

Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan



The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District committed to providing all students with ¹a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

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I. LEADERSHIP

Leadership at all levels plays a critical role in implementing Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans (“the Plan”) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote a positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan was developed in consultation with district and community stakeholders. Consultation includes notice and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the school committee. The district will involve representatives from various constituencies in ongoing aspects of the Plan, including needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings.

B. Assessing needs and resources.

This Plan serves as a blueprint for enhancing our capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of our process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, assess the adequacy of current programs; review current policies and procedures; review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This process assists us in identifying resource gaps and significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the district revises or develops policies and procedures; establishes partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and sets priorities.

The district will consider the following needs assessments:

- 1) surveying students, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues; and
- 2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses).

This information will help us identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. The Plan will describe the methods the school will use to conduct needs assessments, including timelines and leadership roles.

C. Planning and oversight.

The Plan identifies the school or district leaders responsible for the following tasks:

1. receiving reports on bullying;

2. collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes;
3. creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
4. planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5. planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6. choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; 7. developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them;
8. amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct to among other things, make clear that bullying of students by school staff or other students will not be tolerated;
9. leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and
10. reviewing and updating the Plan each year.

D. District Priorities.

1. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District expects all of the members of the school community to treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for difference.
2. The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.
3. We understand that members of certain student groups, including but not limited to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The school or district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.
4. We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.
5. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach

to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This Plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. The Plan states the content and frequency of staff training and ongoing professional development as determined by our needs, and lists other topics to be included in these staff programs. These locally identified additional areas of training are based on needs and concerns identified by school and district staff.

The law lists six topics that must be included in professional development. Additional topics may be identified by the school or district leadership to meet the unique needs of our district communities. This Plan identifies which training will be provided district-wide and which will be school-based.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan.

Annual training for all school staff will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Employees, hired after the start of the school year, are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

B. Ongoing professional development.

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of our professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

1. developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;

2. developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
3. information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
4. 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;
5. information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address 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 with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc. and bullying behaviors

C. Written notice to staff.

The district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the district employee handbooks and the code of conduct.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, student aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The Plan describes strategies for providing support and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the district's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and student aggressors. The Plan includes a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for student aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

A. Identifying resources.

The Plan includes the district's process for identifying its capacity to provide counseling

and other services for targets, student aggressors, and their families. This will include a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Once this mapping of resources is complete, the district will develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. This may include adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services. An outline of the local processes for identifying existing and needed resources will be developed.

B. Counseling and other services.

The Plan will identify the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the district. If resources need to be developed, the Plan will identify linkages with community based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, the Plan will identify staff and service providers who assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. Schools may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

C. Students with disabilities.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

D. Referral to outside services.

The district will establish a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies. Current local referral protocols will be evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The law requires each district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's or district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction includes classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development. Please refer to the District's Action Plan timeline for curriculum selection. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's bullying prevention resources are available on the Department's website at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/>

Specific bullying prevention approaches.

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or school staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, 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.

Initiatives will teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan includes specific information about how and when the school or district will review the Plan with students.

A. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- 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, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the district has put in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of our school community – students, parents, and school staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. This includes detailed procedures for staff reporting of incidents, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee, or the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor once a report is made. The Department recommends that districts and schools develop different procedures for reviewing and investigating reports of bullying by students, and of bullying by school staff.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or the designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying (781-618-7086). No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents

consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a) Notice to parents or guardians.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b) Notice to Another School or District.

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All

communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c) Notice to Law Enforcement.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable district policies and procedures, consult with the Assistant Superintendent, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

3. Investigation.

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the superintendent or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

4. Determinations.

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the

principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.

The principal or designee will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and
- 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

5. Responses to Bullying.

a) Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d)(v).

Teach students to become "Upstanders". Students can emphasize social support of the target, even in minor forms. The friend or other friends helping the target is KEY to supporting targets. Encourage students to embrace the concept of reducing gateway behaviors (rolling of the eyes, mocking, being mean, teasing); and that this "littering" of the school culture is unacceptable. Empower students with this responsibility.

Teachers and all adults in the school must respond to gateway behaviors (rolling of the eyes, mocking, being mean, teasing). Talk and teach realistically about bullying as a health issue. Educate students about bias. Focus on relationship-building as a way of improving student resiliency.

