

**Bullying Prevention and
Intervention Plan
2015 - 2016**

**FIRST LUTHERAN
SCHOOL**

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

As the teaching staff and other staff members of First Lutheran Church and School, we know that “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist there will be disorder and every vile practice.” James 4:16 ESV and “To those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress...” Romans 2:8 ESV. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the teachers and staff to continue to provide an environment that encourages respect for all and makes it safe for student/students to approach a staff member for protection. First Lutheran shall not tolerate bullying. This policy is supplemental to the Parent Handbook and is to be used as consistent with the discipline policies stated in the Parent Handbook.

Bullying is Prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds, or
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by First Lutheran School.

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, leased or used by First Lutheran, 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; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation or any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited.

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Definition:

“**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: (I) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property; (II) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (III) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (IV) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (V) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying. G.L. c. 71, § 370

“**Cyber-Bullying**” is 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 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. 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 clauses (I) to (V), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. G.L. c.71, § 370

Bullying shall be prohibited: (I) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used the school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the 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 target, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Retaliation means any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a person, who reports bullying provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about 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. G.L. c. 71, § 370

The Plan:

First Lutheran provides age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade. It is part of the Bible curriculum that is taught every day in that we teach of God's great love for us through Jesus Christ, our Savior and that He tells us to love one another, as He has loved us.

First Lutheran shall develop, adhere to and update a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. First Lutheran School shall only be required to give notice to and provide a comment period for families that have a child attending the school. The plan shall be updated at least biennially.

The plan includes,: (I) descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation; (II) clear procedures for students, staff, parents, guardians and others to report bullying or retaliation; (III) a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously; provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report; (IV) clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation; (V) the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation; provided, however, that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior; (VI) clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a target and assessing that target's needs for protection; (VII) strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying; (VIII) procedures consistent with state and federal law for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a target and an aggressor; provided, further, that the parents or guardians of a target shall also be

notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; and provided, further, that the procedures shall provide for immediate notification pursuant to regulations promulgated under this subsection by the Principal or person who holds a comparable role to the local law enforcement agency when criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor; (IX) a provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action; and (X) a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors and targets and for appropriate family members of said students. The plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

The First Lutheran School plan includes a provision for ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to: (I) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (II) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; (III) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying; (IV) 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; (V) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (VI) internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

The plan includes provisions for informing parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of First Lutheran School and shall include, but not be limited to: (I) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support school plan; (II) the dynamics of bullying; and (III) online safety and cyber-bullying.

First Lutheran School provides to students and parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in the languages which are most prevalent among the students, parents or guardians, annual written notice of the relevant student-related sections of the plan.

First Lutheran provides to all school staff annual written notice of the plan. The faculty and staff at each school are trained annually on the plan applicable to the school. The plan is to be posted on the website of First Lutheran School.

The Principal or the person who holds a comparable position shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan at his/her school. A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the Principal or to the school official identified in the plan as responsible for receiving such reports or both. Upon receipt of such a report, the Principal or a designee shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the Principal or a designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee shall (I) notify the local law enforcement agency if the Principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against an aggressor; (II) take appropriate disciplinary action; (III) notify the parents or guardians of an aggressor; and (IV) notify the parents or guardians of the target, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school district, the school district or school first informed of the bullying or retaliation shall, consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school district or school so that both may take appropriate action. If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former

student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in a local school district, the school district or school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall contact law enforcement.

Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

I. Procedures:

Notice to Parents

(1) Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal shall promptly notify the parent of the alleged target and the alleged aggressor of the determination and First Lutheran School's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. The Principal shall inform the target's parents of actions that school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Nothing in this provision prohibits the Principal from contacting a parent of a target or aggressor about a report of bullying or retaliation prior to a determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred. If the alleged target and alleged aggressor attend different schools, the Principal receiving the report shall inform the Principal of the other student's school, who shall notify the student's parent of the report and procedures.

(2) A Principal's notification to a parent about a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of Massachusetts Student Records Regulations.

Notice to Law Enforcement Agency

(1) Upon receipt and review of a report of bullying or retaliation, the Principal shall make a preliminary determination whether to notify the local law enforcement agency of the reported incident. The Principal shall notify the law enforcement agency if the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may result in criminal charges against the alleged aggressor. The Principal shall, consistent with school policy and procedure, consult with any such other individuals the Principal deems appropriate in making such determination.

