

Gateway Regional School District

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

(Based upon School Committee Policy File: JICFB)

- I. Statement of Purpose
 - a. The Gateway Regional School District is committed to creating and maintaining a learning environment that is safe, caring, accepting, and inclusive with civility and respect for all members of the community regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or for any other reason.
- II. District descriptions of, and statements prohibiting, bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation.
 - a. Bullying is prohibited: (i) 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 and (ii) 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, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs. The School Committee expects administrators and supervisors to make clear to school community members that bullying in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees.
 - b. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited. The District will take appropriate steps to protect from retaliation persons who take action consistent with this Plan, or who report, file a complaint of, or cooperate in an investigation of a violation of this Plan. Threats or acts of retaliation, whether person-to-person, by electronic means, or through third parties, are serious offenses that will subject the violator to significant disciplinary and other corrective action up to and including expulsion.
 - c. The Gateway Regional School District will endeavor to maintain a learning and working environment free of bullying.

d. Definitions:

- i. "Bullying", the repeated use by one or more school community members 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. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying. Bullying is based upon unequal physical, psychological or social power or perceived power. Bullying may occur in a dating relationship. Bullying generally involves a pattern of conduct that is directed at another person, rather than a single, isolated incident. Bullying may include elements of bias (as defined below under Harassment).
- ii. "Cyber-bullying", 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 (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.
- iii. "Cyber-harassment" is defined as any willful and repeated harm inflicted through, but not limited to, Web pages, social networking sites, email, instant messaging or text messaging using computers, cell phones and other electronic devices which is motivated by the target individual or individuals membership in a protected group, whether real or perceived.
- iv. "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 conditions of the student's education. A hostile environment is created and the victim's rights infringed upon creating a disruption of the education process if, following an incident covered in this paragraph, said intimidation, bullying or harassment, by either the perpetrator(s) or anyone acting on their behalf, whether through written,

verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, continues within the confines of the school building, on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity, function, program.

- v. "Harassment", is defined as unwelcome, intentional, unprovoked discriminatory behavior, toward an individual or individuals, motivated by membership (real or perceived) in a protected category including: race, color, religion, ethnicity/national origin, disability, gender, gender identify, sexual orientation and age. Harassment included cyber-harassment (see prior definition).
- vi. "Retaliation" is defined as any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment by a school community member directed against another school community member for reporting or filing a complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing of a report or complaint, for cooperating in an investigation under this plan, or for taking action consistent with this plan.
- vii. "School Community Member" is defined as any student, district or school employee, school committee member, independent contractor, school volunteer, parent or legal guardian of a student, or a visitor on school premises or at a school-related or school sponsored function or activity.

III. Confidentiality of Records (49.07)

- a. A principal may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent unless the information is about the parent's own child.
- b. A principal may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his/her parents/guardians. The principal shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
- c. A principal may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals as provided in 603 CMR 23.07(4) (e) and 34 CFR 99.31(a) (10) and 99.36. This provision is limited to instances in which the principal has determined there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individuals. It is limited to the period of emergency and does not allow for blanket disclosure of student record information. The principal must document the disclosures and the reasons that the principal determined that a health or safety emergency exists.

IV. Requirements for Students with Disabilities

- a. For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing (M.G.L., c. 71B, s3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010).
- b. If the IEP team determines that a 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 the disability, the Team must address the skills and proficiencies

needed that shall be included in the student's IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing (M.G.L., c. 71B, s3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010).

V. Procedures for reporting bullying or retaliation.

- a. Any school employee, independent contractor, or school volunteer who becomes aware of or has a reasonable belief that harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime has occurred or may have occurred on school property at a school-related activity, or off school premises when the conduct may impact on the learning environment of the District's schools or a particular student, must report the alleged incident(s) to the building principal or designee within twenty-four (24) hours of a school day (no later than the same time on the next day that school is in session) .
- b. Any student or other person (who is not a school employee, independent contractor or school volunteer) who becomes aware of or has a reasonable belief that harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime has occurred or may have occurred on school property, in a school-related activity or off school premises when the conduct may impact on the learning environment of the District's schools or a particular student, is strongly encouraged to and should report the incident(s) to the building principal or designee within twenty-four (24) hours of a school day (no later than the same time on the next day that school is in session) . In situations where a student or other person does not feel comfortable reporting the incident to a principal or a designee, (s) he may report it to a trusted school employee, who must transmit the report to a principal within twenty-four (24) hours of a school day (no later than the same time on the next day that school is in session).
- c. Any school community member may also report alleged incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime directly to a Principal (or his/her designee), or to the Superintendent (or his/her designee).
- d. Reports may be provided orally (directly to school staff or to the district's safety line (413.685.1050), in written form (using the district's paper based form or through a letter, note or other written means), or through the district's website - (www.grsd.org).
- e. The principal/designee will also explain that the investigation will be kept as confidential as possible, but that the District cannot promise absolute confidentiality, and may not be able to withhold the target's identity from the aggressor, since such a promise could interfere with the District's ability to enforce its Policy, conduct a fair and thorough investigation, or impose disciplinary or corrective action.

