

Dear Parent:

September 21, 2012

Muskegon Catholic Central is committed to providing a safe educational environment for all students. "As a Christ-centered school, we strive to follow the teachings of Jesus above all. He was very clear on how we are to treat others. Numerous times we read this in the New Testament. For example, in Matthew 22, Jesus says, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' This phrase, otherwise known as *The Golden Rule*, is the guidepost for our safe environment goal. As such, we are undertaking efforts to reduce and prevent incidents of bullying between students in the educational environment. Bullying, however, is not a problem that happens only on school property or during the school day. It is also a family and community problem that can exist outside of school and have widespread consequences. Therefore, it is important that parents play an active role in their students' lives to help educate about and prevent bullying.

What Is Bullying?

As a reminder the Aggressive Behavior/Harassment/Bullying/Respect policy of Muskegon Catholic (MCC) states:

"Muskegon Catholic Central expects all students and staff to conduct themselves with dignity and respect towards others and strive for a life based on the Beattitudes. Teachers and staff should be addressed and referred to as Mr., Mrs. Miss, Coach, etc. Aggressive behavior, harassment, or bullying of any kind (physical, racial, sexual, or verbal, etc.) is not permitted. Students experiencing aggressive behavior, harassment, or bullying should report it immediately to a teacher, coach, counselor, or administrator. The Aggressive Behavior Rubric is available in the school office."

Any repeated and pervasive written, verbal or electronic expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, that is intended or unintended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, or at school activities or sanctioned events. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, hazing, harassment, intimidation or menacing acts of a student which may, but need not be, based on the student's race, color, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation.

In other words, conduct that falls under this definition has the following characteristics:

- It is repetitive or pervasive. In general, conduct that occurs once or infrequently will not rise to the level of "bullying." The term typically does not include disagreements between students.
- It is intended to cause harm or distress to the victim.

What is Muskegon Catholic Central doing to prevent and correct bullying?

Muskegon Catholic Central is taking steps to educate students and parents about bullying and prevent and address incidents of bullying. Consistent with the District's Aggressive Behavior/Harassment/Bullying policy, the District provides students with anti-bullying materials to inform them about bullying, its harms, and what actions they can take if they experience or observe behaviors that they believe constitute bullying. District teachers and staff receive training on how to monitor for behaviors that may constitute bullying and clear anti-bullying messaging and safeguard techniques are displayed in classrooms and around the school.

When the District becomes aware of conduct that may be in violation of the District's Aggressive Behavior/Harassment/Bullying policy, it will undertake an investigation to determine whether the alleged conduct constitutes bullying. The District may become aware of bullying either because the conduct is observed directly by District staff or a complaint is submitted by the student or parent. If Muskegon Catholic

Central determines that bullying has occurred, it will take corrective actions to discipline the misconduct and correct the negative effects of bullying for the victim.

The District understands that, as a parent, you are concerned first and foremost about your own student's rights and well-being. However, it is important to remember that all of the students involved in an investigation – the victim, the alleged bully, and all witnesses – have certain rights that the District must respect.

It is also important to remember that the District cannot discipline for conduct that occurs off-campus or outside of the instructional day, unless the off-campus conduct causes a substantial disruption in the school.

How can parents be involved?

Parents play an important role in helping educate their students about the harms of bullying and the corrective actions that can be taken in the event that their student observes or is the victim of bullying.

If your student reports to you that he or she is being bullied, or based on your own observations you become concerned that your student may be bullied, it is important that a written student form be submitted to the school site's principal. In filling out the complaint form, it is important to provide school administrators with as much detail as possible. Important information to provide on the complaint form includes:

- A detailed description of the incidents or behaviors being complained about;
- The dates/times that the incidents or behaviors occurred;
- The location(s) where the incidents or behaviors occurred;
- The names or descriptions of the alleged bully(ies);
- The names or descriptions of any witnesses; and
- Copies of any relevant documents or information that support the allegations.

For example, if a complaint is made about one student using Facebook to bully another student, include copies of the relevant portions of the Facebook page that contains the alleged misconduct.

If you have additional questions regarding Muskegon Catholic Central's Aggressive Behavior/ Harassment/ Bullying policy, please submit your questions in writing to the school site principal. You may also contact MCC's school counselor, Marissa Higgs, to report concerns of this nature at (231) 755-2201 ext. 337. Thank you very much for working with us to provide the most Christ-centered, safest environment possible for all.

Faithfully,

Mr. Rob Bridges
Head of Schools
Muskegon Catholic Central

Mrs. Stephanie Weber
Principal
Muskegon Catholic Elementary

Mrs. Marissa Higgs
Counselor
Muskegon Catholic Central