



## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

**December 2010**

### **I. Introduction**

Cheverus 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 Staff is expected to demand that all students behave appropriately and treat others with dignity 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 Cheverus School, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect. It is the policy of Cheverus 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 Cheverus School against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that appear in our Parent/Student Handbook and Faculty/Staff personnel Handbook.

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**

Cheverus 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 of 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**

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
- 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 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.

**Target** a student against whom Bullying or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

**Plan** a Bullying prevention and intervention plan established by a school.

### **Hostile Environment**

A 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 the student's education.

### **Retaliation**

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 as 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, athletics coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

### **Legal Definitions and School Policy**

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Cheverus 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.

### **III. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

From the earliest grades at Cheverus School, students learn that as members of our school community they have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. 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 Cheverus School community.

All students and parents sign a Parent/Student Contract and Internet Consent Form each September and this is kept on file in the school office.

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 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.

### **IV. 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 Cheverus 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.

### **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. **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.
- C. **Obligation to Notify Parents** It is the policy of Cheverus 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.
- D. **Resolution, Notification, and Follow-Up** Following interviews and 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 determined that the policy set forth in this plan has been violated, the Principal will determine what disciplinary action 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.

#### **V. 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 Cheverus 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.