VI. Anonymous Reports.

- a. Reports may be made anonymously which will trigger an investigation but no disciplinary actions may be taken based solely upon an anonymous report.
- b. Ideally the report/complaint will include identifying the name(s) of the subject of the complaint, if known; describing the facts and circumstances of the incident or pattern of behavior; providing the time(s) and date(s) of the incident(s); and identifying any witnesses and relevant documentary information.

- VII. Response Procedures to a report/complaint:
- a. Upon receipt of a report/complaint, the principal (or his/her designee) will promptly investigate the incident to determine if bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, or retaliation has occurred. Investigation of the complaint will be completed within one to five (1-5) school days whenever possible, and if additional time is required to conduct the investigation no more than two such extensions of five (5) days shall be permitted. Parents/guardian(s) of any students involved in a complaint will be notified by the administration of the complaint within twenty-four (24) hours of a school day (no later than the same time on the next day that school is in session) upon determination that bullying has occurred. Such notification of bullying must comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (603 CMR 23.00) and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 99 as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07). The investigation includes but is not limited to:
 - i. Interview the reporter if possible
 - ii. Note witnesses
 - iii. Note adults who may have been present
 - iv. Investigate actions by perpetrator's friends or others on his/her behalf
 - v. Query about any online or electronic involvement
 - vi. Query about behaviors which are threatening in the context of bullying but are not explicitly forbidden in the school's disciplinary code
 - b. There are several circumstances under which an incident may be referred to the Superintendent (or his/her designee). These include:
 - i. When a parent/guardian/school community member feels the situation is unresolved at the building level.
 - ii. When the incident involves the administrator or other staff in a building who are responsible for investigations.
 - iii. When the situation remains unresolved even after investigation and corrective action (at administrator's discretion but generally meaning there are two or more separate and substantiated incidents regarding a single person or group of persons).
 - iv. Adult to Adult behavior (at the building administrator's discretion).
 - c. All reports/complaints will be documented on the "Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Incident Reporting Form."
 - d. All investigative information will be documented on the "Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Investigation Form."
 - e. When a report or complaint involves physical injury, the principal (or his/her designee) will report the incident to the Superintendent within twenty-four (24) hours of a school day (no later than the same time on the next day that school is in session).
 - f. The principal/designee will determine whether the allegations of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment or retaliation have been substantiated, and whether the Student Code of Conduct has been violated. If the complaint is substantiated, the principal/designee will:

- i. Seek the advice and guidance of legal counsel for the District if legal issues arise.
- ii. Prepare a written report that includes the investigative findings, the investigative steps taken, and the reasons for those findings. These findings will specify whether the allegations have been substantiated, whether the Student Code of Conduct, has been violated, and any decision for disciplinary and corrective action.
- iii. Take appropriate corrective action which may include an informal or formal resolution and/or disciplinary action
- iv. Notify the parents of both the target and aggressor of the incident
- v. Notify the parents of the target(s) of actions taken to prevent further acts of bullying/cyber-bullying, harassment, or retaliations
- vi. When appropriate, notify another school or district if the reported incident involves students from outside the district. The principal/director of a public school, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school or collaborative school will be notified within twenty-four (24) hours of a normal school day (by the same time on the next day school is in session) by telephone by the investigator 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.
- vii. When appropriate, notify law enforcement if the principal/designee believes criminal charges may be pursued (this may include physical injury, destruction of public/personal property, potential hate crimes and other acts of a serious criminal nature). Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and all locally established agreements with local law enforcement and the district attorney's office.
- viii. All actions taken will be documented on the "Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Determination Form."
- ix. The principal/designee will notify the complainant and the subject of the complaint in writing within five school days to let them know whether the complaint has been substantiated. If the complaint is substantiated, the principal/designee will also notify the target of any non-disciplinary corrective action imposed to protect him/her from future Policy violations within five school days. If the complaint is substantiated and the aggressor remains a student in the school, the principal/designee will meet with the aggressor and his/her parent or guardian, to describe the disciplinary and/or corrective action imposed, the school's expectations for future behavior and the potential consequences for retaliation or future violation of the Policy.
- x. If a complaint is substantiated, a report of the incident and its resolution will be placed in the aggressor's student record.
- xi. If the District's investigation results from a third party report, the principal/designee will inform that person that the District has taken steps consistent with the Policy, while not providing information about any