Skill building approaches that the principal or designee may also consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curriculum;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate

school personnel;

- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals; • meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; or
- making a Student Teacher Assistance Team (STAT) team referral.

b) Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

c) Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

C. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff

When school and district personnel receive a report of bullying of a student by school staff, the following procedures are followed that address safety planning, notification to parent or guardians and others, investigation, and response – areas that are addressed when a student is alleged to have bullied another student. These procedures emphasize the importance of the investigation, the need for the aggressor, target, and witnesses to be truthful, and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining schedule arrangements for the target and/or the staff aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the staff aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a) Notice to parents or guardians.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the staff aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Procedures for staff will be consistent with district policies, code of conduct, and the collective bargaining agreement. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b) Notice to Another School or District.

If the reported incident involves students or staff from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c) Notice to Law Enforcement.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she

has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable district policies and procedures, consult with the Assistant Superintendent, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

3. Investigation.

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged staff aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews of targets may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. Interviews of alleged staff aggressors may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, in compliance with the collective bargaining agreement, District policies, and Code of Conduct.

To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation. Interviews of alleged staff aggressors may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the superintendent or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

4. Determinations.

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.

The principal or designee will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and

2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

When a member of the school staff is determined to be the aggressor, the principal or designee will follow District policies, Code of Conduct, and Collective Bargaining Agreement in regard to staff discipline.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Parents and guardians will be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents or guardians. School-specific approaches to collaboration will take into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and the parents.

A. Parent education and resources.

The school or district will offer education programs annually for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school.

B. Notification requirements.

Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety.

The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

1) 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, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by

a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and

2) 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.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation towards a student.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying 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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Gateway Behaviors are any behaviors that are minor (rolling eyes at a friend, making unwanted noise, mocking, whispering and annoying someone) all of which can eventually lead to bullying. Adults responding to gateway behaviors can make a big difference.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Resiliency is the ability of a student to resist or bounce back from an adverse experience or circumstance due to bullying.

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 Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Repeated Use is at least three documented and reported incidents of inappropriate conduct directed at a target during a period of one calendar year or less, unless aggravating factors dictate an extended time period.

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

Upstanders are students who are willing to support targets. These are the assertive friends that are willing to “stick with the target” and offer support. Upstanders are taught NOT to confront the bully. Having friends is huge to victims of bullying.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person’s membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

Bullying Reporting and Investigation Process

This process applies to only situations where bullying is alleged. Disciplinary incidents, involving student aggressors, will be reported using the school disciplinary action process. Disciplinary incidents, involving staff, will be reported in alignment with the Collective Bargaining Agreement and Code of Conduct.

Step One: Administrator Completes Incident Report Form
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If an adult witnesses or reports incident:

- Staff member completes incident report and gives to designated administrative staff member If

a student reports incident to staff member:

- Acknowledge a student's feelings.
- Determine if there are safety issues that must be addressed immediately.
- Student or staff member completes an incident report and gives it to a designated administrative staff member.

Step Two: Conduct Investigation – Did Bullying Occur?

Student Issues:

Interview alleged target:

- Ask the alleged target to complete a narrative of the event (MS/HS only).
- Interview the alleged target first, then the alleged student aggressor.
- Alleged target and alleged student aggressor should be separated.
- Do not ask to see the alleged target in the alleged student aggressor's presence.
- Encourage the alleged target to report any additional incidents with the alleged student aggressor.

Interview the alleged aggressor accused of bullying:

- Identify the problem.
- Focus more on the alleged student aggressor's behavior, protecting the alleged target's confidentiality.
- In case of denial or if further information is needed, interview witnesses.
- Document the witness account.
- Make the alleged aggressor aware of consequences of retaliation against the alleged target and reporter.
- Harassment officers make recommendations to administration when appropriate (HS only).

Contact parent of alleged target and alleged aggressor

Staff Issues:

Interview alleged target of bullying:

- Ask the alleged target to complete a narrative of the event (MS/HS only).
- Interview the alleged target and alleged staff aggressor separately
- Do not ask to see the alleged target in the alleged staff aggressor's presence.
- Encourage the alleged target to report any additional incidents with the alleged staff aggressor.

