Bourne Public Schools

Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan



Bourne to Be Respectful, Responsible, and Safe

Bourne Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

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Introduction

Bourne Public Schools expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. Bourne Public Schools is committed to providing a learning and working environment for students, employees, and visitors 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. Bourne Public Schools supports this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent /guardian involvement.

Consistent with state, and federal laws, and the policies of Bourne Public Schools, no person shall be discriminated against on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Nothing in this plan, however, prevents the schools or district from taking action to remediate bullying and/or cyber bullying based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or district policies. Bourne Public Schools takes specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, including transgender students, and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, teasing, and any forms of retaliation.

Bourne Public Schools 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/during school-related activities. All reports and complaints of bullying and retaliation will be promptly investigated, and the administration will take prompt action to end such behavior and restore a sense of safety for all.

Per Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 which amended G.L.c.71 §370, we recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The district/schools will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, including transgender students, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Definitions

Aggressor is a student/staff who engages in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more persons of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: 1) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; 2) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his/her property; 3) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; 4) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or 5) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school [Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) c.71, § 370)].

Confidentiality is the expectation that anything done or revealed will be kept private.

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 (M.G.L.c.71, § 370).

Hostile environment 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 condition of a student's education (M.G.L.c.71, § 370).

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who 1) reports bullying, 2) provides information during an investigation of bullying, or 3) witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff are defined as any adult who works directly or indirectly with students.

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

Expectations

It is a violation of this plan for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student to engage in or condone bullying in school or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when made aware of an incident of bullying. This plan is not designed or intended to limit the school's authority to take disciplinary action or take remedial action when such bullying occurs out of school but has a connection to school, or is disruptive to an employee's or student's work or participation in school related activities. Reports of bullying occurring in or out of school will be reviewed and, when a connection to work or school exists, will result in a complete investigation and possible disciplinary action and corrective measures.

Bullying is hereby prohibited 1) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or related activities/functions both on and off school grounds, at school bus stops, on busses or other vehicles owned, leased, or used by Bourne Public Schools; 2) through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by Bourne Public Schools; 3) at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or electronic devices that are not owned, leased or used by Bourne Public Schools if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation in any form against any person is forbidden. If retaliation occurs, it could be considered grounds for dismissal of staff or personnel, and removal from the educational setting for a student.

Reporting

It is the responsibility of every employee, student, and parent to recognize acts of bullying and take every action necessary to ensure that the applicable policies and procedures of Bourne Public Schools are implemented. Any employee or student who believes that he/she has been subjected to bullying has the right to file a complaint and to receive prompt and appropriate handling of the complaint. Further, all reasonable efforts shall be made to maintain the confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties, but proper enforcement of this policy may require disclosure of any or all information received.

The safety of suspected targets is our first consideration once a complaint is received. A safety assessment is made immediately and provisional accommodations are implemented by appropriate staff members as deemed necessary; the designated official for reporting (DOR) also immediately notifies the Transportation Director of both suspected target and aggressors.

Due to confidentiality issues, professional judgment is used in information disclosure. If there is an

injury or emergency on school property, or the incident involves a former student under the age of 21 on school grounds, the Police Resource Officer liaison (PRO) is immediately notified. The PRO liaison is also notified if criminal charges have been filed.

At least once every four years, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department per G.L. c. 71.

Reporters

Designated officials for reporting are as follows: 1) school principals at each school level; 2) the Assistant Superintendent at district level; 3) the Transportation Director for bus incidents; 4) Director of Student Services for anonymous reports. The Police Resource Officer liaison is the law enforcement liaison. The Superintendent of Schools has oversight for district compliance with this plan. Each DOR has a voice mail box and designated email address. Mail should be directed to building principals or the Assistant Superintendent.

All oral reports, in person or via telephone, are recorded on the Incident Report Form. Each designated official for reporting maintains a binder of these reports.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination. Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the DESE Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa. Emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781.338.3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's Office.

Investigation

The DOR is responsible for conducting a prompt investigation. The nature and duration of an investigation will depend on the circumstances, including the type, severity and frequency of the alleged conduct. The goal is to obtain an accurate and complete account of all incidents and circumstances deemed relevant to the allegations in the complaint. The investigation will generally include personal interviews with the complainant, the subject(s) of the complaint and others who witnessed or may have potentially relevant knowledge about the alleged incident giving rise to the complaint. Confidentiality guidelines will be followed. Review of documents,

videos, voice mails, emails, websites, text messages, instant messages, and other items deemed relevant may also be included.

Throughout the investigatory and complaint resolution process, the DOR will make reasonable efforts to regularly inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint and their parents/guardians of the status of the investigation and estimated timing for making a determination. While the DOR will attempt to complete the investigation in three school days, no investigation will exceed fifteen school days except for good cause or with consent of all parties. Claims involving physical violence or serious threats of harm will be expedited.