- disciplinary action imposed or any other information that would violate applicable state and federal confidentiality laws or student record regulations.
- xii. The Principal (or his/her designee) will notify all parties of the investigation/resolution of the complaint to the extent consistent with state and federal law. Please note that this element does NOT permit the school to release information that is protected by existing confidentiality laws.

VIII. Range of Actions Following Determination of Bullying

a. Informal Response

- i. The principal/designee will separately discuss in a timely manner with the target and the aggressor and, if a student, with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s), the informal process, the nature of the complaint, explain the prohibition against retaliation, and determine the corrective action the target seeks.
- ii. If appropriate after adequate investigation, the principal/designee, in consultation with the Superintendent, will propose a resolution. If the target, the aggressor and their parent(s) or guardian(s) agree with the proposed resolution, the principal/designee will write down the resolution, and the target and the aggressor, and their parent or guardian, if present, will sign it, and each person will receive a copy. At the meeting, the principal/designee will again explain the prohibition against retaliation.
- iii. A principal/designee will monitor the situation, and will follow up with the target to determine whether there are further incidents or concerns. The principal/designee will maintain a written record of the follow-ups (using the "Gateway Regional Safety/Conduct Form").
- iv. If the target and aggressor cannot agree to an informal resolution, or if at any time after resolution the principal/designee, in consultation with the District Legal Compliance Officer, determines that the problem is not corrected, the District may apply the Student Code of Conduct or commence a Formal Proceeding. If this Policy does not cover the reported conduct, the District will address the report or complaint through its Student Code of Conduct, if applicable.
- v. File retention: the principal will maintain in a separate confidential file the Gateway Bullying/Harassment Incident Reporting Form, the Bullying/Harassment Investigation Form, the Bullying/Harassment Determination Form and the Safety/Conduct Form, information obtained through inquiry and investigation, and the proposed and agreed-to resolution, if any, and will maintain a copy of the file in the applicable student record file to the extent required by law.

b. Formal Proceedings:

- i. The principal/designee will separately discuss in a timely manner with the target and the aggressor and, if a student, with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s), the formal process, explain the prohibition against retaliation, and determine the remedy the complainant seeks.

- ii. File Retention: The principal will maintain in a separate confidential file the Gateway Bullying/Harassment Incident Reporting Form, the Bullying/Harassment Investigation Form, the Bullying/Harassment Determination Form and the Safety/Conduct Form, investigatory interview notes and reports, findings made, the results of the investigation, including any decision for action, and other relevant investigatory materials, and will maintain a copy of the file in the applicable student record file to the extent required by law.
 - iii. Any disciplinary or corrective action against a student must conform to the due process requirements of federal and state law.
 - iv. A principal/designee will monitor the situation, and will follow up with the target to determine whether there are further incidents or concerns, and whether the corrective action imposed has been effective. The principal/designee will maintain a written record of the follow-ups using the "Gateway Regional Safety/Conduct Plan."
 - v. Any right of appeal from a disciplinary decision is governed by the Student Code of Conduct, the school's disciplinary code and Massachusetts and federal law.
- c. Disciplinary Actions
- i. If a principal/designee concludes that the subject of the complaint has violated this Policy, the District will in a timely manner impose disciplinary measures and/or corrective action reasonably calculated to end the complained of conduct, deter future improper conduct, and protect the complainant(s) and other similarly situated individuals. In imposing disciplinary and corrective measures the District will take into account harm the target and other members of the school community suffered and any damage to school climate or property.
 - ii. Disciplinary and corrective action concerning a student may include, but is not limited to, a written warning; classroom or school transfer; short-term or long-term suspension; exclusion from participation in school sponsored functions, after-school programs, and/or extracurricular activities; limiting or denying access to a part or area of a school; exclusion, expulsion, or discharge from school; adult supervision on school premises; parent conferences; an apology to the victim; awareness training (to help students understand the impact of their behavior); participation in empathy development, cultural diversity, anti-harassment, anti-bullying or intergroup relations programs; counseling, or any other action to be determined within the discretion of the District.
 - iii. The District complies with the federal and state law requirements that apply to the discipline of students with disabilities, including the federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" ("IDEA").
 - iv. Acts of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment or retaliation allegedly committed by adult members (including teachers, administrators, staff members, other school personnel, parents/guardians, community partners, school committee

members, or other visitors to the school) of the school community will be reported to school administrators and/or the Superintendent's office, for investigation and consequences, in accordance with applicable procedures, including appropriate legal actions.

