Seton Catholic Schools Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy 2018-01

Policy Statement

Seton Catholic Schools, in accordance with the policies and tenets promulgated by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, believes that each of the Seton Catholic Schools must be aware that their purpose is rooted in the mission of the Catholic Church and the message of Jesus Christ. It is critical that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established and maintained whereby students can achieve the highest academic standards, and where no student shall be subjected to bullying, intimidation or harassment of any kind. The standards of conduct and expectations herein are expected in all aspects of the Seton way of life, including but not limited to curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities and programs. This policy applies to everyone, including but not limited to students, families, administrators, staff, and teachers, who may come into the Seton Catholic Schools.

Administrative Rules

1 **Definition of Bullying.** Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying may be categorized in four groups: verbal, social/relational, physical and electronic/cyber. Examples of bullying may include, but not be limited to, people who use their power – such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, and/or popularity – to threaten, spread rumors, attack someone verbally, and intentionally exclude someone from a group. These behaviors may be repeated, or have the potential to be repeated, over time; however, repetitive behavior need not necessarily be the same action or directed at the same person, but any behavior that could individually be construed as bullying (adapted from http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html#types and is aligned with IN Department of Education Guidance, which can be found at http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/bullying-prevention-intervention-indiana).

Role of the School

1. The educational professionals are responsible for implementing the policy and plan objectives for Seton Catholic Schools Anti-Bullying Policy, including but not limited to implementing and continually monitoring, assessing, and improving appropriate anti-bullying plans and for collaborating with other professionals outside the school and parents in supporting the educational, developmental, and faith formation of all learners in a safe, positive, and productive environment for all learners. This includes any and all incidents or situations that disrupt the educational environment, which may have an impact on anyone or the overall climate and culture of Seton Catholic Schools.
2. Prevention of Bullying is the intended goal. Initiatives are ongoing and currently in place, including but not limited to educational instruction and school-wide discussion and awareness. Strategies have been and continue to be implemented and presented to

include identification of bullying versus conflict, roles within bullying scenarios, and respectful responses to bullying behaviors.

3. This Policy, and any future iteration, must include clear explanation of reporting mechanisms, anonymous or otherwise, that administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents MUST utilize when an alleged bullying incident is observed or reported.
4. Investigation must be done by an Investigative Team, which may or may not be the same team responsible for disciplinary action.
5. Seton Catholic Schools will establish an Anti-Bullying Team (which may or may not be the same team responsible for investigation and/or disciplinary action). The role of the Team shall be to review this policy for any adjustment and work with the Commission's Policy and Planning Subcommittee for review and adjustments as necessary. This policy must be reviewed annually before the start of each school year. The Policy and Planning Subcommittee shall report any policy changes to the Commission as they occur.
6. The safety of all students continues to be a primary focus of Seton Catholic Schools. Developmentally appropriate interventions and/or disciplinary actions must be enacted and enforced with the caveat that any bullying incident may individually rise to the level of suspension and/or expulsion, as may be determined on a case-by-case basis. A positive school-wide approach reflecting our focus on the values instilled in the Gospel shall prevail.
7. Appropriate action will be taken against any student, employee, or other person who retaliates against anyone who reports alleged bullying or against anyone involved in the investigation and subsequent actions. Reprisals may include, but are not limited to, any form of intimidation, retaliatory action or harassment. Administrative and/or disciplinary action against false reports of bullying will always be considered and is specifically excluded from this paragraph.
8. This Policy and its Plan of Action shall be made available to everyone and freely disseminated, including but not limited to flyers, handouts, handbooks, websites, and publications. Report forms shall be made freely and readily available in places and manners where anonymity can be maintained in obtaining and submitting the form.
9. All educators, employees of the school/parish and all adults involved in any matter related to students must understand that they have a duty to report certain information, especially information concerning the welfare of a child, to appropriate governmental authorities and agencies, including the Department of Child Services and the police. In the State of Indiana, everyone is considered a mandatory reporter, and educators have a statutory requirement to report knowledge or suspicion of abuse, neglect, child-endangerment, and other similar matters to the Department of Child Services. Additionally, should criminal activity be suspected, the police shall be contacted. If there is any question about whether a report should be made, the Department of Child Services and/or the police, as appropriate, should be consulted to determine whether a report should be made.

