

# **The Guiding Principles and Rationale Pertaining to the John Paul II Collegiate Anti-Bullying Strategy and Subsequent School Policy**

## **Care, Respect, and Safety**

The “Three R's” of John Paul II Collegiate are *reason, respect, and responsibility*. The vision of John Paul II Collegiate states that “*with Christ as our model we are a community with a distinct purpose. Our vision is to integrate Catholic values in the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual development of our Christian community.*” These gospel values are faith, love, hope, family, respect, honesty, and knowledge. In keeping with these basic fundamentals, and because caring, respectful and safe school environments are essential for children and young people to learn and to achieve healthy personal and social development, all students of John Paul II Collegiate have a right to an education free from all forms of bullying.

## **Youth Voice**

The involvement of children and youth in preventing and reducing bullying is critical. Educators and community leaders must listen to and consult with youth on matters related to bullying. Children and youth must be engaged in the development of policies and practices related to the reduction and prevention of bullying. For the past several years, John Paul II students have been represented on the school Vision Committee, whose role is to advise and make recommendations which will enhance, promote, and protect the positive Christian climate of the school. John Paul II Collegiate students were also engaged in a survey conducted by the Community School Program Coordinator. Students were invited to share their thoughts and make recommendations on issues pertaining to bullying. Through these two forums, our students told us that, although bullying is not a huge issue, it is occurring, and is on the rise. As a result of the student comments and suggestions, many of our bullying programs, student and parent forums, parent information nights, and student support groups were formed. Students also suggested that the installation of video surveillance cameras would contribute to less bullying and a greater feeling of security among students. Thirty-two surveillance cameras were installed later that year. This could not have happened without the engagement of our students through the survey and through their representation on the School Vision Committee.

## **Collective Responsibility and Accountability**

Bullying is a community problem, and solutions to prevent bullying require community-wide involvement. Members of our community, through their involvement in our community school programs, Vision Committee, RCMP Liaison program, parent support groups, and school community council, can help to identify common needs and work together to develop community-based solutions that strengthen caring, respectful, and safe communities and schools. These individuals and organizations can work with the school staff and students to regularly review bullying policies, prevention programs, and related practices, with a view to ensuring effective practices and accountability.

## **Prevention and Early Intervention**

Bullying is a serious problem that has a negative impact on learning success and the well-being of young people. Prevention and early intervention are key to reducing problems of bullying. To be successful in preventing and reducing incidents of bullying, John Paul II Collegiate must remain committed to making the prevention of bullying a priority and involve the school community in the the development of policies and procedures to address the problem. Comprehensive prevention and early prevention strategies include education and awareness; assessment and evaluation; and empirically-based interventions. Our school is a member of the League of Peaceful Schools, and thus embraces strategies which promote a peaceful, anti-bullying atmosphere. These strategies, which include programs implemented and administered collectively and collaboratively by community school staff, teachers, counsellors, chaplains and administrators must continue to complement the school's discipline policy of "zero tolerance" when it comes to bullying. At the school level, the "Referral Team" consists mainly of community school staff, RCMP Liaison, guidance counsellors, administrators and recovery program teachers. This team meets each Tuesday, and one of its mandates is to monitor student relationships on a regular basis. This team plays, and will continue to play, an active role in the prevention of bullying, the rehabilitation of bullies, and the support / counselling of bullying victims.

See **Appendix A** for some key considerations that were taken into account in the formation of this policy. It can be also used as a **compass** to indicate the direction we need to take.

## JOHN PAUL II COLLEGIATE – POLICY ON BULLYING – October, 2006

**A. Students of John Paul II Collegiate have the right to a caring, respectful, safe school environment** which is free from all forms of bullying. All school staff will be educated in such a manner as to enable them to take appropriate steps to prevent bullying, to identify bullying, and to assist and support students who are being bullied.

**B. Bullying is generally defined** as a form of aggressive behaviour that is repeatedly directed at an individual or group from a position of relative power. Bullying behaviour can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g. hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g. name calling, insults, put-downs), social (e.g. social isolation, gossip, or cyber (e.g. threats, insults, or harmful messages spread through the internet). Bullying can be direct, “in your face” confrontation, or indirect “behind your back”, such as spreading rumors. Bullying can be done by one person or by a group. A child or young person being bullied feels helpless in trying to stop it.

