

*Growing Kids God's Way!*

November 17, 2010

Dear Parents,

In the book of I Thessalonians, God says to “encourage one another and build each other up.” In Matthew 7:12 we read, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” There would be no bullying if we were able to execute these commands perfectly.

In early 2010, Massachusetts signed into law a new *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Law*. As you will read in the ALCS draft of our prevention and intervention plan, God has always been against bullying. And as a school which pursues God’s heart and seeks to imitate Him, *ALCS* has always been against bullying. For our 28 year history, ALCS has trained *toward* imitating Christ and His perfect love in action.

One of the requirements of the law is that each school publish a draft of its plan for public comment. The “public” for a private school is defined as families enrolled in the school. We are making the draft of the ALCS plan available on our website for you to read and to comment on. If you have feedback, you may email your comments to [phobart@alcsnet.org](mailto:phobart@alcsnet.org). If you would like to comment anonymously, your feedback could be printed off in hardcopy and mailed in or be left at the front desk.

The plan uses the content of the new law, the model plan developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education and Wilmington Public School’s plan to form the base of our plan. Other resources were referenced as well. School plans intentionally do not include the “how” (how will the plan be implemented) since each school is seen as a unique community.

It is a joy to serve in a community that already highly values human relationships because of our personal relationships with the Savior. It is a joy to partner with parents who place a high value on imitating Christ. Please feel free to provide feedback on the draft of our plan as we seek to honor God by doing relationships even better!

Sincerely,

*The Abundant Life Christian School Board*

# ALCS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

## Table of Contents

- I. Anti-Bullying Philosophy
- II. What Bullying Is Not
- III. Definitions
- IV. Prohibition Against Bullying
- V. Prevention
- VI. Training
- VII. School Response
- VIII. Student Response
- IX. Reporting Procedures
- X. Investigation and Resolution
- XI. Restoration

### **I. ANTI-BULLYING PHILOSOPHY**

*Abundant Life Christian School* has always been and will continue to be committed to ensuring that our learning environment is a safe and caring place for all students. We will continue to treat each other with respect and refuse to tolerate bullying in any form. This position is stated clearly throughout the ALCS Handbook and is specifically expressed under “Basic Educational Goals,” (“To develop a respect for and an understanding of one’s unique responsibility to God, self and others, affirming the value of all human life.”); “Code of Behavior,” (Infractions include as unacceptable conduct “name calling, putting down fellow students, treating others harmfully, posting any negative content about another student on an internet site); and in the “Middle School Student Standards of Conduct Agreement,” (“I will treat my fellow students with kindness and respect, refraining from cruel or abusive words or deeds.”).

At ALCS, the overarching philosophy for all activities, communication, interpersonal relationships and curriculum has been, since its foundation, that each student is the unique creation of God and as such is worthy of love, respect, nurturing and investment, “Children are a gift from God.” Psalm 127:3 and “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Matthew 7:12. The book of Hebrews says to “spur one another on to love and good deeds.” Thessalonians says to “encourage one another and build each other up.”

To prevent bullying and to disrupt a pattern of bullying, the ALCS plan utilizes character development, accountability to a Higher Authority, prevention education, behavior management, disciplinary action and restorative justice (a balanced approach to the needs of the target, aggressor, and community through processes that preserve the safety and dignity of all).

In light of the 2010 law enacted in Massachusetts, our *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program* has been documented here for the purpose of informing families

and in compliance with that law and for training and re-training all ALCS staff.

Relevant sections of the plan shall be included in the school employee handbook and in the grade school handbook. The bullying prevention and intervention plan will be posted on the school website.

## **II. WHAT BULLYING IS NOT**

You don't have to be a parent long before you realize, "This child is going to need some training. Where's the manual?" God says it pretty straight, "For all have sinned and fall short ..." Thankfully, as believers in an all-loving, all-wise God, we know we do have a Manual that will serve every purpose – God's Word on all matters -- scripture.

If we were perfect, we wouldn't need a Savior. If we were perfect, we wouldn't need others to model for us what kindness looks like. Think of children who have just begun life's journey. They need to be taught how to walk, how to eat by themselves, how to dress and how to play. They need to be taught how to read, how to add and how to draw. Is it any wonder that they also need to be taught how to be honest, how to persevere, how to obey and how to be kind? That they need to learn how to navigate the social cues of each individual in their lives?

