

# BCA BULLYING POLICY

## Adopted 9/1/12

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**Barrington Christian Academy is in the process of completing a comprehensive bullying policy. Not only has Rhode Island passed the Safe-School statute, but also as a school proclaiming the mission of Christ to make disciples and “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20), we consider a significant component of our mission to be helping our students learn how to treat all people with the love and respect that Christ calls us to show.**

**One of our core values, shared in the acronym BCA has **HEART**, comes is to form **R**elationships that demonstrate God’s love to the world.**

#### **RHODE ISLAND’S SAFE-SCHOOL ACT**

##### **SCHOOL CLIMATE**

Bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation against any person associated with a report of bullying or the investigation thereof is prohibited in all schools that are approved for the purpose of the compulsory attendance statute (§§16-19-1 and 16-19-2). School staff shall take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying at school. Such measures may include professional development and prevention activities, parental workshops, and student assemblies, among other strategies. School faculty, administration and staff, at all times, will model courteous behavior to each other, to students, and to school visitors. Abusive or humiliating language or demeanor will not be accepted. Additionally, students and their families are expected to exhibit courteous behavior to all members of the learning community in school and at school sponsored events.

Known as the Safe School Act, the statute recognizes that the bullying of a student creates a climate of fear and disrespect that can seriously impair the student’s health and negatively affect learning. Bullying undermines the safe learning environment that students need to achieve their full potential. The purpose of the Policy is to ensure a consistent and unified statewide approach to the prohibition of bullying at school.

# Definitions

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

As defined in the safe schools act, **BULLYING** means the 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 student that:

- a. Causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student's property;
- b. Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- c. Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment for the student;
- d. Infringes on the rights of the student to feel safe and participate fully in school activities; or
- e. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

## **Types of Bullying**

Examples include but are not limited to the following:

**1. Verbal Bullying:** any of these actions can be considered bullying when they are repeated and/or have the specific intent to harm, harass or intimidate.

- Name-calling
- Repeated teasing
- Insults
- Gossip
- Flaming – Heated, short-lived argument that occurs between two or more people. Tends to be offensive, rude, insults, threats and vulgar language.

**2. Emotional Bullying:**

- Harming a person's self-esteem by using put-downs (humiliation)
- Threatening physical harm or relational consequences
- Social exclusion or isolation or threats thereof
- Bullying through lies and false rumors

**3. Physical Bullying:**

- Use of physical force and intimidation
- Hitting, kicking, intentional shoving or pushing, and spitting
- Verbal threats of harm
- Stealing, hiding or vandalizing personal property (this includes "borrowing without permission)
- Hazing—often in the form of "initiation rights"

**4. Relational Bullying:**

- Ignoring, isolating, excluding, shunning (include examples such as aggressive stares, rolling of eyes, sighs)

- Bearing false witness against one's neighbor

#### **5. Cyber Bullying:**

##### **• Bullying that occurs through the use of media, social media, Internet, texting, etc.**

- a. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- b. The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages; or
- c. The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of materials on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the creation, impersonation, or distribution results in any of the conditions of bullying
- d. Cyber-stalking – repeated sending of harmful messages that include threats of harm, intimidation or offensive comments.
- e. Cyber-threats
  - i. Direct threats
  - ii. Distressing Material Harassment – repeated, ongoing sending of offensive messages to an individual.
- f. Denigration – speech about a person that is harmful, untrue or cruel.
- g. Outing and Trickery – publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal communications or images (contain intimate or personally embarrassing information)

#### **What does “AT SCHOOL” mean?**

For purposes of this policy, **AT SCHOOL**, in conjunction with the state safe schools act means:

- a. on school premises,
- b. at any school-sponsored activity or event whether or not it is held on school premises,
- c. on a school-transportation vehicle (BCA-owned, public school bus, or while riding in a parent's car on a school-sponsored event),
- d. at an official school bus stop,
- e. using property or equipment provided by the school..

#### **What is Humiliation?**

Humiliation is any act that causes another person's self-respect, dignity or self-esteem to be attacked in an unbiblical manner. Generally, this is a manner that is public rather than a private discussion of any correction that a person wants to communicate. Such expression, physical act or gesture may include, but is not limited to, an incident or incidents that may be reasonably perceived as being motivated by characteristics such as: **Race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or mental, physical, or sensory disability, intellectual ability or by any other distinguishing characteristic.**

## **POLICY OVERSIGHT and RESPONSIBILITY**

The **head of school, assistant head of school, and lead teachers** shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of this bullying policy.

**The head of school and assistant head of school shall review summary report of incidents, responses, and any other bullying-related issues on a monthly basis. Urgent issues will be addressed immediately.**

## **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

The head of school shall ensure that students, staff, volunteers, and parents/legal guardians are provided information regarding this policy. This information shall include methods of discouraging and preventing this type of behavior, the procedure to file a complaint, and the disciplinary action that may be taken against those who commit acts in violation of this policy.

This policy shall be:

- a. Distributed annually to students, staff, volunteers, and parents/legal guardians.
- b. Included in student codes of conduct, disciplinary policies, and student handbooks.
- c. Posted via link on the home page of the school website.

## **REPORTING**

The head of school shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents/guardians, how a report of bullying may be filed and how this report will be acted upon.

The victim of bullying, anyone who witnesses an incidence of bullying, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may file a report of bullying. BCA teachers will record in the discipline section of a student's records on Renweb any observed incidence of a student demonstrating inappropriate behavior toward another student. By recording even small incidences in the behavior file, a record will be available that may reveal repeated intentional actions that constitute bullying even though any single incident might not be considered such.

