Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy

The safety and well-being of children at Flex Academy is of paramount consideration. Children deserve to be protected from abuse, neglect, bullying, harm or threat of harm. Therefore, staff and teachers will ensure that children attending our school experience a safe and respectful environment free from harassment and bullying.

Flex Academy is involved in ongoing work and training to ensure that students feel respected and connected with our community. This includes protection of our students' physical safety, social connectedness, and inclusiveness as well as protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, while remaining consistent with Flex Academy's faith-values, cultural perspectives and philosophical values.

Behaviour that does not respect the individual's honour and dignity will be immediately dealt with upon consultation with leadership, staff, teachers and parents.

Because we seek to foster a safe environment for all, Flex Academy will take all reasonable steps to prevent any and all retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of this policy.

Resource: ERASE is a comprehensive prevention and intervention program that builds on effective progress already in place to ensure consistent policies and practices across all school districts backed by strong community partnerships. Four different types of bullying are outlined: Physical, Social, Emotional, Verbal, and Cyber. In addition to providing resources for parents, students and educators, ERASE also provides an Online Reporting Tool for students or parents to report incidents of bullying. For more information on ERASE, visit the Erase Bullying Website.

Cyber-Bullying and Bullying Prevention

Statement of Purpose

Flex Academy is committed to fostering, through example and guiding practices, an online and physical environment that works to keep students and staff safe from cyberbullying and bullying. Reported incidents will be taken seriously and fully investigated. Any form of cyberbullying or bullying will be confronted. Action to resolve bullying may result in suspension or deletion from Flex Academy social networking, blogging, or school community events.

Definition of Cyber-bullying and Bullying

Bullying is a relationship problem exerted from a position of power, where repeated physical, verbal or social aggression causes embarrassment, pain, or discomfort. Bullying acts may be intentional or unintentional and perpetrated by individuals or groups. Cyberbullying applies to aggressive acts to belittle or defame an individual through repeated digital communications (e.g., social networking forums, emails, websites, blogs, webinar platforms, chat lines, etc.) Cyberbullying and bullying may include threats, name-calling, insults, sexual harassment or racial slurs.

Physical bullying includes all of the above, with the addition of hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property when it is in a physical context. Bullying is not necessarily the case in every situation that may result in conflict. Student disagreements, speaking in a perceived aggressive tone, confronting someone's behaviour, misunderstandings, and personality struggles are all examples of normal human interaction that isn't necessarily bullying when there is no evidence of controlling aggressive behaviour.

Student and Parent Guidelines

- Do not become involved in any form of bullying
- Do not answer abusive messages or emails
- Do not delete, but record, all abusive messages and report them to one of the school authorities
- Do not give out the personal contact information of others without their prior consent
- Do not share embarrassing images
- Ensure there is received permission before forwarding other people's messages or images
- Realize that digital communication is permanent
- Understand jokes are easily misunderstood, especially through digital texts
- If safe to do so, intervene to protect a student who is being bullied
- If a student/parent believes they or someone in the school is a victim of cyberbullying or bullying, they are to report the incident/situation as soon as possible to school administration

Teacher and Staff Guidelines

- Model respectful communication
- Refrain from disparaging, defaming comments
- Take a stand against cyber-bullying and alert administration in any case of cyber-bullying
- Discuss bullying with students.
  - Definition of cyberbullying and lessons to address this can be found here.
  - Educate students on types of bullying behavior. Here are some possible resources to use:
    - Media Smarts
    - OverDrive Ebook resources on Digital Wellness, SORA - Digital Wellness gr. K-4 , SORA - Digital Wellness gr 5-9 and SORA - Digital Wellness Resources for Educators
  - Discuss the process of reporting bullying incidence
  - Discuss school actions that could apply

- Record (save and/or print offending material) clearly inappropriate messages, images, including date(s), time(s), and name(s) involved and share with school administration
- Report any complaint to a school administrator (Director, Assistant Director or Head of School) and forward the details and evidence related to the incident (date, time, names, and school event or cyber platform.)
- The school will report back to the parent or student on the action that has been taken

Leadership Guidelines

- Affirm the individual for reporting the suspected cyber-bullying or bullying incident
- Thoroughly investigate the reported one(s) through questions to verify the alleged incident
- Contact parents/guardians of all students concerned in the bullying incident
- Provide feedback to those concerned
- Report the investigated incident to a Director
- The Director will apply an action plan appropriate for protecting and empowering the victim(s)/school community and to disciple the alleged cyber-bully. When possible and appropriate, action will encourage the reconciliation of the individuals involved.
- The Director will report incidents to the Head of School
- If needed, contact relevant professionals.