Interview the staff accused of bullying:

- Prior to the interview, review the employee's job description.
- Determine whether an employee is working under the Collective Bargaining Agreement. • For employees in Units A-D, refer to the Collective Bargaining Agreement: Complaints. • Follow policies GBEB (Staff Conduct) and Policy KE (Public Complaints) and ECOC • Interview the alleged staff aggressor with at least one other adult present
- Alleged target and alleged staff aggressor should be separated.
- Focus more on the alleged staff aggressor's behavior, protecting the alleged target's confidentiality.
- In case of denial or if further information is needed, interview witnesses.
- Document the witness account.
- Make the alleged aggressor aware of consequences of retaliation against the alleged target and reporter.

Contact parent of alleged target

Step Three: Document Incident and Consequences

- Document outcome of investigation (Incident Report Form)
 - Alleged target will be notified of action taken or not taken
 - Provide update to appropriate staff member(s)
 - Monitor students' behavior (alleged target and alleged student aggressor)
 - Monitor alleged staff aggressor's behavior in alignment with Collective Bargaining Agreement, policies, and Code of Conduct
 - Notify teachers who have contact with alleged target and alleged student aggressor
- Report filed with the Superintendent's Office

Step Four: Assign Consequences as appropriate when bullying is determined

- Assign appropriate consequences relevant to student and staff disciplinary procedures. • If the alleged student aggressor denies the incident, and there is insufficient evidence, tell the alleged aggressor that you hope s/he is right and that nothing happened, but you will continue to monitor behavior.
- Monitor safety of the target.

I. Whitman-Hanson Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form (NEW)

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filling the Report: _____
This line may be left blank if an anonymous report is being made. (Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)
2. Check whether you are the: [] - Target of the behavior [] - Reporter (not the target)
3. Check whether you are a [] - Student [] - Staff member (specify role) _____
 [] - Parent [] - Administrator [] - Other (specify) _____
4. Write your contact information/telephone number: _____
5. If you are a student, state your school: _____ Grade: _____
6. Information about the incident:

Name of Target (of the behavior)_____

Name of the Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior):_____

Date(s) of the Incident(s):_____

Time When the Incident(s) Occurred:_____

Location of the Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible):_____

7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: _____ [] - Student, [] -Staff. [] - Other _____

Name: _____ [] - Student, [] -Staff. [] - Other _____

Name: _____ [] - Student, [] -Staff. [] - Other _____

8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on the back if necessary.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report:_____ Date:_____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to:_____ Postion:_____ Date:_____

Signature and Title: _____ Date:_____

II. INVESTIGATION:

1. Investigator(s):_____ Position(s)_____

2. Interview:

[] - Interviewed Aggressor Name:_____ Date:_____

- Interviewed Target Name: _____ Date: _____

- Interviewed Witnesses Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

3. Are there any prior documented Incidents by the Aggressor? - Yes - No

If yes, have incidents previously involved a target or target group? - Yes - No'

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION - Yes - No

4. Summary of Investigation

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document if needed)

III. CONCLUSION FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation: - Yes - No

- Bullying - Incident documented as _____

- Retaliation - Discipline referral only _____

2. Contacts:

- Target's Parent/Guardian: Date: _____

- Aggressor's Parent/Guardian: Date: _____

- District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: _____

- School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement: Date: _____

3. Action Taken

- Loss of Privileges - Detention(s) - Internal Suspension
- External Suspension - Community Service - Diversionary Program
- Education - Other _____
- STEP Referral (Short Term Educational Placement): _____

4. Describe the Safety Planning: _____

Follow-up with Target: Scheduled for _____ - Initial and date when completed _____

Follow-up with Aggressor: Scheduled for _____ - Initial and date when completed _____

5. Report forwarded to the Principal - Date: _____
 (If principal was not the investigator)

Report forward to the Superintendent - Date: _____

Parent Communication Guidelines
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Note: Communication to parents/guardians must be written as a formal letter on school letterhead and include the following information:

- Date of the letter
- Dear Parents/Guardians: Full Name and Address
- Your son/daughter was involved in an incident on (the date) _____. We believe it is important to share this information with you.
- A description of what was reported
- The incident has been investigated and will be monitored. Due to reasons of confidentiality, students' names and disciplinary actions cannot be disclosed.
- Please sign and return this letter to school in an envelope addressed to _____ as soon as possible. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.
- Include space for acknowledgement signatures.

Principal/Designee Signature Date

Parent /Guardian Signature Date

**Process for Responding to a Report of Bullying
Flow Chart**

