

**Muskegon Catholic Central**  
**Aggression Prevention Policy**  
**Approved November 2012**

**I. Respect, Dignity, and Safety**

Every Muskegon Catholic Central student, staff member, and volunteer has the right to be in a school environment that is safe, conducive to learning, and in which he or she feels respected. It is our belief that a Christ-centered, welcoming and secure school atmosphere is necessary to promote spiritual, academic, social, and personal growth. For this reason, our school(s) will not tolerate aggression within the school building, on school grounds, on school-sponsored transportation, at any school-sponsored activity away from the schools, or while using school-owned technology devices. Misconduct occurring outside of school may also be disciplined if it substantially interferes with the school environment. We will intervene when aggressive behavior comes to our attention, and will enforce rules and consequences when aggression occurs. All students, staff, and volunteers are protected under this policy, regardless of personal characteristics or features. Consequences will be based on the severity and frequency of the aggressive behavior. We will also empower students, staff, and volunteers to report aggressive behavior, particularly threats, bullying, and harassment, and to treat others with respect.

Aggression is defined as any gesture, word, or action that hurts a person's body, feelings, friendships, reputation, or property.

Bullying is a form of aggression when one person or a group of persons, intentionally and repeatedly uses their greater power to hurt another person's body, feelings, friendships, reputation, or property. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or psychological, or a combination of all three. It also can include electronically transmitted acts via internet, telephone or cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or wireless hand held device.

Bullying is characterized by mean looks, gestures and words or actions that are repeated over time. Acts of bullying are intentional, malicious in nature and include the following:

- A. is directed at one (1) or more students;
- B. substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one (1) or more students;
- C. adversely affects the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school district's educational programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress;
- D. is based on a student's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (e.g., race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment, or by any other distinguishing characteristic), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics, and

Harassment is a form of aggression that results in the creation of a hostile, intimidating, discriminatory, or offensive school environment. It can be based on race, color, culture, ethnicity, national origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability/impairment. In particular, sexual harassment is unwanted and repeated behavior of a sexual nature, and involves an imbalance of power between the individuals involved. It includes, but is not limited to, all unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal, visual, or physical contact of a sexual nature. It can take the form of a gesture, word, or action.

Bullying and harassment are prohibited without regard to subject matter or motivating factor. Bullying and harassment of students by students, school employees, and volunteers who have direct contact with students will not be tolerated in the school or school district. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate bullying or harassment is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior. In situations between employees or volunteers, workplace bullying or harassment is prohibited by this policy and individuals determined to have engaged in any form of workplace harassment or bullying are subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the applicable employee contract and as may be determined by any legal statute that is found to apply.

Aggressive behavior (which includes the subset of bullying and harassment) is defined as, but is not limited to, the following:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, shoving, tripping, kicking, spitting, pinching, poking
- Interfering with, hiding, damaging, extorting, or stealing another's property
- Offensive, insulting, or obscene gestures with hands, fingers, or face
- Name-calling; put-downs; humiliating or demeaning remarks; taunting; offensive graffiti, notes, text messages, facebook messages, or e-mail; cyber-bullying and electronic intimidation; directed profanity; implied or explicit threats of emotional or physical harm; demeaning sounds such as animal noises; insulting a person's family, religion, ethnicity, or disability.
- Undermining the person's relationships with others by arranging social exclusion and shunning; spreading rumors; setting a person up to be publicly humiliated; revealing private and confidential information to embarrass others; sabotaging a friendship; forcing others to act against their will.
- Any form of racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, disability, or sexual harassment.
- Any form of hazing that has the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, suffering, or exclusion from a group.

## **II. Staff Action**

### **A. When Aggression Has Been Witnessed By The Staff Member**

All staff members who witness aggression will take immediate action to intervene with any person or groups of persons using or threatening to use aggression. Staff will confront and stop the behavior immediately. Behaviors on the expect respect/behavior rubric will be documented and reported to the principal (or his or her designee) using the Aggressive Behavior Report Form. Consequences will be determined and administered based on the school district's pre-established consequence rubric for aggressive behavior.

### **B. When Aggression Has Been Reported To A Staff Member**

When a staff member has not directly witnessed aggression, but a student bystander or target has reported it, the staff member has the responsibility to take action. The staff member should gather basic information including who was involved, what happened, where the incident occurred, when it got started, how often it has been happening, and the names of any witnesses or bystanders who might have seen the incident. The alleged incident should be documented using the Behavior Report Form and given promptly to the principal or principal's designee. The incident will be investigated in a timely

manner (ideally the same day, but within three days of submission), and a plan of action and/or consequences will follow as deemed appropriate. The confidentiality of students reporting will be upheld when the alleged perpetrator is questioned. Periodic follow-up with the reporting student by a designated staff member will occur to ensure that no additional acts of aggression and/or retaliation have occurred. If additional acts of aggression and/or retaliation have occurred, the administrator or his or her designee will respond with continued consequences, ongoing monitoring, and documentation.

### **III. Student Action**

When a student is a target of aggression, he or she is encouraged to tell a staff person. It is acceptable for students to inform any staff person with whom they feel comfortable sharing this information. It is the staff member's responsibility to report the complaint to the appropriate school personnel using the Aggressive Behavior Report Form. The confidentiality of reporting students will be upheld.

When a student has witnessed an aggressive act, including bullying and harassment, he or she is **expected** to act as a responsible bystander by telling a staff person. Reporting aggression when it occurs helps break the code of silence. Student bystanders are also encouraged to offer support to the target, and to speak out directly against the aggression if it is safe to do so.

