

Dedham Public Schools

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Complementary to Policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of Dedham Public School, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran or military status, homelessness, ancestry, ethnic background, national origin, or any other category protected by state or federal law.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians.

The Plan is posted on the Dedham Public Schools website and distributed to community partners for public access. As mandated by M.G.L. c.71, 15, this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be reviewed and updated biannually.

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Statement of Purpose

The Dedham Public School is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) has been established to prevent, intervene, and respond to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

The Dedham Public School expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. Dedham is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. 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.

Dedham is committed to enhancing our capacity to prevent issues of bullying through the use of prevention programs that teach students to identify, refuse to tolerate, cope with and report bullying behavior. Building-based Principals or their designee are responsible for:

- Receiving reports on bullying;
- Investigating reports of bullying;
- Collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data;
- Creating a process for measuring improved outcomes; and
- Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports.

Prohibition against Bullying, Cyberbullying and Retaliation

Dedham Public School prohibits bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation as defined in the following definitions. Students or staff who engage in bullying or retaliation are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with administrative disciplinary policies and applicable to state and federal laws.

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, 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
- (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.

According to guidelines developed by the Department, nothing in this Plan requires Dedham Public School to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Definitions

The following definitions derive from M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 and 603 CMR 49.03.

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

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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:

- 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, e-mail, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings. Cyberbullying also includes:

- i. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- ii. The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation results in bullying; or
- iii. The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution of posting results in bullying.

Department, as used in this Plan, is the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person 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 extra-curricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

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

Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Reporting by Parents, Guardians, Students and Others

Oversight:

The building Principal or designee is responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- i. Receiving reports on bullying or retaliation;
- ii. Collecting and analyzing school-wide data on bullying to assess the present level of need and to measure improved outcomes;
- iii. Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
- iv. Implementing the on-going professional development that is required by law;
- v. Identifying the support strategies that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors;
- vi. Choosing and implementing, in partnership with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the curricula to be used by an individual school (or District);
- vii. Updating student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct as needed; and
- viii. Leading parent/guardian engagement efforts

Reporting:

It is believed that a culture of openness is considered the most effective means for countering bullying behavior. Dedham Public School responds promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation. These procedures ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what happens when incidents of bullying occur.

Dedham Public School expects students, parents, 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 is taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students are provided with 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.

Responding to Potential Bullying or Retaliation:

The Principal or designee will take steps to promote safety during the course of and after a required investigation for all parties involved. This includes assessing the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from further incidents.

Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating an individual student 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; altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target.

Investigative Procedures for Potential Bullying or Retaliation:

Each school is required to investigate in a timely manner and determine whether or not bullying or retaliation has occurred. This requires a determination as to the nature of the incident (bullying versus peer conflict versus harassment). Once determined, an investigation and outreach to the target and family should occur concurrently with a commitment to addressing the needs of the target, identifying and educating bystanders, and providing formative/educational consequences for aggressors.

Steps to be taken should include:

- a. Determine the nature, chronicity, and severity of the presenting situation.
- b. Identify aggressor(s), target(s), and bystanders.
- c. Provide a safety and comfort plan for the target(s).
- d. Identify whether or not the bullying or retaliation has occurred on or off campus.
- e. Inform aggressors about the potential consequences for bullying, retaliation, and cyberbullying in or out of school.
- f. Have conversations with all parties.
- g. Inform parents or guardians and all relevant adults of initial investigation; notice of confidentiality.
- h. Establish a timetable for following up with parents or guardians.
- i. Collect data and document.

Each school must take steps to supervise non-classroom areas. The review and exchange of information regarding non-classroom areas are important to determine potential “hot spots” where bullying or retaliation may more likely occur, consider ways of keeping certain groups apart during transitions, building positive collaborations between older and younger students, and consider increasing adult density in “hot spots” if need be.

Consequences from Findings:

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the District use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior, M.G.L. c.71 § 370 (d)(v). Skill building approaches include consultation with school counselors and psychologists, offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the District's anti-bullying curricula, providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, implementing a range of academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports to promote pro-social ways of engagement, adopting specific individualized behavioral plans, etc.

Consequences should consider these specific issues:

- Nature, severity and chronicity of the behavioral impact on the victim;
- Degree of physical, psychological, social harm on the victim;
- Student’s age, development, and degree of maturity;
- Surrounding circumstances and context in which the incident(s) occurred;
- Prior disciplinary history and continuing patterns of behavior;
- Relationship between and among the parties involved;
- Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred; and
- The need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior.

Consequences for bullying or retaliation should be immediately and consistently applied and must be delivered in a non-hostile manner. Consequences may be disagreeable or uncomfortable but should not involve hostile punishment. Appropriate consequences may include a range of consequences subject to due process where appropriate, including but not limited to:

- Verbal reprimand;
- Temporary removal from the classroom;
- Loss of privileges, including before and after school activities;
- Time-outs for the purpose of calming;
- Notice to parent or guardian;
- Supervised break time;
- Detention;
- In-school suspensions;

- Out-of-school suspensions;
- Re-assignment of seats at lunch, on the bus, class, etc.; and
- Reassignment/rescheduling of classes.