The DOR, in consultation with the Assistant Superintendent, will take all steps deemed necessary to protect to the extent practicable the complainant, witnesses, and other individuals from further incidents or retaliation pending the outcome of the investigation. These steps may include, but are not limited to, ordering interim disciplinary action, appropriate adult supervision, reassigning classroom seating, temporarily transferring the student subject of the complaint from classes with the complainant or to an alternative school assignment, instructing the alleged aggressor to avoid contact and maintain appropriate safe distance from the alleged target while on school property and at school events and monitoring compliance with any court-ordered protective orders. All interviewees, alleged targets, and alleged aggressors will be warned against retaliation and made aware of the prohibition to speak about the matter in order to maintain the integrity of the investigation. All interim safety measures will be monitored for success.

Confidentiality – Information from a student record of a target or aggressor may not be disclosed to a parent unless the information is about the parent's own child. Disclosure of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency is allowed under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his/her parent. Such communication must protect privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Student record information about a target or aggressor may be disclosed in connection with a health or safety emergency if such information is necessary to protect the health and/or safety of the student or other individuals per 603 CMR 23.07(4) (e), 34 CFR 99.31(a) (10), and 99.36.603 CMR 49.07(3). This is limited, however, to instances where there is an immediate and significant threat; all such disclosures must be documented with reasons why the health and/or safety emergency existed. All employee records are confidential.

Documentation and Records

The district has Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Forms for reporting and documenting bullying claims and investigations. Every DOR keeps written records of all oral

interviews and written responses during the investigation. All investigatory reports, written items, documents, videos, and other types of evidence are kept in each DOR's binder.

Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Once the DOR determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he/she will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior as required by M.G.L.c. 71 § 370(d)(v). These may include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on our anti-bullying curricula;
- 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 pro-social ways to achieve their goals.
- Meeting with parents/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
- Making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking disciplinary action

If the DOR decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the DOR including the nature of the conduct, the age of the students involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the plan and the district/school code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education improvement Act, which should be considered in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline. If the DOR determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents of students alleged to have engaged in bullying or retaliation will be invited to attend a meeting at which the activity, words, and/or images subject to the complaint will be reviewed. A student disciplined for bullying or retaliation will not be readmitted to the regular school program until his/her parents/guardians attend such a meeting.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The DOR will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others. One strategy that may be used is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the DOR 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 DOR will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Training and Professional Development

Annual Staff Training: Annual training for all school staff will include staff duties as outlined in The Plan, an overview of the steps that the DOR 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. All school staff will be trained in supporting the safety of particularly vulnerable populations, including transgender students. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will 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.

Ongoing Professional Development: As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, the content of school and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Appropriate supports for particularly vulnerable populations, including transgender students;
- Developmentally, age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally, age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- Research finding on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment; • Information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying;
- 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. This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by Bourne Public Schools for professional development include:

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference, including gender identity and expression;
- 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.

Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

All staff will be trained to recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Training will include developing awareness and sensitivity to this vulnerability and enhanced vigilance to prevent bullying, harassment or teasing.

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which 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 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;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity

and differences. Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related section of The Plan including how and when the district/schools will review The Plan with them.

General Teaching Approaches that support bullying prevention Efforts: The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment and will be emphasized in the Bourne Public Schools. 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 with regard to: ○ Disabilities, physical appearance, 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;
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

Counseling and Other Services*:* Each school in the Bourne Public School District has an on-site social worker or adjustment counselor who works with students and parents/guardians. Upon request, referrals are made to the following community-based organizations:

- Crisis Intervention Cape Cod and Islands, 24-hour Access
- Child and Family Services
- Family Continuity
- Bay View Associates
- MSPCC
- Support groups at the Bourne Community Center
- Cape Cod Neighborhood Support Coalition
- 2-1-1
- Community Health Center

- Bourne Early Childhood Council
- The PRO liaison also works with parents as warranted.

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.

Collaboration with Families

Bourne Public Schools will offer education programs for parents/guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or schools in collaboration with the PTA, School Councils, Title 1 Advisory Council, and Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Bourne Public Schools provides presentations for parents on bullying and cyberbullying from the assistant district attorney's office and MARC. We have also held parent and community meetings to address Internet Safety and share the school's current devices to protect students and staff.

Each year Bourne Public Schools will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti bullying curricula being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber bullying and online safety. Bourne Public Schools will send parents' written notice each year about the student-related sections of this plan and the district's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents will be in hard copy and electronic formats and in the language most prevalent among them. This plan and related information will be posted on the Bourne Public Schools website.

Notice

Bourne Public Schools will provide students and parents/guardians, in age appropriate terms and in their most prevalent language, annual written notice of the relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Bourne Public Schools will annually provide written notice of and training on The Plan to all school staff. Relevant sections of The Plan will be included in Bourne Public Schools student and faculty handbooks and will also be posted on the Bourne Public Schools website.