Plan of Action

1. **Generally.** Seton Catholic Schools is dedicated to the prevention of bullying in Seton Catholic Schools. To that end, it is implementing a policy of no tolerance toward

bullying, as explained in paragraph 5 below. It is the goal of Seton Catholic Schools to educate students, administration, staff, teachers, and families of the policies herein. The Plan of Action is to educate everyone as to the definitions of bullying as well as the consequences. The mechanisms for Confidential Reporting, Investigation, Disciplinary Action, and Documentation in this Policy will further facilitate an understanding of Seton Catholic Schools' dedication.

2. **Education About Bullying.** Seton Catholic Schools will continue to develop and implement annually a comprehensive educational component appropriate for each grade level about bullying and its prevention. Students, particularly, but also families, staff, administrators, and educators, must understand bullying – both what it is and what it is not. They must also know how to report it, what is required, and what to expect when it is reported.

3. **Reporting.** The report form shall be readily available to be obtained confidentially and delivered confidentially to any staff, educator, or administrator, who MUST then deliver the report form to the Principal at the respective school. Confidentiality is essential in every case and must be strictly maintained. All persons involved, including students and parents, must respect that not all information about a bullying incident can be made publicly available or disclosed at all.

4. **Investigation.**
   a. Upon receipt of any report of bullying, the principal shall immediately submit the incident report to the Investigating Team.
   b. The Investigating Team consists of both principals and one other person who is employed by Seton Catholic Schools and/or the parish, as may be determined on a case by case basis. The Investigating Team shall not include teachers or secretaries.
   c. The Investigating Team will investigate and determine whether a report of bullying is unsubstantiated or substantiated and provide appropriate disciplinary recommendations in the case of a substantiated report.
   d. Investigation of all reports of bullying are to be investigated within a timely manner and shall result in an Investigation Summary Report, generated and signed by all the members of the Investigating Team.
   e. The Investigation Summary Report should clearly identify and describe:
      i. All persons involved;
      ii. When the incident(s) took place;
      iii. Where the incident(s) took place;
      iv. The incident(s) in detail and any power imbalance that existed to create the bullying, if possible;
      v. Any history of repetitive behavior, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated;
      vi. When and how parents of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator informed/involved;
      vii. The outcome of the investigation – either substantiated or unsubstantiated; and
      viii. Any recommendation for discipline.

5. **Discipline.** All substantiated bullying incidents shall be reviewed by a Disciplinary Team, which may or may not be the same as the Investigating Team. Any discipline shall be delivered in a timely manner and due consideration should be given to the

recommendation of the Investigating Team. A Disciplinary Report, which details all consequences, shall be appended to the Investigation Summary Report. If a Disciplinary Team is not available, the Investigating Team will carry out the disciplinary action. The Seton Catholic Schools' Disciplinary policy is instructive; however, it must be noted that Seton Catholic Schools has no tolerance for bullying. Seton Catholic Schools defines no tolerance to include the following:

- Our no tolerance stance is a reinforcement of a positive school-wide approach reflecting our focus on the values instilled in the Gospel.
- No tolerance means that Seton Catholic Schools will not tolerate any bullying and incidents will result in consequences.
- **No tolerance does NOT mean that a student will automatically be expelled for bullying.**
- No tolerance means that any substantiated incident SHALL result in a developmentally appropriate intervention and/or disciplinary action, ranging from minimal intervention to expulsion for any single incident, as may be deemed appropriate.

6. **Documentation.**
   a. All Investigation Summary Reports and the Disciplinary Reports must be catalogued and maintained by the school for Seton Catholic Schools' historical record keeping through the age of expected graduation.
   b. A Bullying Summary Report, different from the Investigation Summary Report and the Disciplinary Report, that includes the number of reports/incidents and the discipline that was instituted, will be presented monthly to the executive committee of the School Commission Board. Confidentiality of the Bullying Summary Report, generally, and student information, to the extent discussed, shall be strictly maintained within the executive committee.
   c. Collated data from all Investigation Summary Reports must be shared with the Office of Catholic Schools twice per year (December and May).

_____ **Submitted to Seton Catholic Schools Commission on 2018.02.28**

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