In addition, formative activities will be given, which may include:

- Reparation to the target (recognizing that a direct apology may be contraindicated);
- Completion of curricular based assignments;
- Completion of community service designed to help the aggressor understand and respect differences,; written report required by the aggressor; and
- Therapeutic support for both aggressor and targets.

Notification Obligations:

Notice to parents or guardians: Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee promptly notifies the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this determination, and of the procedures for responding. The Principal or designee will inform the target and/or the target's parents/guardians of the actions that the school will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. The Principal or designee will NOT disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to apparent or guardian unless the information is about the parent/guardian's own child. There may be circumstances in which the Principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to conducting an investigation. Notice given is consistent with state regulations, 603 CMR 49.00.

Notice to another school or District: If a 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 promptly notifies by telephone the Principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications are in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

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 notifies the local law enforcement agency. Notice is consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with Dedham Police Department. In making these determinations, the Principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with school resource officers and the Superintendent or designee. At all times, schools will remain sensitive to the confidentiality of all parties, but may not be able to preserve fully the confidential nature of the allegation.

Collaboration with Families

Dedham Public School will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on how parents and guardians can reinforce anti-bullying curricula at home and any social competency curricula used as well. Programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC), or similar organizations. Additional information about bullying resources for parents and guardians can be found on the District's website and/or in each individual school.

Notification Requirement: Each year, the District will inform parents and guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula being used, including information about the dynamics of bullying, cyberbullying, and on-line safety. All notices and information is made available to parents or guardians in hard copy and in electronic format. The Plan and related information is posted on the Dedham Public School website.

Access to Resources and Services

Each school in Dedham provides a continuum of supports and services to which targets, perpetrators, or their families may be referred as a result of a bullying incident. In addition, Dedham Public School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more such characteristics. The District shall offer a continuum of supports and services to support such vulnerable students, including access to the counseling and therapeutic resources described below.

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 considers what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skill-building

Every school has a counselor and/or school psychologist who is available to provide counseling supports to students. Moreover, a range of responses that balances the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior is provided by:

- a. offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school district's anti-bullying curricula;

- b. providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors, and/or school psychologists, as well as other appropriate school personnel;
- c. implementing a range of academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- d. meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building at home;
- e. adopting individual student safety plans and/or individual student behavior plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and/or
- f. making a referral for evaluation.

Taking Disciplinary Action: If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action is 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 is consistent with the Plan and with the District's code of conduct.

In addition to taking disciplinary action, the following list includes strategies that may/may not be implemented: holding parent conferences, transferring a student's locker, enhancing adult supervision, excluding participation in school-sponsored or school-related functions, after school programs or extra-curricular activities.

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.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others: The Principal or designee considers what adjustments, if any, are needed within the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or designee contacts the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed such as an Individual Student Safety Plan. If so, the Principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Academic and Non-Academic Activities

The Plan, including all curricular and school-based initiatives, is designed to disrupt a negative pattern of bullying behavior. It is an integrated approach which incorporates disciplinary action, behavior management, preventive education, and positive behavior supports. Students in the Dedham Public School will do the following to prevent bullying:

- treat others with respect;
- refuse to bully others;

- refuse to stand by and let others be bullied;
- refuse to watch, laugh, or join in when someone is being bullied;
- try to include everyone, especially those who are often left out; and
- report bullying to an adult.

Training and Professional Development

Annual training for all school staff takes place at the start of each school year. Staff members 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.

In general, on-going professional development opportunities establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, constructive management of classroom behaviors, civil communication, empathy and respect for differences. Professional development builds the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, §370, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development is guided by research-based information on:

- developmentally and/or age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- developmentally and/or age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- research on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Additional areas identified: Dedham Public School includes building pro-social behaviors, developing healthy relationships, fostering supportive behavior management in the school and classroom, and increasing coping strategies to promote a resilient student body.

Dedham Public School provides all staff with an annual notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties in the school, in building-based Staff Handbooks, and in the code of conduct. Mandatory on-line staff training completed by staff at the beginning of each school year confirms that staff have participated in training and received all notifications.

Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of Dedham Public School, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, veteran or military status. Nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of Dedham Public School to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H1/2, or 37H3/4, M.G.L. c.71, §§41, and 42, other applicable laws or local school or district policies or collective bargaining agreements in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the behavior is determined to be bullying or retaliation.

In addition, Chapter 86 requires schools and districts to administer a student survey developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education every four years to assess “school climate and to the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in schools”. Survey results will be used to assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention curricula and instruction that is required under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention statute.