

BULLYING PREVENTION

The Fall River Public Schools endeavors to maintain a safe learning environment where students can achieve the highest academic standard. The Fall River Public Schools is committed to creating an environment in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically, in a caring and supportive atmosphere, free of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying. To that end, bullying, cyberbullying and/or retaliation shall be prohibited.

Definitions

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional 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 him/herself, or of damage to his/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” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a: wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo- electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation of impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include 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 or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected. For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used, it is intended to denote either bullying or cyber-bullying.

“Aggressor” is a student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation about bullying, or witnesses or has

reliable information about bullying.

"Hostile environment", 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 the student's education.

"Target" means a student victim of bullying or retaliation.

Prohibitions

Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds;
- At school bus stops;
- On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the Fall River Public Schools.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the Fall River Public School district if the act(s):

- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupts 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.

Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

Each Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms. This written notice may

be provided through the student handbook.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the Fall River Public Schools website.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

MGL 71:37O; 603 C.M.R. 49.00

Fall River Public Schools

Fall River Public Schools
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Fall River Public Schools created this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, in consultation with administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community at large. The Plan’s format parallels the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education *Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework* and is designed to be used by all schools as well as by the school district in a consistent manner.

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I. LEADERSHIP

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 includes all district and building administrators, teacher leaders, guidance counselors, counseling staff, and wellness teachers. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan as well as evaluating it for effectiveness.

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, administrators, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, students, parents, and guardians. This consultation included a public comment period for feedback from parents as well as the community at large.
- B. Assessing needs and resources. The Plan shall serve as the school's and district's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, have assessed the effectiveness of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services.

During the initial needs assessment, the following actions were taken.

1. A district-wide Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Committee was assembled which assessed current school and district initiatives to identify gaps and needs at each of the levels including elementary, middle, and high school.
 2. Each school completed *The Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework*.
 3. Students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels completed a survey to identify specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying, in particular regarding vulnerable populations, "hot spots" within schools/ school grounds/buses. This information will continue to be used to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, to inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.
- C. Planning and oversight. The Fall River Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has identified that the building principal or designee as the individual who is responsible for receiving all reports on bullying. The building principal or designee is responsible for collecting and analyzing building data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure whether or not there are improved outcomes. This same individual is also responsible for creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors. The Fall River Public Schools will offer ongoing professional development that is required by the law. The building principal or designee is responsible for planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors as well as for choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use to instruct students about issues of bullying, including cyber bullying. Each building principal or designee is responsible for implementing the Fall River Public Schools Bullying

Prevention and Intervention Plan; for amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and reviewing and updating these materials each year, or more frequently, if necessary.

The Superintendent or designee is responsible for developing new or revising current Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related protocols under the Fall River Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and for designating key staff to be in charge of reviewing and updating them on a biennial basis in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. The School Committee is responsible for the approval of any new school committee policy or revisions to existing school committee policies.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O Fall River Public Schools will 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. It also includes a description of the content and frequency of staff training and ongoing professional development that align with the school/district needs and required topics. All locally identified additional areas of training will be based on needs and areas of concern as identified by school and district staff.

The Fall River Public Schools Bullying Prevention Plan will focus on the following six topics. :

- A. Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan 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. All 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. New teachers will receive training during the orientation session that is offered to all new teachers prior to the start of the school year.
- B. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of curricula, programs, school initiatives, and bullying prevention and intervention strategies necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will increase the skills and knowledge base of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development within the Fall River Public Schools will be informed by research and will include information on the six topics as required by state law:
- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - (iv) 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;
 - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
 - (vi) 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 by the school or district 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; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- integrating students of differing abilities/buddy/mentoring programs.

C. Written notice to staff. Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Fall River Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities in the school employee handbook.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. The Fall River Public Schools is committed to understanding the emotional needs of students' families.

- A. Identifying resources. School counselors, together with building designee, will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, The Fall River Public Schools will continue to work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced-based curricula and to provide additional preventive services to students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff.
- B. Counseling and other services. School counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include on-going emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community based counseling referrals when appropriate. School counselors meet with parents and teachers as needed to help address students' academic emotional, and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible. School counselors work with administrators to provide linguistically appropriate resources to identified families. School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSA's) within the local vicinity, providing services to

Mas Health/Medicaid eligible students. School counselors, school psychologists and special needs educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and social skills groups for students with social skills weaknesses.

- C. Students with disabilities. As required by M G. L. c. 71B, § 370, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines that the student has an autism spectrum disorder or 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 Fall River Public Schools has a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. School counselors will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies.

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

The following procedures are based on the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 370. In addition to the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, where the alleged conduct is on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability or religion, the district should also consider whether the conduct constitutes a hostile environment based on those protected classes, consistent with its Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures.

