



Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Position

It is the mission of St. Paul Lutheran School to maintain a safe learning and work environment that is free from bullying. Students, parents, and staff are expected to conduct themselves in a proper, Christian manner, and demonstrate respect and love for each other. Bullying and any form of intimidation is unacceptable at St. Paul Lutheran School.

Is An Anti-Bullying Policy Necessary?

You would think that a Christian school would not need to take a stance regarding a behavior that is an obvious refusal to obey God's clear command about how we should treat each other. Unfortunately, we live in a sinful world and in a society that is filled with rebellion against the Word of God. Our children come to our school hearing and seeing poor examples of "acceptable" societal behaviors. They must come to St. Paul Lutheran School and learn what Christ commands us all to do to glorify Him and build up the body of Christ.

The other practical side of instituting an anti-bullying policy is awareness. If we are all aware of the way we should and should not behave we will all be more sensitive to seeing and responding to unacceptable treatment of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus Christ, Our Perfect Role Model

In many past student conferences it has been asked, "When did Jesus tease anyone?" or "When did Jesus bully anyone?" or "When did Jesus hit anyone?" or "When did Jesus cause anyone to cry or feel embarrassed?" The answer to all of these questions is, never! If Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and our perfect example of how we should live and treat each other, why would we ever think that bullying in its many forms can be tolerated. Bullying can *never* be justified.

How Is Bullying Defined?

Bullying occurs when a person or group is intimidated, frightened, excluded, hurt, or suffers a lack of self-esteem as a result of a pattern of behaviors directed at them by others. The following is a comprehensive listing of behaviors that may fall within the boundaries of what constitutes bullying:

- Physical aggression – including hitting, punching, shoving, biting, hair pulling, scratching, spitting, rude gestures, inappropriate touching, or kicking
- Teasing or verbal abuse – including putdowns, insults, name calling, or racial/sexual remarks
- Unjustified exclusion from activities or friendship groups

- Gossiping or slandering
- The setting up of humiliating experiences
- Damaging a person's property/possessions or taking them without permission
- Threatening gestures, actions, or words
- Written or electronic (e-mail, camera, video, internet messaging, chatrooms, blogs, cellphones) messages that contain threats, insults, teasing, or put downs

Possible Warning Signs That Bullying Has Taken Place

We would expect that children would share with their parents, teachers, or principal that he or she has experienced or is experiencing intimidation by another individual or group. Many students try to handle these situations on their own and many do not want to share embarrassing events. If this is the case, the following behaviors may begin to occur and would be indicators of some form of intervention:

- Sudden lack of interest in school or home activities
- An uncharacteristic drop in grades
- Withdraws from social activities or becomes more of a "loner"
- Injuries inconsistent with the explanation
- Often ill, unable to sleep, or sleeps too much
- Sad, sullen, angry after receiving e-mail or phone messages
- Change in overall character
- Speaks about peers in derogatory or demeaning terms
- Stops talking about daily activities

What to do? Responsibilities of students, parents, and school personnel...

Students

- Students being bullied should report it to staff, parents, or church personnel.
- Students that are aware of or have observed bullying activity should report it to any staff member, parents, or church personnel.
- Students should be willing to resolve bullying situations by: a willingness to share what Christians do and do not do, grant forgiveness if it is asked for, and make every effort to not repeat a negative behavior.
- Sign and agree to abide by the "Christian Behavior Pledge."

Parents

- Parents are encouraged to take what their children say seriously and report the bullying concerns to the school. (It has been said many, many, times, "We cannot resolve or intervene in a situation if we are not aware that it has occurred or has been occurring.")
- Parents need to accept that the whole story may be quite complex and to trust the school to resolve bullying matters in the fairest manner possible. There are always two sides of any story. Sometimes they conflict dramatically and sometimes they support a very clear description of the event.
- Parents need to sign and agree to support the "Christian Behavior Pledge."

Staff

- All staff, church personnel, and volunteers should take bullying reports seriously. We do not, and have not agreed with the statements, "Stop tattling. I don't want to hear it. Grow up and handle it yourself." This was a common practice years

ago, but with societal changes and the recurring incidents of school violence in the nation, we are obligated and responsible to aid in any conflict resolution.