A student is bullied or harassed when he or she is intentionally and repeatedly the target of the negative actions of a stronger or more powerful person or group that causes fear, emotional stress, and / or physical harm.

**C. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated** at John Paul II Collegiate. We believe that bullying is a serious problem that adversely affects the learning success and well-being of children and youth.

**D. The whole community has a stake in the success of the anti-bullying program.** The entire John Paul II Community, which includes members of the board of education, educators, support staff, parents / guardians / caregivers, and students, shares the responsibility to promote a caring, respectful, and safe school environment, and to prevent and reduce bullying.

The school administration, program co-ordinator, and counselling department will continue to actively promote, implement, and deliver a variety of anti-bullying programs at all grade levels for students and parents. This may include units for classes, pull-out programs, and parent-student forums.

**E. The school will take the following steps when responding to instances of bullying:**

- The in-school administration, classroom teachers, and all support staff will respond by providing a clear message that bullying will not be tolerated.
- All instances of bullying, no matter how insignificant they may seem, must be reported to a guidance counsellor or to the in-school administrator directly involved with the student.
- The in-school administrator will listen, investigate, offer support, and determine the appropriate course of action.
- A bullying incident report will record those involved and the action taken. This report will be filed appropriately.
- In a timely fashion, parents/guardians of all involved will be contacted and informed of the incident and how it is being handled. In most cases, parents / guardians will be invited to meet with school officials at some point in the process.
- The in-school administrators will follow the school discipline policy and procedure, the school division policy and the Education Act when consequences for bullying involve suspensions and or / expulsions. The school discipline policy and behavioural

expectations of students will be outlined in the Student / Parent Handbook and made available to all students.

- Post-suspension follow-up will always occur, and will include any combination of the following in addition to other measures which may be deemed appropriate:
  - referral to in-school guidance
  - referral to an in-school student forum, focus group, or anti-bullying program.
  - referral to outside agency such as mental health, child protection, RCMP, or justice.
- The in-school administration has a responsibility to support the bullying victim or parent / guardian when the choice is made to involve the RCMP. RCMP involvement, in most cases, will be initiated through the RCMP liaison officer.
- The in-school administrator or counsellor will keep the parents / guardians informed until the situation is resolved.
- When the safety of a member of the school community is at immediate risk, the in-school administration and school staff have a responsibility to report to the RCMP incidents of bullying which cannot be handled internally or which are obviously criminal offences.

**F. Effective anti-bullying policies and practices need to be reviewed regularly.** The school team, in conjunction with all its partners and stakeholders, will be committed to staying on top of the most recent research on bullying, and while reacting strongly to specific bullying incidents, focus on being proactive in their approach to the general issue. Regular meetings will be held to assess the success of the anti-bullying strategies and programs. Regular reviews of the bullying prevention policies and practices will be conducted to determine what is working and what needs to be strengthened to reduce problems and bullying.

## Appendix A – Key Considerations

- Does John Paul II have a comprehensive strategy to prevent and reduce bullying?
- Are students given the opportunity to have input into the policies, practices, and decisions pertaining to bullying?
- Are sufficient resources and professional development opportunities made available to those attempting to address the problem?
- Are parents and community members given the opportunity for input?
- Is there an active education component to increase awareness and understanding of bullying?
- Is there a system of empirically based interventions at the school level?
- Does the school have a specific policy to address the problem of bullying among youth?
- If yes, does the policy align with the school division policy?
- If yes, does the policy affirm the right of children / youth to a caring, respectful, and safe school environment?
- If yes, does the policy specify that bullying in any form will not be tolerated?
- If yes, does the school policy define bullying?
- If yes, does the school policy specify the roles of personnel for dealing with bullying?
- If yes, does the school policy specify the procedures and processes to be followed for responding to instances of bullying?
- If yes, are there provisions for the policies and practices to be evaluated on a regular basis?
- If yes, is the policy available to all members of the school community?