(a) If the Principal decides to notify the local law enforcement agency, the Principal shall document the reasons for the decision and immediately contact the local law enforcement agency to discuss the incident and the law enforcement agency's involvement. Nothing in this section shall prevent the Principal from taking appropriate disciplinary or other action pursuant to school policy and state law.

(b) If the Principal decides not to notify the local law enforcement agency, or the local law enforcement agency determines that its involvement is not necessary under the circumstances, the Principal shall respond to the incident of bullying or retaliation as provided in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. If the Principal subsequently determines facts that cause him or her to believe that the aggressor's conduct may be criminal, the Principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency.

(2) The Principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency of a report of bullying or retaliation consistent with 603 CMR 49.06(1) if bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21.

(3) First Lutheran School shall include the requirements and procedures for communicating with the local law enforcement agency in the bullying prevention and intervention plan required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

II. Complaint Processes:

Formal/Written Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file written reports of conduct that they consider to be bullying or retaliation. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with the Principal. Students, parents, guardians, or other individuals who file written complaints of bullying or retaliation to a teacher or the Principal may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the staff member who receives the complaint.

Informal/Verbal Complaints by Students

Students may also make informal/verbal complaints of conduct that they consider to be bullying or retaliation by verbally reporting to a teacher or staff member or Principal. Such informal/verbal complaints shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A teacher, other professional employee, or Principal who receives an informal/verbal complaint shall promptly reduce the complaint to writing, including the information provided. Such written report by the teacher, other professional employee and/or administrator shall be promptly forwarded to the building Principal (or other responsible program administrator) for review and action in accordance with Section III below.

Anonymous Complaints:

Anonymous reporting will be managed at the school level. Students, parents/guardians and others are able to make anonymous bullying reports by telephone, or by mail.

Anonymous reports should include at least the following information:

- Date, time and location of the incident.
- Individuals involved and their roles (e.g. target, aggressor, bystander).
- Any knowledge of prior incidents that were reported or not reported.
- The relationship of the reporter to the incident (e.g. witnessed firsthand, third party report).

Upon receipt of an anonymous report the school will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit, an Incident Reporting Form will be completed by the investigating staff member and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

False Reporting:

When a student(s) knowingly makes a false report of bullying or retaliation and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

Suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the school's Discipline Policy.

Reporting Form:

Attached to this plan is the First Lutheran School's **BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM**. This form may be used to report incidents of Bullying and/or incidents of Retaliation. This reporting form will also be available on First Lutheran School's Website.

III. Staff Responsibilities and Intervention Strategies

Teachers and other School Staff:

Teachers and other school staff, who witness acts of bullying or retaliation, as defined above, shall promptly notify the Principal and/or his/her designee in writing of the events observed, and shall promptly file a written incident report concerning the events witnessed. Teachers and other school staff who receive student reports of suspected bullying or retaliation shall promptly notify the Principal and/or his/her designee of such report(s). If the report is a formal, written complaint, such complaint shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the Principal or his/her designee. If the report is an informal/verbal complaint by a student that is received by a teacher, administrator or other professional employee, he or she shall prepare a succinct written report of the informal complaint, which shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the building Principal or his/her designee. If the report is an informal complaint by a student that is received by other school staff, this employee shall verbally report the matter to the Principal and/or his/her designee promptly (no later than the next school day).

In addition to addressing both informal and formal complaints, teachers and other professional employees are encouraged to address the issue of bullying and retaliation in other interactions with students. Teachers and other professional employees may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and retaliation and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially-appropriate behavior. Teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, harassing, humiliating or intimidating another student, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying."

Administrator Responsibilities:

1. Investigation

- a. The Principal (or designee) shall be promptly notified of any formal or informal complaint of suspected bullying or retaliation received by any teacher or other professional employee. Under the direction of the Principal or his/her designee, all such complaints shall be investigated promptly.
- b. A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying or retaliation are verified, a recommendation for intervention, which may include disciplinary action. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.
- c. When a student making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complainant. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it

with the alleged aggressor), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

2. Remedial Actions

a. Verified acts of bullying or retaliation shall result in intervention by the Principal or his/her designee that is intended to address the acts of the aggressor and the needs of the target, and to assure that the prohibition against bullying behavior or retaliation is enforced with the goal that any such bullying or retaliation behavior will end as a result.

b. Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the target and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying. While conduct that rises to the level of “bullying”, as defined above, will generally warrant disciplinary action against the aggressor of such bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the Principal. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

The following sets forth possible interventions for the Principal to enforce the prohibition against bullying.

c. Addressing Bullying Behavior:

Non-Disciplinary Interventions

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying.

