

St Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran School

BULLYING PROHIBITION POLICY

The mission of St. Matthew's Lutheran School is to provide a safe environment to cultivate maximum student potential to glorify God. Bullying is not in line with God's commands in Luke 6:31 to, "*Do to others as you would have them do to you,*" and in Galatians 6:10, "*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*" Bullying inhibits a productive learning environment. This policy will help encourage all members of St. Matthew's Lutheran School to support a loving, caring, respectful, forgiving environment in which learning can take place.

I. PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. St. Matthew's Lutheran School cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under direct supervision of school personnel. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of the school and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of the school in its normal operations, it is the intent of St. Matthew's Lutheran School to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. The purpose of this policy is to assist St. Matthew's Lutheran School in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other disruptive behavior.

II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

- A. "Bullying" means any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or pattern thereof, by a student that is intended to cause or is perceived as causing distress or intimidation to one or more students. Bullying interferes with another student's or students' educational benefits, opportunities, or performance. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, conduct by a student against another-student that a reasonable person under the circumstances knows or should know has the effect of:
1. harming a student;
 2. damaging a student's property;
 3. placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property; or
 4. creating a hostile educational environment for a student.
- B. "Immediately" means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.

- C. "On school property or at school-related functions" means the school and church buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for school purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. School property also may mean a student's walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the school does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.

III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on St. Matthew's Lutheran School's property or at school-related functions. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at anytime or in anyplace constitutes bullying that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school or the safety or welfare of the student, other students, or employees.
- B. No teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the school shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.
- C. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.
- D. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.
- E. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.
- F. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with school policies and procedures. The school may take into account the following factors:
 - 1. The developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved;
 - 2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;
 - 3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;
 - 4. The relationship between the parties involved; and
 - 5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

- G. Consequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. Consequences for employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or engage in an act of reprisal or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from school property and events and/or termination of services and/or contracts.
- H. St. Matthew's Lutheran School will act to investigate all complaints of bullying and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, or other employee of the school who is found to have violated this policy.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE

- A. Any person who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate school official designated by this policy. A student may report bullying anonymously. However, the school's ability to take action against an alleged perpetrator based solely on an anonymous report maybe limited.
- B. The school encourages the reporting party or complainant to use the report form available from the principal or available from the school office, but oral reports shall be considered complaints as well.
- C. The principal or the principal's designee is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying.
- D. A teacher, principal, volunteer, contractor, or other school employee shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall inform the principal immediately.
- E. Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted or required bylaw.
- F. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.
- G. The school district will respect the privacy of the complainants), the individuals) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the school district's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

V. SCHOOL ACTION

- A. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of bullying, the school shall undertake or authorize an investigation by school officials or a third party designated by the principal.

- B. The school may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant, reporter, students, or others pending completion of an investigation of bullying, consistent with applicable law.
- C. Upon completion of the investigation, the school will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, remediation, termination, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to try to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. School action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the application of Law and Gospel as directed by St. Matthew's Lutheran School Board of Education and St. Matthew's Lutheran School administration.
- D. The school is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the school. School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in a bullying incident and the remedial action taken, to the extent permitted by law, based on a confirmed report.

VI. REPRISAL

The school will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the school who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

VII. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- A. The school will annually provide information and any applicable training to school staff regarding this policy. Resources may be included from but not limited to the following sources:
 1. Coloroso, Barbara. The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander. HarperCollins Publishers: New York. 2003.
 2. Juern, John, PhD. Christian Treatment of Classmates. Presentation given to Minnesota District Teachers' Conference, October 21, 2005; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.
 3. Resources available through Minnesota Independent School District No. 861, Winona, Minnesota.
- B. St. Matthew's Lutheran School will annually provide education and information to students and parents regarding bullying, including information regarding the school's policy prohibiting bullying, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.

- C. The administration of the school is directed to implement programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to respond to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize the victim, and to make resources or referrals to resources available to victims of bullying.
- D. St. Matthew's Lutheran School may implement violence prevention and character development education programs to prevent and reduce policy violations. Such programs may offer instruction on character education including, but not limited to, character qualities such as attentiveness, truthfulness, respect for authority, diligence, gratefulness, self-discipline, patience, forgiveness, respect for others, peacemaking, and resourcefulness. Programs maybe taught independently or in conjunction with a religion or Catechism class.

VIII. NOTICE

St. Matthew's Lutheran School will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and staff. Reference to this policy will appear in the St. Matthew's Lutheran School Parent-Student Handbook and in the Principal's Newsletter.

This policy will be reviewed annually and modified based on state and federal legislation changes.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. §120B.232 (Character Development Education)
Minn. Stat. §121A.03 (Sexual, Religious and Racial Harassment and Violence)
Minn. Stat. §121 A.0695 (School Board Policy; Prohibiting Intimidation and Bullying)
Minn. Stat. §§121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. §121A.69 (Hazing Policy)

St Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran School

BULLYING REPORT FORM

General Statement of Policy Prohibiting Bullying

St. Matthew's Lutheran School maintains a firm policy prohibiting bullying of its students, staff, volunteers, and other employees. All persons are to be treated with respect and dignity. Bullying by a student, staff member, volunteer, or other employee of St. Matthew's Lutheran School / Church will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Complainant _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____

Date of Alleged Incident(s) _____

Name of person you believe was a bully to you or another person _____

The action of bullying was carried out against _____

Describe the incident(s) as clearly as possible, including such things as: what force, if any, was used; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements (i.e. threats, requests, demands, etc.) (Attach additional pages if necessary)

Where and when did the incident(s) occur? _____

List any witnesses that were present. _____

This complaint is filed based on my honest belief that _____
has been a bully to me or to another person. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this
complaint is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Complainant Signature _____ Date _____

Received by _____ Date _____