

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan  
Gateway Regional School District**

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# Gateway Regional School District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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## **Priority Statement**

Gateway Regional School District expects that all members of the school community will treat one another in a respectful manner. The District is committed to providing and maintaining a safe, secure, and positive school climate and culture. This positive culture will increase student engagement and promote academic achievement. The District will purposefully build a kind, inclusive community.

The District is legally responsible to create a safe environment for *all* students and will teach all students strategies to prevent and respond to teasing, bullying, cyber bullying, and harassment. 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.

The District understands 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. Teachers and staff have the professional responsibility to monitor vulnerable students and provide additional support, as required by law.

The District must establish separate discrimination or harassment policies that include these or other categories of students. Nothing in this section shall alter the obligations of the district to remediate any discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state or federal law.

The District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. The District will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. The District will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, the District has established this Bullying Prevention Plan to prevent, intervene, and respond to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent shall be responsible for investigating the report and taking other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged target. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report and taking other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victims.

## **Policy Scope**

At Gateway Regional, bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or cyber-harassment is prohibited:

1. on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds; or
2. at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or
3. through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or
4. at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district; or
5. if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

This plan applies to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to educators, administrators, school nurses, paraprofessionals, food service workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular advisors, wrap around staff, substitutes, volunteers and contracted service providers. Although the school district cannot make directives to caregivers or community members, district administrators will include local law enforcement to settle matters outside the district's control.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

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

## **Collaboration with Families**

The District is committed to working with families to ensure that bullying is addressed immediately. If families have questions or concerns about this plan or bullying in general, please contact the school principal or superintendent.

A number of resources for caregivers that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the District can be found on our website at <https://www.grsd.org/general-information/bullying>.

The District will inform caregivers of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used in the student/family handbook available on our website each year. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety.

## **Reporting Bullying**

Any member of the school community, students, staff, caregivers, or other community members may make a complaint and report bullying, harassment or retaliation behavior orally or in writing. All individuals who are reported as aggressors, targets, witnesses, or are otherwise involved in a bullying incident will be afforded the same protection regardless of their legal status. Any member of the school community who retaliates against another for reporting bullying or harassment, or who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action.

The school principal or their designee will be responsible for investigating reports of bullying immediately but no later than two school days after the report is received.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, caregivers, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing by their administrator. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, caregivers, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. Written reports may be submitted via email to the principal, via the incident report form found on our website or in the student/family handbook, or via [this anonymous reporting google form for students in grades 6-12](#) and [this anonymous reporting google form for grades PreK-5](#).

### **Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when an administrator is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. Reports can be made via email, SWIS, verbally in person, or in writing.

### **Reporting by Students, Caregivers, and Others**

The District expects students, caregivers, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Reports can be made via email, verbally in person, or in writing. Students, caregivers, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report.

## **Anonymous Reporting**

Any school community member may make an anonymous report of bullying, harassment, or retaliation. Anonymous information cannot be used by itself for disciplinary proceedings, but it may lead to an investigation into the allegation if additional corroborating evidence is determined.

## **Responding to Reports of Bullying**

### **Safety**

Immediately after receiving a report of bullying, 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 an interim 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. Safety plans are shared with staff who have direct responsibility for supervising the alleged aggressor and the alleged target, which may include staff assigned to hallway duties and general supervision.

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.

### **Obligation to Notify**

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

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.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an

incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

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

### **Investigation**

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

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

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

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

Investigation of the complaint will be concluded within 14 school days of the filing of the initial report. Most investigations will be concluded within 10 school days.

There are circumstances in which an incident is referred to the Superintendent of Schools.

- When a parent, guardian, or student feels an incident was not resolved at the building level.
- When an incident involves the Equity Officer or principal or other building staff responsible for an investigation.
- When a situation remains unresolved after an investigation and corrective action. Usually this would be two or more substantiated incidents involving a single individual or group.
- Adult to adult bullying behavior.

## **Determination**

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

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

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

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.

## **Responses to Address Bullying**

### **Teaching Appropriate Behaviors**

Upon the principal or designee determining that 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) (v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions with a counselor;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with counselors and/or other appropriate school personnel;
- 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
- making a referral for evaluation.

### **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 this Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

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

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

### **Ensuring Safety**

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. This may include but not be limited to extending the interim safety plan to run through the remainder of the school year or through a set time determined by the school administration.

Safety plans will be written to parties involved, and will be clearly communicated (both verbally and in writing) to the students, the teachers and support staff that supervise the students, and with the caregivers of both students. Safety plans will include expectations of both students, as well as the consequences for not meeting these expectations. Safety plans are expected to have written acknowledgement from the caregivers, the administrators and the students, and will be shared in writing to teachers, counselors, support staff and anyone who supervises the students on a plan. If written acknowledgement is intentionally withheld by the student, parent and/or guardian after it is shared with them, the safety plan will still be implemented as written. In these instances where a student, parent and/or guardian refuses to sign the plan, the principal or designee will inform the superintendent. Safety plans will expire at the end of each school year, but can be reimplemented at the request of the administration or family.

