

The Ancona School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Introduction:

At Ancona, we expect that all members of our school community will follow the Guiding Principles for a Peaceful Learning Community.

It is the policy of the School to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct which disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe for others. As a compliment to this, we use a restorative practice framework for supporting our students when mistakes or poor choices are made.

The School will promptly investigate any report of bullying or retaliation for reporting on bullying. Upon determining that a case of bullying or retaliation has taken place, we will immediately take action to intervene and address the safety concerns for any member of the community who has been victimized.

It is important that this plan be well understood by all members of the Ancona community. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the plan. Questions and concerns related to this plan may be referred to her, the school counselor, or division heads.

The School will provide written notice of the relevant student-related sections of this plan to parents/guardians at least annually. The School will provide verbal notification to students in age-appropriate terms and the Guiding Principles for a Peaceful Learning Community will be posted in each classroom.

The School will provide training on bullying for faculty and staff. The training at a minimum will include a review of the reporting obligations for all faculty and staff and the processes that the School will follow in response to a report of bullying or retaliation.

Policy:

The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying or who in good faith provides information during an investigation of bullying.

Bullying is generally defined as “the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a

victim,” that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or damage to the targeted student’s property;
- Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student;
- Infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Cyber-bullying: Cyber-bullying is bullying (as defined above) through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines, and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to, e-mail, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise. Students are expected to abide by The Guiding Principles for a Peaceful Learning Community in all environments while they are enrolled.

Hostile Environment: A hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student’s education.

Retaliation: Retaliation is any form of materially adverse action such as intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying or who provides information during an investigation of bullying.

Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-bullying:

From the earliest grades at Ancona, students learn that as members of our community they have a right to be treated as outlined in the Guiding Principles for a Peaceful Learning Community. Our curriculum emphasizes respect for differences, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior.

The administration and faculty recognize it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend beyond the classroom to include any time the student is acting as a representative of the school.

Any time a student’s actions break the Guiding Principles for a Peaceful Learning Community but do not rise to the level of bullying, there can be a school response and consequences that

are not outlined here.

Reports of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, or Retaliation:

Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying prohibited by this policy is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the School Counselor or any trusted adult in the building. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible. Students who knowingly make false reports of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action.

A parent of a student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying is strongly urged to promptly notify the School Counselor or any trusted adult in the building. Furthermore, any parent who has witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the School Counselor or any trusted adult in the building.

Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyber-bullying in violation of this policy or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to one of the School Counselor. There are to be no exceptions. A member of the faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs them of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation seriously. Also, while the School cannot promise strict confidentiality, because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation only on a legitimate need-to-know basis.

Responding to a Report of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, or Retaliation

The Ancona School

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A. Preliminary Considerations: When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the School Counselor, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation.

B. Obligation to Notify Parents: It is the policy of the School to notify the parents of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made.

C. Investigation: The following is an outline of the procedure that is pursued once a complaint has been brought to the attention of the School Counselor: The School Counselor and another staff member will conduct an investigation on all reports of bullying or retaliation. The investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student who was the target of the alleged bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident.

D. Internal Consultation: Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as the School deems appropriate, the School Counselor will meet with faculty, staff, and/or administrators who interact with the students and will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been substantiated.

E. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up: If it is determined that the policy set forth in this plan has been violated, the Head of School will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented.

The goal of an investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being a repetition of the incident and to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

Upon completion of the investigation, the School Counselor will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student or students against whom the complaint was made. Parents will then be informed of the results of the investigation, but will not be made privy to the disciplinary or other corrective action taken

against another student. The School Counselor will not release confidential information when informing students and parents.

Any disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior, and no disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Head of School, in consultation with the school counselor, may refer perpetrators, victims, and family members of such students for counseling or other services as appropriate.

The School Counselor will insure that there is follow-up contact made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and their parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents.

The School will keep a file on all reports of bullying or retaliation, the investigation, and any actions taken in response to a finding of bullying or retaliation.

Conclusion

This Plan is intended (1) to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students; (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

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