Schools, churches, youth organizations -- all these and more partner with parents in teaching children how to make good choices in relating to peers. Parents, educators – anyone who works in a leadership role with children and youth are charged with the vital task of discerning the motivation behind acts of unkindness. Lack of maturity? Lack of training? Difficulty reading social cues? Difficulty discerning appropriate behavior in different settings? With different peers? Jealousy? Fear? Insecurity? Mean-spiritedness? Is it *bullying*?

At ALCS we are committed to teaching children what is appropriate behavior. We are committed to training children in that behavior. And we are committed to introducing them to the Savior that can cause lasting *heart* change, not just a change in behavior when grown-ups are watching.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Bullying is the severe or 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 target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property\_
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property\_
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target\_

- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school\_ or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

School means the actual facility, school grounds and property utilized by the school for school-sponsored activities.

#### **IV. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, on the school van or other vehicles leased, or used by the school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

#### **V. PREVENTING BULLYING THROUGH INSTRUCTION & SUPERVISION**

##### **A. General teaching approaches**

In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we are directed to teach children *all the time*. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These are foundational to reaping healthy interpersonal behavior.

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline (think “Culture of Grace”)

- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

**B. Specific bullying prevention approaches**

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.
- supervising students according to school expectations

**VI. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ongoing professional development will continue in order to ensure that the school climate promotes safety and respectful interpersonal relationships. Staff will receive annual notice of the plan and will strive to:

- maintain a safe and caring classroom for all students.
- promote and model the use of respectful language;
- foster an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- build relationships and communicate with families;
- constructively manage classroom behaviors;
- use positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- apply constructive disciplinary practices;
- teach students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;

Professional development will continue addressing:

- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take

- place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will include ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose disability affects social skills development.

## **VII. SCHOOL RESPONSE TO BULLYING**

- Staff will integrate bullying prevention into school culture
- ALCS will instruct students to immediately report bullying to the nearest adult or their teacher.
- ALCS will encourage parents to immediately report bullying to their child's teacher and/or to administration (Assistant Administrator and/or Administrator)
- Staff will intervene quickly and effectively when bullying is observed
- Staff will address the needs of the target
- Staff will document the report
- Staff will communicate promptly with parents of the target and parents of the aggressor
- Staff will respond promptly and appropriately to bullying reports
- Staff will take seriously student, family and fellow staff concerns about bullying
- Staff will assign consequences for bullying based on the school discipline code
- Staff will assign consequences for retaliation against bullying reporters

## **VIII. STUDENT RESPONSE TO BULLYING**

- students will treat each other respectfully
- students will refuse to bully
- students will not stand by and let others be bullied
- students will not watch, laugh or join in when someone is being bullied
- students will report bullying to an adult as soon as possible

## **IX. STUDENT, STAFF AND PARENT REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Due to privacy laws, school officials cannot tell a parent how they have disciplined a student, even if his or her child was directly bullied by that student.

- students will report bullying to an adult as soon as possible
- the adult will document the complaint and will report to the Assistant Administrator
- reports will be handled quickly, discreetly and with as much confidentiality as possible
- both the target and the accused will be treated respectfully
- steps will be taken to stop the bullying

- results/progress will be reported to target/target's parents
- results/progress will be reported to the aggressor/aggressor's parents
- in order for the school to take certain actions to stop the bullying, the target's name may need to be used.

## **X. INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION**

After conducting an appropriate investigation, the school will determine the severity of the behavior and will assign appropriate consequences. Options such as the following may be used individually or in combination in order to achieve resolution.

- Investigation will include speaking with the target, the accused, supervisors, bystanders/observers.
- Attempts for resolution may include verbal warning/reprimand, age appropriate in-school counseling/correction and/or consequences, a verbal or written apology, parent/school conference(s), professional counseling, participation in socialization groups, detention, suspension, expulsion.
- All options will be conducted in as Godly a manner as possible. God is love *and* justice. God's Word will be used to correct, admonish, encourage, warn, etc. as needed to achieve resolution.
- It is wise to realize that school and families both desire the best for our students. There are literally dozens of ways any given situation can be handled. We use all of our skills, wisdom, experience and prayer to do what we believe to be the very best for the school community.

## **XI. RESTORATION**

To "restore" means to bring back to the original, or an improved, condition. The Christian Gospel message is about restoration -- God sending Jesus to restore relationship with mankind. Restoration is biblical. It includes:

- Honest ownership of wrong done by the offender
- The offender chooses to reverse direction (repentance)
- Restitution by the offender (apology, etc.)
- Acceptance of restitution by the offended (forgiveness)
- Loving discipline
- Restoration closure – challenge and comfort to both (all) parties