IX. Safety Plans 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.

- a. 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.
- b. After the determination that bullying has occurred, and after appropriate disciplinary action has been taken, the Principal/designee will develop with the target, and if a student with his/her parent/guardian(s) a safety plan; and with the aggressor(s) and if a student with their parent/guardian(s) a conduct plan. Both plans will include notifying the teachers (or relevant school community member) not only of the incident, but also of all the parties involved, specifying their roles.
- c. A staff member (as designated by the administrator, school community member, and if a student, the parent/guardian(s)) will be assigned as a check-in person to regularly meet with the school community member to ensure that the safety plan is being followed. The safety plan of the target will include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - i. No acts of retaliation have occurred.
 - ii. Strategies are provided for dealing with future incidents, emphasizing immediate reporting of any further acts.
 - iii. Information regarding outside support services are provided to the school community member and if a student, his/her family.
 - iv. The frequency and duration of the check-ins will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - v. After two (2) weeks (or sooner if necessary), the check-in person will provide a progress report on the emotional well-being of the school community member to the principal/designee.

- vi. The safety plan cannot be discontinued without the agreement of the school community member, and if a student, the parents/guardians, the designated check-in person, and the principal/designee.
 - vii. A selection of a 'Safe Zone'—an area identified where the victim can go to get help from a trusted school community member.
 - viii. A mechanism for information all relevant adults (teachers, coaches, bus drivers, counselors and other support staff) of the situation between the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s).
 - ix. A plan for monitoring of less structured areas of the school environment, such as buses, lunchroom and playground.
 - x. Follow up with parent/guardian(s) of all involved to inform them of actions being taken.
- d. The principal/designee will hold compulsory meetings to ensure that the conduct plan is being followed for the aggressor(s) which will include, but not be limited to, the following:
- i. No further acts of bullying have been committed.
 - ii. The school community member has been educated regarding acceptable alternative behaviors.
 - iii. The school community member has received further education of the school's anti-bullying policy, including the potential for more severe school consequences and/or criminal charges being filed.
 - iv. The frequency and duration of these meetings will be agreed upon and will depend on future actions.
 - v. Information regarding outside support resources will be made available to the school community member(s) and if students, their parents/guardians.
 - vi. A progress report identifying school community member conduct will be provided after two (2) weeks (or sooner if necessary).
 - vii. Discontinuation of the conduct plans will be determined by the principal/designee. All meetings and the ending of the conduct plan should be documented and kept throughout the school community member's school career. If a student, parents/guardians will be notified of the discontinuance of a conduct plan.
- e. Staff members (as designated by the administrator/designee) will be asked to observe activity to ensure that anyone who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying is safe and check that:
- i. No acts of retaliation have occurred.
 - ii. Strategies are provided for dealing with any incidents, emphasizing immediate reporting of any further acts.
- f. Any person who knowingly makes false charges or brings a malicious complaint regarding bullying may be subjected to any of the disciplinary and/or corrective actions outlined in this plan.

X. School Climate and Public Involvement

- a. Gateway's Bullying and Intervention Plan will be developed and revised in consultation with school staff, school volunteers, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians.
- b. The initial plan will be developed through involvement of a Parent Advisory Committee, the Safe and Drug Free Schools Committee, all school staff and with input from two public meetings open to all (Spring 2010 for overall school climate review and Fall 2010 for review and input on the bullying plan and next steps regarding school climate). These groups currently include representation from local law enforcement agencies and the district has an operating agreement with the Hampshire County District Attorney's Office, all seven local police departments and the Massachusetts State Police to review student issues related to various activities both inside and outside of the normal school day and school year.
- c. Gateway's school climate is monitored through student surveys, staff participation in school and district committees, a parental advisory committee and administrative open door policies. This data is carefully reviewed, and appropriate responses are developed, by the Safe and Drug Free Schools Committee which includes a diverse representation of the school community and other local agencies.
- d. Information on Gateway's school climate and more specifically, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be distributed through student handbooks, red folders, mailings, staff meetings, student assemblies and through the district's website.
- e. The school will provide parent/guardian education and resources through the auspices of the Safe and Drug Free Schools Task Force in conjunction with PTO's, school councils, Friends of Gateway and the special education parent advisory council. This will include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Working with the School Climate Parent Advisory Committee to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying by maintaining a positive school climate.
 - ii. Each year parents will receive resources on bullying and bully prevention, information on the anti-bullying activities in the schools, information on the bullying curriculum in place in school and ideas for how families can collaborate with the school to prevent bullying including:
 1. How parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan;
 2. The dynamics of bullying; and
 3. Online safety and cyberbullying.
 - iii. 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.

