Principal.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION - SAFETY

SMA finds that establishing safety of the Target while an investigation takes place is of utmost importance. Responses to promote Target safety may include but are not limited to creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the Target/Aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus, in before and after school programs and in the hallways and bathrooms; identifying a staff member who will act as the "safe person" for the Target. The Principal will take additional steps if needed to promote safety during and after the investigation as necessary.

SMA finds that establishing safety of the student who reports bullying or retaliation of the utmost importance. The Principal will implement appropriate strategies for protection of the student who has witnessed a bullying or retaliation event, for the students who provide information during an investigation or for the student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

OBLIGATIONS TO NOTIFY OTHERS

Upon determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Report will be completed and submitted to the Catholic Schools Office, if needed the Principal and the Superintendent will confer with the General Counsel of the Diocese.

Upon determination of an occurrence of bullying or retaliation the Principal will promptly notify the parents of the Target and Aggressor of the event and the response by SMA to the event of bullying or

retaliation. There may be certain circumstances where that Principal may report to the parents prior to investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations 603 CMR 49.00.

If the reported incident of bullying or retaliation involves a student from another school the Principal of SMA will promptly notify by telephone the Principal of the other school or schools of the incident so that each school may take appropriate actions. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations and 603 CMR 49.00.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal 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. If an incident occurs on the grounds of SMA and involves a former student under the age of 21 years the Principal will contact the local law enforcement agency if the Principal believes there is reasonable basis for the pursuit of criminal charges against the Aggressor.

In the process of making this determination the Principal will be consistent with the Plan and with applicable Academy Policies and Procedures may consult with the Office of the General Counsel of the Diocese.

INVESTIGATION

The Principal will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and in doing so will consider all available information known including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the Principal will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents and others as necessary. The Principal 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 other SMA staff as appropriate, as is possible, confidentiality will be maintained to the best of their ability. The Principal will maintain a written record of the investigation in a locked and confidential location.

The procedure for investigating reports of bullying or retaliation will be consistent with SMA policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal will consult with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and/or the General Counsel of the Diocese. The Principal will make this determination based on the facts and circumstances available at the time. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent the recurrence of the bullying or retaliation and to ensure the Target's activities at SMA are not restricted. The Principal will determine what remedial action is required and what responsive or disciplinary actions are necessary.

The Principal, may determine, based on the presenting circumstances, the need to consult with the involved student's teachers and parents to identify any underlying social or emotional issues that may have contributed to the bullying or retaliation behavior and assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The Principal will promptly notify the parents of the Target and the Aggressor with 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 notices to parents will comply with applicable Massachusetts and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding confidentiality of the students' records, the Principal cannot report specific information to the Target's parent about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a directive that the Target must be aware of in order to report violations.

RESPONSES TO BULLYING – TEACHING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR THROUGH SKILLS BUILDING

Once the determination of bullying or retaliation has occurred, as required by the law SMA will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behaviors to the students involved as well as the other students, Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 71, Section 370(d)(v). Skill building approaches that the Principal may consider include offering individualized skill building sessions based on the Academy's anti-bullying curricula; providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students; implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways of achieving their goals; meeting with parents 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 a psychological evaluation.

TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Disciplinary action will be based on the facts from the Principal's investigation, including the nature of the offending conduct, the ages of the students involved and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior in keeping with the SMA mission statement and Academy Philosophy. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the SMA'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 determines that a student knowingly make a false allegation of bullying or retaliation that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

PROMOTING SAFETY FOR THE TARGET AND OTHERS

The Principal will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the SMA environment to enhance the Target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy the Principal 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 implementation of remedial and discipline action the Principal 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 will work with appropriate staff and faculty of SMA to implement the needed measures.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

SMA will offer education programs for parents that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any other social curricula used by SMA. SMA will send parents written notice each academic year regarding the student related sections of the Plan and the School's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents will be in hard copy and electronic formats (posted on the school website). SMA will post the Plan and related information on the SMA website.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with Massachusetts and federal laws and the policies of SMA nothing in the Bullying Prevention Plan prevents SMA 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 SMA policies.

Additionally, nothing in the SMA Bullying Prevention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of SMA to take disciplinary action or other action under Mass. Gen. Laws. Ch. 71, Section 370(d)(v), other applicable laws or local SMA policies in response to violent, harmful or disruptive behavior regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior. Further in no event should the SMA Bullying Prevention Plan be construed in any way so as to limit or modify the obligations of mandated reporters to make timely required 51-A reports when appropriate.