

# Monomoy Regional School District

## Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

### The Monomoy Regional Schools' Core Values:

- We respect ourselves, each other, and our environment.
- We are honest with ourselves and others to support an atmosphere of trust.
- Through our words and actions, we create a culture of civility, thoughtfulness, appreciation, and approachability.
- We hold all members of the school community to high expectations of behavior and academic performance.
- We validate the inherent dignity and worth of each member of the school community.
- We view mistakes as opportunities for learning.
- We believe that all choices have consequences and we take responsibility for our actions.
- All members of the school community have equal access to educational and co-curricular opportunities and experiences.

The Monomoy Regional Schools expect that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The Monomoy Regional Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

The Monomoy Regional Schools will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for all populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation,

and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We 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 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber bullying, and the Monomoy Regional Schools is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues and incidences of violence.

## I. Definitions

- **Aggressor or Perpetrator** is a student or member of school staff including but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extra-curricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.
- **Bullying** the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of school staff including but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to extra-curricular or paraprofessional of a written or electronic expression or a physical or emotional harm to the victim that (i) causes emotional or physical harm to the victim or victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or 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 or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.
- **Cyber bullying** is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings.
- **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.
- **Target** is a student against whom bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation is directed.
- **Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation is prohibited. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously; provided,

however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Bullying is 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, or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district.

Bullying is 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 a 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 educational process of the school.

## **II. Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation**

### **A. Reporting bullying or retaliation.**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall 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 Monomoy Regional Schools will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including an Incident Reporting Form, a drop box in all schools, and a link to all staff emails for reporting purposes.

The use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. However, the school or district will: 1) include a copy of the 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 or district's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and 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. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action. 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.

## 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 in order to protect anyone who reports bullying, provides information relating to an investigation of bullying, or witnesses and/or provides reliable information regarding an act of bullying.

## 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 CMV 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 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 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

The principal or designee will investigate promptly 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, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation 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. 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 district procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

#### D. Determinations

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 determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the target's or aggressor's 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 or resulted from the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional support, including social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians 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.

## E. Responses to Bullying

### 1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

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 § 379(d)(v)).

Skill building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's bullying prevention curricula;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school 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 Bullying Prevention curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills.

### 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 and may include, but not be limited to verbal warning, written warning, reprimand, suspension, or expulsion subject to applicable procedural requirements.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDIEA), 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.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the implementation of intervention strategies and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target as well as any individuals who reported, witnessed, or provided information relative to an incident of bullying to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct or if there has been any incidence of retaliation or intimidation. If so, the principal and appropriate support staff will determine whether additional corrective or supportive measures are needed and, if necessary, will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

### 4. Other

- Referral of either the target and/or aggressor for an evaluation under Section 504 or Special Education
- Conducting a Safety and Risk Assessment of the Aggressor

## III. Access to Resources and Services

### A. Counseling Resources

School counseling services are available for both the target and the aggressor. When appropriate, students and their families may be referred to community based agencies. The



district ELL liaison is available to assist principals and/or counselors in communication in native language when necessary.

#### B. Students with Disabilities

When the IEP team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the team must consider if and/or what should be included in the IEP to develop skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

### IV. **Bullying Prevention Approaches**

#### A. Specific bullying prevention approaches.

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research with, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance, speaking up, and not joining in the laughter, teasing, gossip, or rumors;
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. School principals will determine how and when their school will review the Plan with students.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students;
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral supports
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development
- Using the Internet safely
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength; and
- Telling the aggressor "I don't like what I saw you do", "I don't like what I heard you say". Do not dismiss what you saw or heard.

School principals will determine how and when they will review these teaching approaches with staff.

V. **Training and Professional Development**

**Timeline:**

All training and professional development for all staff (administrators, teachers, and support staff, as well as custodial and food service employees) will take place, as much as is practicable, in the fall of each new school year. Training will take advantage of local resources such as the Chatham and Harwich Police Department, the Barnstable County Sheriff's Department and the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University.

The school district will continue to hold regular parent forums to address the issue of bullying and cyber-bullying and to provide parents with appropriate strategies to help prevent it from occurring.

### **Building Based:**

1. Annual review of the Bullying Prevention Plan for **all** school staff, which includes strategies for identifying possible bullying in the classroom/ school environment and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation.
2. Review with teaching staff the bullying prevention curricula offered at each grade level within the school.
3. Regular meetings of each Building Guidance Team to review data, assess the ongoing effectiveness of the plan, and develop additional strategies *to respond to* and prevent bullying.

### **District-Wide:**

1. Training for all new staff (annually) and existing staff (biennially) on bullying recognition, prevention, and intervention using the MARC training materials to include:
  - a. What bullying is and isn't.
  - b. A description of the complex power differential that is at the heart of most bullying situations.
  - c. The role of school culture in supporting or preventing bullying.
  - d. The practical steps and specific responses that can help reduce bullying.
  - e. Current research on bullying and ways to identify students who may be at risk for bullying.
  - f. Effective strategies to help students who are victims of bullying.
  - g. The nature of cyber-bullying and how it differs from bullying.
  - h. Training on incorporating internet safety education across the curriculum to minimize incidents of cyber-bullying.
2. Semi-annual (December and May) meetings of District Crisis Team to review data on reports of bullying.
3. Annual training of special education teachers addressing ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individual Educational Plans.

## **VI. Collaboration with Families**

Each year, through the use of parent forums, newsletters, and by posting information and resources on the schools' website, the school principals will inform parents or guardians about:

- The bullying prevention curricula used at each grade level;
- How parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school plan;
- The dynamics of bullying; and
- Online safety and cyber bullying

School principals may seek district support from the Director of Student Services and additional technical and training support from the Chatham and Harwich Police Department, the Barnstable County District Attorney's Office, and the Sheriff's Department.

In addition, the student-related sections of the district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, and Internet Safety Policy, will be in each school handbook, which is provided to parents and guardians at the beginning of each school year.

## **VII. 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, sex, religion, national origin, 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.

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. c71, §37H or 37H ½, 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.