Disciplinary Interventions

When acts of bullying or retaliation are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

Suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused aggressor of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Student Discipline policy, per the Parent Handbook.

Expulsion may be imposed only after **PROCEDURES FOR LONG-TERM SUSPENSION/EXPULSION** are followed. This consequence shall normally be reserved for serious incidents of bullying or retaliation and/or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying behavior.

3. Safety Planning and Support

a. The Principal establishes a safety plan for target (s) of bullying/harassment. This includes strategies to protect students who report bullying, provide information during an investigation, and/or who witness or provide reliable information about an act of bullying. The plan includes the following elements:

- Selection of a “safe zone”; an area identified by the target where he or she can go to get help from a trusted adult, e.g. the Principal’s office, a classroom, etc.
 - A mechanism for informing all relevant adults (teachers, coaches, and other support staff) of the situation between the aggressor(s) and target(s).
 - A plan for monitoring of less structured areas of the school environment, such as lunchroom and playground.
 - Follow-up with parents/guardians of all involved to inform them of actions being taken.
 - Protect the confidentiality of the reporter and witnesses wherever possible.
 - Assessment of effectiveness of the above interventions on a regular basis.
- b. The safety plan may also be used for an aggressor, or even a bystander, in order for them to more effectively manage troublesome times/areas of the school, such as unstructured play and less supervised places.
- c. Counseling services for those affected by bullying or harassing behavior are available through the district’s connections to area mental health providers and the Department of Children and Families for further support and intervention, if needed.
- d. Support Services are made available and arranged for all parties involved in a reported and/or substantiated incident of bullying and/or retaliation, including the aggressors and appropriate family members of the involved students.

The Principal or his/her designee shall intervene in order to address multiple incidents of bullying against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student may include the following:

- a. Counseling;
- b. Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations;
- c. Encouragement of student to seek help when targeted;
- d. General Prevention and Intervention Strategies

While no specific action is required, and school needs for specific prevention and intervention strategies may vary from time to time, the following list of potential prevention and intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional employees in each school:

- a. Implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying, including any such program identified by the Department of Education;
- b. A school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying;
- c. Establishment of a bullying prevention coordinating committee with broad representation to review school climate survey results and implement appropriate strategies;
- d. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;

- e. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying prevention curricula;
- f. Individual interventions with the aggressor, parents and school staff, and interventions with the bullied student, parents and school staff;
- g. School-wide training related to safe school climate;
- h. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions;
- I. Respectful responses to bullying concerns raised by students, parents or staff;
- J. Planned professional development programs addressing prevention and intervention strategies;
- k. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of targets and include them in group activities;
- l. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of staff and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;
- m. Modeling by teachers of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students;
- n. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others;
- o. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere;

IV. Reporting Obligations:

A. Report to the Parent or Guardian of the Aggressor

If after investigation, acts of bullying or retaliation by a specific student are verified, the building Principal shall notify the parent or guardian of the aggressor in writing of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in such notification.

B. Reports to the Target and his/her Parent or Guardian

If after investigation, acts of bullying or retaliation against a specific student are verified, the Principal shall notify the parent or guardian of the target of such finding. The Principal will notify the actions that will be taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation. In providing such notification, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the aggressor of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the aggressor, as reflected in the student's educational records, shall not be disclosed to the parents or guardian of the target, except as provided by law.

C. List of Verified Acts of Bullying or Retaliation

The Principal shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school, and this list shall be available to the Board of Christian Education.

V. 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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, §37O, the content of the school's professional development specific to bullying and harassment will be informed by research and will 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.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

D. STUDENT EDUCATION:

The new Massachusetts legislation requires each school or district to provide age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade, K-12, which is incorporated into the school curricula. Curricula must be evidenced based and include classroom strategies, whole school initiatives and focused strategies for bullying/violence prevention and social skill development.

At First Lutheran some **general teaching approaches** that supports a safe and respectful learning environment includes:

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- Building relationships and communicating with families;
- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- Using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- Applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;

- Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

E. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES:

Annual Notice

Each year the First Lutheran School will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about its procedures regarding bullying/harassment and of the prevention curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, harassment, cyber- bullying/harassment and online safety, including the district's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy (through Principal newsletters, Student Handbooks and Codes of Conduct) and electronic formats.