Resolving Action

- Involve parents
- Mentor students in social and emotional skills
- Disciplinary action might include temporary or permanent suspension from Flex Academy, including regular school programming, school social networks, blogs, webinar chat options, and other school activities such as learning camps and field trips.

Internet Safety & Literacy Tips for Parents

At HCOS our students are encouraged to become wise, digitally capable learners who can search online within boundaries, ensuring Internet safety and healthy learning. With this in mind here are some useful rules for providing Godly education for your new Flex learner.

- Talk to your students about responsibility while online regarding hours of use, which sites may be accessed and which ones are undesirable. Educate yourself about the Internet and which sites your students are using.
- Create family rules, including hours of use and which sites may be accessed and which ones may not. Use nanny filters if necessary.
- Place your computer in a central, open location like the living room so Internet time can be supervised.

Guiding your Students Online

To ensure your students feel safe online please follow the suggested guidelines. Look into setting up the following bookmarks for their own special folder:

- Digital Wellness - HCOS Learning Commons
  - For quality Christian educational links you may send your students to the following subject index at HCOS Linking Library
    - Instill a sense of empathy in your students. Teach them to treat others like you want to be treated. Encourage positive behavior online at all times.
    - For research use existing current and reliable subscriptions and databases offered freely with our school such as Explora, Gale Cengage, WorldBook, Pebble Go and Learn 360.
    - Share the learning commons resources that are available for our families with our Internet Safety pages and also our Research Pages for grades K-5 and grades 6-9 and grade 10-12.
    - Teach your students about current awareness and digital literacy skills using our subscriptions Everfii, The Canadian Reader, and What in the World.
    - CommonSense comes with digital literacy lesson plans for all grades. Digital Compass.
    - BeInternetAwesome comes with Internet awareness/safety lessonsBookmark several subject indexes such as the following child friendly sites
    - Teach your students about fake news with Brake the Fake from MediaSmarts
  - For quality Christian educational links encourage students to use our web linking portal to be found within the Insignia search portal.
  - Bookmark high school student search engines such as Google Scholar, Wolfram Alpha, and Research Gate.
  - Bookmark primary school search engines such as Kidtopia, Kid's Search Engine, Duck Duck Go, GoGooligans, Kiddle and indexes like Teach The Children Well. Create a desktop for students with bookmarked sites so that students know to follow rules with suggested sites.
  - On RightNowMedia have your high school students engage in a thought-provoking Bible study on digital citizenship. This study encompasses sexting, digital technology and creating balance online for middle grades and up.
  - OverDrive Ebook resources on Digital Wellness, SORA - Digital Wellness gr. K-4, SORA - Digital Wellness gr 5-9 and SORA - Digital Wellness Resources for Educators

Preserving Privacy

- Encourage your students to refrain from putting pictures up of themselves or identifying information such as phone numbers, email addresses, passwords or credit card numbers.
- Encourage open dialogue with your students about other people who might engage them about personal information.
- Teach your student that talking to a stranger on the Internet is the same as talking to a stranger on the street.

- For additional resources, look at Privacy Pirates.

Possible Hazards

- Alert your students to possible online dangers such as giving out personal information to strangers. Advise them to stay clear of chatting online in chat rooms with people they do not know. Younger children should not be in chat rooms, and older children should ask permission before entering chat rooms with which you
- If your child starts receiving inappropriate mail or phone calls get to the bottom of it immediately.
- Tell your students that if someone harasses them online or makes them uncomfortable in any way they should tell a parent or teacher or someone they trust.
- Contact the police immediately if your student receives child pornography, is sexually solicited, or has received any inappropriate explicit images on the Internet.

Information on Cyber Safety

- Internet Awareness for Parents MediaSmarts
- Get Net Wise Get Net Wise
- The White Hatter
- Digital Citizenship: Guide for Parents
- Focus on the Family
- The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has issued a Cybertip.ca Alert for parents on how talk to youth about online extortion. Review a tip sheet for parents.

  We also encourage all parents to sign up with Cybertip to receive information on concerning technology trends as they emerge.

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