

ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA SCHOOL
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN
2022-2023

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I. Introduction.

St. Stanislaus Kostka School (the “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 civility and respect. Bullying, Cyber-Bullying and Retaliation are not to be tolerated.

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 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 a sense of safety for the targeted student. 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.

Accordingly, the School hereby promulgates this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the "Plan") as required by the Diocese of Springfield Bullying Prevention Policy (the “Bullying Prevention Policy”).

II. Definitions.

For purposes of this Plan, the following definitions shall apply:

“Aggressor”, means a student who engages in Bullying or Retaliation.

“Bullying” is 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 Target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the Target or damage to the Target's property;
- places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a Hostile Environment at School for the Target;
- infringes on the rights of the Target at the School; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the School.

By way of example only, Bullying may involve, but is not limited to:

- unwanted teasing
- threatening
- intimidating
- stalking
- Cyber-Stalking
- physical violence
- theft
- sexual, religious, racial or any other type of harassment
- public humiliation
- destruction of School or personal property
- social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion
- rumor or spreading of falsehoods

For the purpose of this Plan, whenever the term "Bullying" is used it is to denote either Bullying or Cyber-Bullying (as defined below).

“Cyber-Bullying” means Bullying through the use of technology including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, social media, or instant messages.

Cyber-Bullying shall also include the creation of a web page, blog, or social media profile/handle 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.

Cyber-Bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of Bullying.

“Hostile Environment” means a situation in which Bullying causes the School environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the

conditions of the student's education.

"Retaliation" means 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, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

"Target", means a student against whom Bullying or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

III. Leadership.

All members of the School community have a 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 Diocesan Schools Office, 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.

All aspects of planning and oversight for the reporting, investigation, procedures, and discipline related to Bullying at the School will be under the auspices of the Principal.

IV. Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation.

Bullying is prohibited:

- On School Grounds owned, leased or used by a School;
- On property immediately adjacent to School Grounds;
- At any 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 any other vehicle owned, leased or used by the School; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the School;

Bullying is also 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, leased or used by the School if the act or acts in question:

- create a Hostile Environment at School for the Target;
- infringe on the rights of the Target at School; or

- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the School.

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

V. Training and Professional Development.

- Annual Staff Training on the Plan. Annual training on the Plan for all School Staff, and, at 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.
- 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 Policy and 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.
- 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.

VI. Access to Resources and Services.

The Principal will assist in identifying outside agencies for counseling and other services to ensure that the underlying emotional needs of Targets, Aggressors, families, and others are addressed.

VII. Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation.

- 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. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form (Exhibit B) is to be completed and placed in a confidential locked file. 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: 1) make the Incident Reporting Form available in the School's main office; and 2) post it on the School's website.

At the beginning of each School year, the School will include a description of the reporting procedures and resources in the parent handbook and on the School website.

1. Reporting by Staff

A Staff member will report immediately to the Principal 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. 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.

B. 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 the Superintendent – Catholic Schools Office. Upon determining that Bullying or retaliation has occurred, a copy of Exhibit B – Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form is to be submitted to the Superintendent – Catholic Schools office. If necessary, the Superintendent and Principal will confer with the General Counsel of the Diocese.
- b. 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.

- c. Notice to Another School. If the reported incident involves students from another school, the Principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify 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.
- d. 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, consult with the School resource officer, if any, and other individuals the Principal or designee deems appropriate (including, but not limited to, the Office of the General Counsel of the Diocese).

- C. 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. (Exhibit B – Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form)

Procedures for investigating reports of Bullying and Retaliation will be consistent with School policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal or designee will consult with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools and, if necessary, the Superintendent and Principal will confer with the General Counsel of the Diocese. 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 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.

D. 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. 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 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 Staff to implement them immediately.

VIII. Collaboration with Families.

Families are an integral part of the St. Stanislaus Kostka School community, and they play a crucial role in creating a safe, caring, and respectful learning environment that is rooted in the Franciscan emphasis on community, loving service, and the dignity of each person.

Parents and guardians are asked to read the school's bullying prevention and intervention policy and to have conversations with their children about the harm that bullying creates, how they can prevent bullying, and how they can intervene or help if they see it happening.

A. Parent education and resources. The School will help parents to find resources that help to inform and empower students and families. Examples include:

- The Parent Help Guides and Presentations page on the website of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University:
<https://www.marccenter.org/parents>
- The Student and Family Support page on the website of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/>

B. Notification requirements: The School will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan. 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 370 (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 notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or both, so-called 51A Reports, where appropriate.