- 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 will be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an incident reporting form,¹ a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an incident reporting form is not required as a condition of making or recording a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of an incident reporting form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. An incident reporting form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the

¹ See Appendix for Reporting Form.

reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, 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 when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee 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 school or 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. 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, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written 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.

Please note: *Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit personnel's ability to call 911 where a threat to safety of the student and/or other individuals is present. If there is concern about anyone's immediate physical safety, please call 911 first, then notify an administrator.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

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. Interventions will consider the rights of both the target and the aggressor, including both the consideration of remedial and disciplinary measures for the aggressor as appropriate..

In determining the steps necessary to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents, the principal or designee shall consider that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race,

color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, 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.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student or staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student or staff member 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 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 Fall River Police Department. 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 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the Fall River Police Department if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

- C. Investigation. Upon receipt of a report or complaint that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, the principal will promptly commence an investigation. If there is concern for physical harm of a student or student, the principal shall take interim measures reasonably calculated to ensure the safety of the student or students during the pendency of the investigation. In investigating any such complaint, the principal or designee

will interview students, staff, and any witnesses to the alleged conduct. To the extent practicable and consistent with the principal's obligation to act promptly and to thoroughly investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process and shall not disclose unnecessary or confidential information to interview subjects. During any such interviews, the principal will inform the target, aggressor, and all witnesses that retaliatory treatment of any individual for reporting or lack of cooperation with an investigation of bullying will result in disciplinary action may include suspension or expulsion from school.

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.

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

At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, the principal shall notify the Fall River Police Department and School Resource Officer if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. Notice shall be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. The principal shall document the reasons for his or her decision to notify law enforcement. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to require reporting to a law enforcement agency in situations in which bullying and retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.

- D. Determinations. The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all the facts and circumstances in a timely manner. If, after the investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal will determine what remedial action may be required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. The principal will also consider what disciplinary and/or remedial measures are reasonably calculated to eliminate the bullying and to prevent its reoccurrence.

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.

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 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.

E. Notice of Investigative Findings

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify parents or guardians of the target and aggressor of this, and of the

procedures for responding to it. While prior notice of an investigation shall not be required, the principal shall not be precluded from notifying the parents of a target or aggressor prior to completion of the principal's investigation. This communication will be done in the primary language of the home.

In notifying the parents of a target or aggressor of an investigation or the principal's findings thereon, the principal shall maintain the privacy and confidentiality of any individual or child who is not the child of the parents to whom the notice is provided. The principal shall ensure that any notice to the parents complies with applicable state regulations including, but not limited to, 603 CMR 49.00, and shall not report specific information to the target's parent(s) about the disciplinary action taken against an aggressor unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The notice to the parents or guardians of the victim shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents of the victim should be provided the following contact information: Program Quality Assurance Services, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370.

F. Requests for Reconsideration

If either the complaining party or the individual against whom the complaint was made is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, that person may request, in writing, a reopening of the investigation or reconsideration of the investigative findings. The written request shall state the reasons for request and shall be delivered to the Superintendent of the Fall River Public Schools within ten (10) school days or the parents'/guardians' receipt of notice of the investigative findings. Superintendent or designee shall decide whether or not to reopen the investigation and shall provide written notification of that determination to the appealing party and to the other party involved.

The filing of a request for reconsideration or a reopening of the investigation shall not stay the imposition of disciplinary sanctions, or the implementation of any safety interventions determined to be appropriate by the principal.

G. Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district 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)(vi). Fall River Public Schools administrators and staff may consider the following skill-building approaches:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's 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 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; and
- including offerings, supports and, where appropriate, individual behavior plans addressing the recognition that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, 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.

2. 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 or district's code of conduct. Possible consequences to serious incidents of bullying include suspension and expulsion from school.

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.

3. 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. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. He/she may also implement a safety plan. In developing a safety plan, the principal or designee shall consider that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, 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.

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.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Fall River Public Schools is committed to promoting a strong home-school partnership regarding bullying prevention. Each school will provide information to families that will support common language across the district as well as sharing prevention and identification strategies. Communication between home and school will be via school notices, school and district web sites, and parent conferences/presentations on a regular basis.

It will also focus on school and district-specific approaches to collaboration which 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 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. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.
- B. Notification requirements. Each year the school will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the bullying prevention curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school district or school plan, 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 school or district will post the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The following information will be included in the Bullying Prevention Plan, all student handbooks, staff handbooks, and in the student code of conduct in accordance with *M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(b)*.

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

(1) Bullying shall be prohibited on school grounds, 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. Bullying at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school district or school, shall be prohibited if the bullying: (a) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (b) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (c) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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

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.

X. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Fall River Public Schools, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school in Fall River or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, gender identity, disability, 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 including its Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures.

In addition, nothing in the 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, 37H½ and/or 37H 3/4, 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.

REFERENCES: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

LEGAL REFERENCES:
MGL 71:37O; 603 C.M.R. 49.00