- iv. The schools and/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, and the Safe and Drug Free Task Force.
- v. 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 cyberbullying 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 Plan and related information on its website.

XI. Notice to Law Enforcement Agency

- a. Before the first day of each school year, the superintendent or designee of a school district shall communicate with the chief of police or designee of the local police department about the implementation of this section. Such communication may include agreeing on a method of notification, a process for informal communication, updates of prior written agreements, or any other subject appropriate to the implementation of this section.
- b. At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, the principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency 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 local law enforcement agencies. The principal shall document the reasons for his/her decision to notify law enforcement. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to require reporting to law enforcement agencies in situations where bullying and retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.
 - i. In making the determination whether notification to law enforcement is appropriate, the principal may consult with the school resource officer and any other individuals the principal deems appropriate.
 - ii. Nothing in this section shall prevent the principal from taking appropriate disciplinary or other action pursuant to school district or school policy and state law, provided that such disciplinary actions balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
 - iii. The principal shall respond to the incident as set forth in relevant provisions of this plan.
- c. If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in the school district or school, the principal of the school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall notify the local

law enforcement agencies if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

XII. Training and Professional Development

- 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. 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.
- 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.
- c. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of schoolwide and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
 - (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 cyberbullying; and
 - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

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 includes:

- i. promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- ii. fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- iii. building relationships and communicating with families;
- iv. constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- v. using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- vi. applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- vii. teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- viii. engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- ix. maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

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

XIII. District Resources

- a. The district shall annually identify resources for providing a positive school climate including staffing, curriculum, school safety, student and staff counseling, student intervention teams through the auspices of the Safe and Drug Free School Committee in conjunction with a parent advisory committee, the School Based Health Center, the Huntington Health Center, the Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force, the District Attorney's Office and the Russell State Police Barracks. The Safe and Drug Free School Committee may also contact and engage other outside agencies in planning for and developing resources to maintain and improve a positive school climate.
- b. As needed students (both victims and aggressors) and/or their families, shall be referred to the School Based Health Center, or other outside agencies, for assistance based upon the protocols currently in place and/or on recommendations from the district nurse leader, guidance or adjustment counselors, school psychologist or administrators.
- c. The district shall also work on developing appropriate behavior through skills-building activities with students. These may include:
 - i. offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;
 - ii. providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
 - iii. implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
 - iv. meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
 - v. adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
 - vi. making a referral for evaluation.

XIV. School Based Activities to Encourage Positive School Climate

- a. Curricular
 - i. Second Step (Preschool)
 - ii. PATHS "Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies" (K-4)
 - iii. Love and Logic
 - iv. Positive Actions (4)
 - v. Bullyproofing Your School (K-4, 5 & 8)
 - vi. Teenage Health Modules (Health Classes)
 - vii. Violence Prevention Curriculum (7-12)
- b. Teaching Strategies/Approaches
 - i. Having clear expectations for classroom and school routines
 - ii. Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement at all times
 - iii. Using positive behavioral supports
 - iv. Developing positive adult relationships with students
 - v. Modeling, teaching and rewarding pro-social, healthy and respectful behaviors

- vi. Using positive approaches to behavioral health
- vii. Providing internet safety training and appropriate technology safeguards
- viii. Supporting student interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities
- c. Co-Curricular Activities
 - i. STARS Program (Elementary)
 - ii. Gateway "Gotcha" Middle School
 - iii. "Good Choices" Program (7-12)
 - iv. Student Organizations/Activities
 - 1. Gay/Straight Alliance
 - 2. Peer Mediation
 - 3. White Ribbon Campaign
 - 4. Spread the Word, Shred the Word
 - 5. Middle School After-School Program

Attachments:

The Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Incident Reporting Form
The Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Investigation Form
The Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Determination Form
The Gateway Regional Safety/Conduct Plan
The Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Contact Log
The Gateway Regional Bullying/Harassment Flowchart