- All staff should establish whether a bullying incident is isolated or an ongoing pattern of behavior. In either case, any inappropriate words or behavior must be addressed.
- The principal and administrative assistant, who are part of the staff, must be made aware of any and all reports of bullying behavior.
- By virtue of their calling as Christian teachers and professionals they have already pledged themselves to the protection, care, and well-being of their students.

Scriptural References Regarding Proper Christian Behavior

- Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”
- Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
- All of James 3 (Please take some time to read it!)
- John 15:12 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”
- Colossians 3:13 “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
- I Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”
- John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Corrective, Administrative Procedures

The procedures for addressing and correcting bullying behaviors are in harmony with the existing “Discipline Policy” found on page 8 of our handbook. There are some more detailed steps that would be specific to bullying problems. However, the basic disciplinary procedure is the same as with all other behavioral issues.

1st Reported Incident

- Interview the student who believes they have been bullied.
- Interview students that may have witnessed the bullying incident.
- Investigate, talk to the accused student(s) and develop a strategy to change behavior(s). This would always be prefaced with “What would Jesus do and want us to do?”
- If the occasion warrants, the principal, the affected student and the accused student would meet and attempt to resolve the conflict.
- Request a written apology to the victim. This would be copied and kept on file. The original would be given to the bullied student.
- The principal must document the conference.
- If deemed necessary, detention from recess or after school may be applied.

2nd Reported Incident

- Interview all students that may be involved.
- Contact the parents of the student that has not learned his responsibilities as a Christian citizen.
- Issue a detention or suspension depending on the severity of the incident.

3rd Reported Incident

- Interviews to verify the incident.
- Student, parent(s), principal, and School Council representative have a conference.
- Possible expulsion.

*Please note on page 9 of our handbook the following: “There may be times where this (disciplinary) procedure, due to the infraction, may not be followed step-by-step by the administration. An extreme breach of behavior may result in immediate suspension. For example, fighting or punching with the intent to harm may result in immediate suspension. Threatening and bullying may also result in immediate suspension.”

Conclusion

We all need to follow the commands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our world is a sin-filled environment, yet we must be His ambassadors and disciples. At St. Paul Lutheran School, we will make every effort to follow Him in word, thought, and deed. We must also model and communicate this to our students. We ask everyone to assist us with their prayers and support to make His school a place where Christ’s name is proclaimed and glorified.





Christian Behavior Pledge

We agree to do our part in preventing bullying at our school. We believe it is the equal right of everyone to enjoy our school and to have the confidence that it is a place where all will feel safe, secure, and accepted regardless of color, race, gender, age, popularity, God-given abilities, intelligence, religion, and nationality.

Bullying can be pushing, shoving, hitting, spitting, as well as name calling, teasing, picking on, making fun of, laughing at, or deliberately excluding someone from any school activity. (Please review pages 2 and 3 of our Anti-Bullying Policy) Bullying causes pain and stress to victims and is *never* justified or excusable as “kids just being kids”, “just teasing” or any other rationalization. Bullying is not Christ-like nor acceptable behavior for His people.

As parents/guardians, we pledge to:

1. Keep ourselves and our children informed and aware of the anti-bullying policies and procedures of the school.
2. Work in partnership with the school to encourage positive behavior, valuing differences, and sensitivity to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. Discuss regularly with our children their feelings about school work, friendships, and relationships.
4. Inform school/church staff of changes in our children’s behavior or circumstances at home that may change a child’s behavior at school.
5. Alert the teaching staff and administration if any incidents of bullying have occurred.
6. Understand that there are always “two sides to every story” and will depend on the administration to investigate fully any bullying incident.

As a student, I pledge to:

1. Learn about and fully understand my school’s Anti-Bullying Policy.
2. Demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ, my Savior to my fellow students, parents, and school staff.

3. Talk with my parents about my feelings about school work, friendships, and classmates.
4. Tell my parents or teachers or principal if any bullying has occurred.

By signing below, we, the parents and student, agree to stand by the above pledges and to do our part in preventing bullying at St. Paul Lutheran School.

Parent Signature

Parent Printed Name

Date

Student Signature

Student Printed Name

Date