

HARASSMENT/BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING POLICY

The Ursuline School is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of harassment. Harassment refers to unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment. No person at The Ursuline School shall engage in harassment or other forms of unacceptable conduct, which, in purpose or effect, creates such an environment or interferes with another's experience at school. Such conduct includes all forms of bullying, off-color language, offensive comments (spoken or written), jokes, innuendos, the use of degrading words or gestures and inappropriate physical contact. All persons who attend or work at The Ursuline School have a responsibility to maintain an environment that is free from all forms of harassment. The following exceptions should serve as guidelines:

- ◆ To prevent harassment, increase your own awareness and monitor your own behavior/do not share passwords.
- ◆ If you are subject to harassment, do not ignore it; speak, immediately, with a member of the administration or a faculty member will facilitate with reporting it.
- ◆ If you believe that another student or adult is being subjected to harassment, do not ignore that; speak, immediately, with a member of the administration.
- ◆ If you are made aware that your own behavior is harassing, immediately refrain from engaging in such behavior.

Harassment is a form of discrimination which The Ursuline School does not condone. There will be no retaliation against any person who submits a complaint in good faith or who assists in providing information about a complaint. If the facts and the results of the investigation substantiate the complaint, then the appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action will be taken.

Harassment/Bullying is unwanted, intentional, aggressive and repeated behavior that is meant to demean, humiliate, isolate and control an individual. This includes, but is not limited to; making threats, spreading rumors, physical or verbal attack, and intentional exclusion meant to cause harm.

Harassment/Bullying includes an imbalance of power in which another individual uses their power - such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity- to control or harm others.

Advances in technology have created opportunities for cyber bullying and the misuse of technology. It is the expectation of The Ursuline School that behavior and actions related to the use of technology are appropriate and truly respectful of oneself and of others. Cyber bullying is defined as deliberate, harassing, threatening and humiliating misuse of electronic media that is disruptive to one's educational environment. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their daughter's social media accounts.

Zero tolerance should mean that students who bully/harass others may be disciplined, NOT that they are going to always be expelled. Age and circumstances are important. School is a place to learn and we often learn from making mistakes after being afforded opportunities to correct mistakes.

Incidents of meanness that are sometimes age appropriate but still not acceptable may be referred to the Director of Personal Development/conflict resolution, peer mediation, and/or the Counseling Department. Serious and/or continued harassment will be reported to the Assistant Principal for Student Life.

Steps to Foster a Culture of Empathy

In light of the Mission, Philosophy and Goals of The Ursuline School, we strive to foster, create and nurture a safe educational environment and culture of Christian empathy among The Ursuline School community.

Preventative and Educational Strategies/Steps that create an awareness of and foster this culture of empathy:

- ◆ Student/Parent Handbooks are distributed each school year which outline our mission, philosophy, goals and acceptable policies.

- ◆ Personal Development classes are required for all middle school students. This program emphasizes inclusion and respect among all school members. Additionally, students learn how to improve communication and incorporate successful strategies related to conflict resolution, relational aggression and establishing appropriate boundaries.

- ◆ School counselors, faculty advisors and homeroom teachers meet formally and informally with students. This allows for ongoing opportunities to address policy and address areas of concern that may arise during the year.
- ◆ An off-site orientation for all 9th grade students is held in September in addition to weekly Peer Leadership sessions throughout the year.
- ◆ Peer Mediators meet regularly during the long homeroom with the middle school students to provide mentoring and support for building healthy and positive relationships.
- ◆ There is a Personal Development Day for all 10th grade students with presenter Stu Cabe.
- ◆ Peer Mediation and Peer Leadership Programs encourage and solicit students to continue to reinforce a culture of inclusion and respect. In addition, these student leaders are trained to assist students.
- ◆ Grade level discussions are conducted that identify and determine student concerns.
- ◆ Clubs/Organizations (“Friends of Rachel,” “Students Against Destructive Decisions,” and “Teen Angels”) include programs which are dedicated to raising awareness and intervention activities that promote a culture of respect and empathy.
- ◆ Student/Parent Athletic Handbooks and Codes of Behavior outline expectations and appropriate behaviors.
- ◆ Visible expectations that promote a safe and inclusive environment are evident around the school building. Examples will include postings of expected classroom behavior that promote

inclusion, respect and acceptance and also included are visuals that promote the expectation for a positive, safe and friendly environment.