### **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Support**

Any caregiver wishing to share a concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs>. Emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are available at the Superintendent's office.

## **Student Support**

### **Resources and Counseling**

Any student or staff member who has been a target, aggressor or bystander of bullying may access additional support at school. This may include but not be limited to counseling, individualized or small group support with our anti-bullying curriculum, or regular meetings with counseling, nursing, or administrative staff.

Students who need additional social-emotional support can receive counseling and guidance from school psychologists, counselors, and special educators. IEP and 504 Teams may explore implementing an evidence-based social skills curriculum and additional time in social skills groups for students who are especially vulnerable to bullying and harassment due to race, disability, or gender orientation.

In addition, some students and families may need to be referred to outside services. School psychologists, guidance counselors, and/or special educators will help students and families find the outside services they need in a timely way. A community resource that is accessible to Gateway students is the School Based Health Center through the Hilltown Community Health Center.

### **Requirements for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may need additional support at school as they develop social skills. 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.

The IEP or 504 team can recommend pragmatic language and /or counseling services to supplement a school's social skills curriculum. The social skills curriculum may require reinforcement, repetition, or modification to reach a student with identified social skills deficits. This is often provided by small group instruction but may be provided through individualized instruction. A school counselor, school adjustment counselor, or psychologist can monitor a student's social skills development and respond to socially challenging circumstances in the school environment.

If a student with an identified disability is involved in a bullying, harassment, or retaliation incident, either as a target or aggressor, there should be careful consideration of the student's disability. The district employs a bullying protocol in the form of a checklist that was developed in accordance with our legal expectations. This form is reviewed, completed and signed by all Team members at the conclusion of every Annual and Triennial Review for every student on an IEP. Based upon the findings of the Team, the IEP is modified to ensure that for all students who have a disability that affects social skill development, or a disability that may make a student vulnerable to

bullying, harassment or teasing; the IEP must include a plan to address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

## **Bullying Prevention: Staff Trainings**

### **Annual Required Staff Training**

Annual training for all school staff on the contents of this plan will occur each year before school begins as part of the mandated training. The training will include:

- The contents of this plan including the definitions of bullying and the process for prompt reporting including technical aspects
- The professional responsibilities of staff for preventing bullying to create a safe and supportive classroom and hallway environment

The principal or designee is responsible for collecting evidence that staff completed this training. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in the mandated training within two weeks of their start date.

### **Ongoing Professional Development**

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

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- developmentally (or 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 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;
- information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- 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.

As recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development may 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.

**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 in the school or district employee handbook. Published information will include sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff.

## **Bullying Prevention: Student Engagement**

### **Anti-Bullying Curriculum**

Bullying prevention curricula will be selected based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's recommendation. Currently, the District is using Second Step published by the Committee for Children. Additionally, students and families can opt in to the peer leadership anti-bullying training through the Anti-Defamation League starting in middle school.

In Kindergarten through Grade 5, students have Second Step lessons. In Second Step students will learn pro-social values and skills such as empathy, emotional management, and problem solving. Students will also have lessons that include ethical values. As part of social skills training, students will learn about alternatives to discipline like restorative justice, making amends, and community service.

In grades 6 through 12, middle and high school faculty and staff embed lessons on anti-bullying in the health classes. The guidance department also engages in teaching around appropriate social skills on an as-needed basis and can be referred by anyone for additional social emotional support.

The District will be reviewing the effectiveness of Second Step in the summer of 2023. To evaluate this curriculum, the review committee will be looking for a robust anti-bullying curriculum to include:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or school staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communication; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Students will learn about the District's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in health classes each year.

### **Best Practices to Support Bullying Prevention**

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These strategies are required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

### **Bully Prevention Survey**

At least once every four years, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-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. The school district may survey students more frequently to use the data to improve school safety and culture. Student participation in the survey is optional but encouraged.

## Definitions

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

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

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of an electronic medium, 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 or 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.

Cyber-harassment is willful and repeated harm inflicted through but not limited to, Web pages, social networking sites, email, instant messaging or text messaging using computers, cell phone, or electronic network, when the target is an individual or individuals who are members of a protected group, either real or perceived.

Harassment is unwelcome, intentional, discriminatory behavior toward an individual or group motivated by real or perceived membership in a protected category including but not limited to race, ethnicity/national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

Sexual Harassment is a sexual advance, request for sexual favor, or behavior of a sexual nature when:

1. submission to or rejection of such advance, request, or behavior is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment, or as a basis for

employment decisions, or decisions regarding student evaluation, or participation in school programs or activities, OR

2. sexual advance, request, or behavior that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or school performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or sexually offensive environment.

Sexual harassment may occur student to student, adult to student, student to adult, adult to adult, male to female, female to male, male to male, and/or female to female.

Hazing is any behavior or method of initiation into a student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully endangers the physical or mental health of any individual. Such behavior includes beating, whipping, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug, or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the health and safety of an individual or which subjects an individual to extreme mental stress, including sleep deprivation, or extended isolation. Hazing is a form of bullying.

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

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

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

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

## **Relationship to Other Laws**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this Plan covers the behavior.