In addition, teachers will record on Renweb any reported incidence of bullying or inappropriate behavior of one student toward another so that cumulative records may reveal repeated patterns that constitute bullying, even though a single incident might not be considered such.

Teachers do not have the authority to remove a discipline report from a student's Renweb record. Removal of any report under the discipline section shall be reserved for the head of school or associate head of school.

Any student or staff member who believes he/she is being bullied should immediately report such circumstances to an appropriate staff member, teacher or administrator.

**Parents / Guardians** of the victim of bullying and parents/ guardians of the alleged perpetrator of the bullying shall be notified within twenty-four (24) hours of a formal incident report. When there is a reasonable suspicion that a child is either a bully or a victim of bullying, the parents/ guardians of the child will be notified immediately by a lead teacher, associate head of school or head of school. First notification will usually be made through an email of the discipline report on Renweb. Follow-up will be made via personal phone call and a face-to-face meeting as necessary or requested by either the school or the parent.

**Responsibility of Staff: All BCA faculty and staff**, as well as volunteers, who observe an act of bullying or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place must report the bullying to school authorities. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

**Responsibility of Students:** Students who observe an act of bullying or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place must report the bullying to school authorities. **Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.** A victim of bullying, however, shall not be subject to discipline for failing to report the bullying. Student reports of bullying or retaliation may be made **anonymously**, provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a perpetrator only on the basis of an **anonymous report**.

**False Reporting/Accusations:** A school employee, school volunteer or student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be disciplined in accordance with the school behavior code.

**Prohibition against Retaliation:** Retaliation or threats of retaliation in any form designed to intimidate the victim of bullying, those who are witnesses to bullying, or those investigating an incident of bullying shall not be tolerated. Retaliation or threat of retaliation will result in the imposition of discipline in accordance with the school behavior code.

**Reports in Good Faith:** A school employee, school volunteer, student, parent/ legal guardian, or caregiver who promptly reports, in good faith, an act of bullying to the appropriate school official designated in the school's policy shall be immune from a cause of action for damages arising from reporting bullying.

## **INVESTIGATION/RESPONSE**

The head of school, assistant head of school or lead teachers shall promptly investigate all allegations of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. If the allegation is found to be credible, appropriate disciplinary actions, subject to applicable due process requirements, will be imposed.

The investigation will include an assessment by the school counselor of what effect the bullying, harassment or intimidation has had on the victim.

Parents/guardians of a student who engages in continuous and/or serious acts of bullying will also be required to schedule for the student an evaluation by a mental health professional prior to a student being allowed to return to school after a serious incident that results in a suspension.

**Police Notification:** Immediate notification of the local law enforcement agency will be made when circumstances warrant the pursuit of criminal charges against the perpetrator.

### **Intervention Response**

Actions taken to respond to the bullying situation will have these goals in mind:

- a. To provide the student with a safe educational environment.
- b. To develop responses, if possible, with input from the student, his or her parent/ guardian, and staff.
- c. That the parents/ guardians of a victim shall also be notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

The disciplinary actions for violations of the bullying policy shall be determined by the head of school, assistant head of school and lead teachers.

As a school, our goal is to teach and discipline redemptively. That means that we desire both correct behavior and the spiritual formation of the heart that only God can accomplish through His Holy Spirit. As sinners saved by grace, we recognize the position each of us has in being a recipient of grace, a recipient of forgiveness and a child of God who has been bought with a price. Students who are repentant, who demonstrate a contrite spirit and observable changes in their actions are more likely to be restored to the privileges of enrollment as a BCA student. Students who demonstrate an attitude of mockery, or lack of change of behavior or attitude, may remain enrolled on a probationary status. Lack of change in attitude or behavior will result in dismissal from the school on the basis of being out of harmony with the goals and spirit of BCA.

Disciplinary actions for violations of the bullying policy shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. The severity of the disciplinary action shall be aligned to the frequency and severity of the behavior.

The range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a student for bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Admonitions and warnings (minor first offenses)
- b. Parental/ Guardian notification and meetings
- c. Detention
- d. In-school suspension
- e. Loss of school-provided transportation or loss of student parking pass
- f. Loss of the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities
- g. Loss of the opportunity to participate in school social activities
- h. Loss of the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises or middle school promotional activities
- i. School suspension: no student shall be suspended from school unless it is deemed to be a necessary consequence of the violation of this policy.
- j. School Expulsion
- k. Requirements to speak with law enforcement officials
- l. Formal charging of a student with a criminal offense if so warranted.

#### **SOCIAL SERVICES/COUNSELING**

Referral to appropriate counseling and/or social services in the community may be suggested or required for bullying victims, perpetrators and appropriate family members of said students.

#### **SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Students will be prohibited from accessing social networking sites in school, except for educational or instructional purposes and with the prior approval from school administration.

## BCA SAFE SCHOOLS ACT REPORT FORM

Name: (person reporting) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time event occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions about this reporting incident:  
List the name(s) of the alleged bully(ies), and/or cyber-bully (ies). If name is not known, provide any other identifiable information:

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Describe your past and present relationship between you and the alleged bully, and/or cyber-bully:

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Describe the incident:

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When and where did it happen?

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Were there any witnesses?     yes  no      If yes, who?

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Other information, including previous incidents or threats:

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I certify that all statements made in the complaint are true and complete. Any intentional false statement of fact will subject me to appropriate discipline. I authorize school officials to disclose the information I provide only as necessary in pursuing the investigation.

Signatures:

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School official receiving complaint: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School official conducting follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_