- ◆ Professional Development for faculty and staff addresses the importance of inclusion, respect and monitoring student behavior toward one another. Prior to each sport season, coaches attend an annual meeting outlining mission, philosophy and TUS expectations and code of conduct for all involved.
- ◆ The school periodically hosts Student and Parent Assemblies
- ◆ Intentional placement of staff in the cafeteria assists with the supervision, monitoring and supporting an inclusive and safe environment.
- ◆ The installation of cameras in certain hallways to monitor and also discourage inappropriate/unsafe behavior has been completed.

The primary intent of these mentioned strategies/steps is focused on creating and sustaining an empathetic and safe educational environment. The Ursuline School recognizes the importance to respond to incidents of reported bullying/harassment using a combination of consequences that may involve an educational, counseling and/or disciplinary action.

Responses to any violation of the policy will vary in method and severity, the uniqueness of the reported incident, age of the student(s) involved and based on the past history of student(s) involved.

Procedures for Reporting and Addressing Incidents

- ◆ All members of the Ursuline school community are encouraged to report any form of harassment, bullying or cyber bullying. This report may be made to a counselor, the Director of Peer Development/Mediation, an advisor, teacher, coach or any administrator.
- ◆ Any reported incident will be investigated by an administrator and/or counselor or school representative deemed appropriate, depending upon the alleged incident and those allegedly involved.
- ◆ The administrator/counselor or an appropriate school representative will gather all information related to the alleged incident of bullying/harassment. This may include evidence of on-line comments and postings, notes, in addition to formal conversation with the student(s) alleged to be involved in the reported incident.
- ◆ The administrator/counselor or school representative will assess the nature and degree of the incident and determine the appropriate steps and action. Parental notification regarding all students alleged to be involved is important.

It is important to gather all of the necessary information. Once an incident of bullying/harassment has been confirmed several steps will be taken to insure the emotional, physical and overall well-being of the target student(s). These steps may include the option of counseling, a change in the student's schedule and regular follow up meetings with administration/counseling. Parental notification and discussion is an essential part of this process as well as the student(s) who have been offended, active participation in steps that may assist in dealing with an incident.

Any member of the school community who has engaged in bullying/harassment is subject to the following:

- ◆ A contact and/or meeting with the “alleged” student(s), parent, and/ or member of TUS community with an administrator/counselor and any school representative deemed necessary to address the allegations and proof of incident(s).
- ◆ Actions that may be incurred by the offending student(s)/person(s) may include but are not limited to the following: a change in schedule, detention, probation, suspension, removal of specific privileges/participation and, based upon the frequency or severity of the offense, serious disciplinary consequences.
- ◆ Mandatory Counseling program and/or mediation aimed at promoting behavioral compliance. The goal is to educate and counsel the student/person(s) to understand the impact and consequences of the negative actions/behavior so that he/she will contribute positively to the culture and climate of empathy expected at The Ursuline School.
- ◆ Loss of computer/laptop use at school unless under direct supervision.

Plan/Steps of “Restorative Justice” may be required to be completed by the offending student(s). The goal of this plan is to focus on the needs of the *victim*. This plan overseen by an administrator/counselor attempts to find a unique solution to an offense that has caused a person(s) harm. The person who has been harmed does not necessarily have to “confront” the offender (s) but should be aware and involved in the plan either directly or indirectly.

Steps involved in Restorative Justice overseen by Administration

- ◆ The student(s), person(s) involved in bullying/cyber bullying may have to create a thorough “report” outlining the extent of the inappropriate and unacceptable offense to the appropriate representative, usually the Assistant Principal of Student Affairs, counselor, or Director of Peer Mediation.
- ◆ The offending student(s), person(s), with oversight from an administrator or Director of Personal Development should present a “clean up” plan that satisfies the restorative justice goal by clearly stating why the bullying/cyber bullying was wrong. The student(s)/ person(s) may also commit to an acceptable plan of action to retract the offense, this may include, but not be limited to a written apology and the promise not to engage in further bullying/cyber bullying in the future. The steps involved in this Restorative Justice Plan are designed to assist in recognizing a wrongdoing, accepting responsibility and repairing the harm done. Mediation is often an integral part of the plan.