### **IV. Parent Action**

If a parent has been told by his/her child that the child has been the target of aggression, parents should encourage their child to report the incident to a staff member. If the student can not or will not do so, parents should inform school authorities directly. If possible, a written record of the incident (the 5 W's - who was involved, what happened, when it started and how often, where it happened, and names of witnesses) should be brought to school. **Parents should never support or condone retaliation on the part of their child.** Parents should also encourage their child to inform the school of any cases of known aggression, particularly bullying or harassment, when their child was a direct witness.

### **V. Parent Notification**

Bullying and harassing behaviors will result in parent or legal guardian notification for both the target of the bullying/harassment and the perpetrator(s).

## **VI. Consequences for Aggression**

Pre-established consequences will be assigned for acts of aggression, as well as for threats or acts of retaliation against any person who reports aggression, bullying, and harassment. Retaliation for reporting is prohibited, and consequences will increase in severity for real or threatened reprisal. Consequences will also be given for false accusations of aggression, bullying, and harassment, and such false allegations are similarly prohibited by this policy. Consequences are escalating for repeated and for more severe acts of aggression. If aggressive behavior is intentional, repeated, and involves an imbalance of power between the people involved, it will be considered bullying/harassing behavior. Because bullying and harassment involve repeated behaviors, they will result in increased disciplinary action. Consequences for aggression will follow the rubric developed by the district. Our school's consequences for students are designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior by requiring a self-reflection process (a Time To Think Form), and to protect the target of the behavior. Some of these rubric consequences may include:

- Verbal intervention by the witnessing adult
- Documentation, including written documentation to parents or legal guardians
- Meeting with the principal
- Student calling parents or guardians in the administrator's or adult's presence
- Restriction of informal time with friends including supervised indoor silent recess and/or supervised silent lunch away from peers
- Completing a self-evaluation about the aggressive behavior during supervised restricted time (Time To Think Form)
- Attending "classes only" (student participates in no informal, unstructured activities such as lunch, recess, passing time in the hall, athletic practices or games, or before/after school activities for a designated period of time or until behavior improves)
- Conference with the Principal, School Counselor, and Parent to establish an individual behavior plan after repeated behavior or no improvement. This plan would include benchmarks that are closely monitored.
- In-school suspension or out-of-school suspension.
- Notifying the Head of School when appropriate/Notifying law enforcement officials when appropriate
- Recommendation for expulsion to the School Management Team

Additional remedial measures or consequences may include:

- Serious discussion between teacher and student
- Mediation (after a consequence has been served)
- Removal from activity, sitting away from other students in the classroom, or time out in another classroom
- Loss of privileges
- Assigned seating in problem areas (e.g., bus, lunch room)
- Detention
- Requiring restitution to the target, classroom, or school when appropriate
- Service work relevant and proportionate to the offense
- Transformative conferencing/restorative justice
- Conference with the School Counselor
- Attending individual or group sessions with the counselor or social worker
- Behavioral assessment and evaluation with a possible referral to a Child Study Team if appropriate.

Consequences may also be determined by existing school board/management team policy or law enforcement requirements. In these cases disciplinary action may escalate more quickly than outlined on the rubric. In cases with significant extenuating circumstances, the administration reserves the right to deal with the offense on an individual review basis. On rare occasions, this may result in disciplinary action being more or less severe than outlined.

If after an investigation, a student is found to have bullied or harassed an individual, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. If after an investigation, a school employee is found to have bullied or harassed an individual, the employee shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, termination. If after an investigation, a school volunteer is found to have bullied or harassed an individual, the volunteer shall be subject to appropriate measures up to, and including, exclusion from school grounds. "Volunteer" means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students but is not employed by the district.

This policy will be disseminated to all school staff, students, and parents annually. There will be an annual process to discuss this policy with students and staff. All new hires will be required to review and sign off on this policy. It will be made clear that this policy applies to all acts of aggression on school property, on the bus or school-sponsored transportation, at all school-sponsored activities or functions, whether or not these activities are held on school premises, and while using school-owned technology devices. All incidences of bullying and harassment and the resulting consequences, including discipline and referral, will be reported to the School Management Team on an annual basis.

This policy is not intended to and should not be interpreted to interfere with legitimate free speech rights of any individual. However, Muskegon Catholic Central reserves the right and responsibility to maintain a safe environment for students that is conducive to learning.

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### **Guidelines**

Every incidence of bullying or harassment (as defined by the definitions previously given) needs to be addressed immediately and effectively. However, it is important to recognize that not every act of aggression is bullying or harassment. As most administrators and teachers know, there are a myriad of situations and circumstances of inappropriate student behavior that call for intervention, but not all are necessarily a form of bullying or harassment. There are a variety of aggressive behaviors that may not fit the definition of bullying or harassment. These may include, but are not limited to, examples of normal peer conflict between classmates that escalate into a single act of aggression (e.g., name-calling, pushing, hitting, etc.), one-time events between students that are not repeated and appear situational in nature, or disagreements between friends that end in an act of aggression. There are other behaviors which are not necessarily aggressive, but fit the criteria of annoying behaviors designed to bug or bother others (e.g., making noises, tapping pencils, touching someone's belongings, etc.). Many of these aggressive and annoying situations can be addressed using common sense and typical means of behavior modification or management. It is when the behavior fits the criteria of bullying and harassment, as earlier defined, that all the concomitant steps are taken as delineated in this policy, including contacting the perpetrators' parents, the targets' parents, and informing the School Management Team.