

BULLYING PREVENTION

The Fall River Public School District (“District”) endeavors to maintain a safe learning environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. The Fall River Public School District is committed to creating an environment in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically in a caring and supportive atmosphere free from harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets 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. Accordingly, in an effort to support vulnerable students, the District will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, To this end, bullying, cyberbullying and/or retaliation shall be prohibited and the District will provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment.

Definitions

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited

- 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; 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
- 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 acts create a hostile environment at school for the target, infringe on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of

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bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan")

The District shall develop, adhere to and update a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention ("Plan") in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. The consultation shall include, but not be limited to, notice and a public comment period. The Plan shall apply to students and all school staff members, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals. The Plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

The Principal in each building, or their designee, is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan within their school.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant student-related sections of the Plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians in age-appropriate terms and in the languages most prevalent within the District. This written notice may be provided through the student handbook. Annual written notice of the Plan, and annual training on the Plan, shall be provided to all school staff. The Plan shall be posted on the District's website.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

M. G.L. c. 71, §370; 603 C.M.R. 49.00

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Fall River Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Fall River Public Schools created this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, volunteers, administrators, community representatives, law enforcement, students, and parents and guardians. The Plan shall be implemented district-wide. The Plan applies to all students and all school staff members, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity, and paraprofessionals.

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I. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided by M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O and its implementing regulation at 603 C.M.R. 49.02:

Aggressor - perpetrator of bullying or retaliation as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, §37O.

Bullying - the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a 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.

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.

Hostile environment - a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

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

Principal - the administrative leader of a public school, charter school, collaborative school, or approved private day or residential school, or his or her designee for the purposes of implementing the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan.

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

School - an approved private day or residential school, collaborative school, or charter school.

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School grounds - property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school, or collaborative school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

Target – a student victim of bullying or retaliation as defined in M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O.

Victim - a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

II. LEADERSHIP

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan

The District will develop, adhere to, and biennially update the Plan in consultation with teachers, administrators, school staff, professional support personnel, volunteers, community representatives, law enforcement, students, parents, and guardians. Such consultation will include, but not be limited to, notice and a public comment period.

B. Data Collection

The District will annually report bullying incident data to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) in the form and manner established by DESE. Reported data will include: the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation, the number and nature of substantiated incidents, the number of students disciplined, and any other information required by DESE. The Principal or designee will be responsible for overseeing the collection, maintenance, and reporting of such data. Additionally, at least once every four years, the District will administer the DESE student survey. The Principal or designee will be responsible for verifying completion of the DESE student survey and will forward completed surveys to the DESE.

C. Implementation and Oversight

The Principal in each building, or their designee, is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Plan. The School Committee is responsible for the approval of any new school committee policy or revisions to existing school committee policies. T

III. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying and retaliation are prohibited. For the purpose of this Plan, references to bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

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

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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.

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

Nothing contained in this Plan requires the District to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

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. Accordingly, in an effort to support vulnerable students and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment, the Principal or designee will consider whether the following actions are required: (1) if the alleged target or the alleged aggressor is on an IEP or 504 Plan, the Principal or designee will notify the Team leader; (2) if the alleged conduct is on the basis of a protected class (i.e. race, gender, disability, etc.), the Principal or designee will need to follow the District's Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures, as well. For the purpose of this Plan, all students will receive the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

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

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of suspected bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, to the Principal or designee, and may be oral or written. Use of a formal Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. If the allegation involves the Principal, or his/her designee, as the alleged aggressor, staff, students, parents/guardians, or others shall report it immediately to the Superintendent. If the allegation involves the Superintendent as the alleged aggressor, reports shall immediately be made to the school committee.

The District expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student as the target to report it to the Principal or designee (or Superintendent or designee, or school community, when applicable).

District staff members are required to report immediately to the Principal or designee (or Superintendent or designee, or school committee, as applicable) any instance of suspected bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses, including reports made to them by students, parents/guardians/, or other staff. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing by the Principal or designee. 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 policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

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Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not District staff members, may be made anonymously. Any report made anonymously will be thoroughly investigated, however, a student will not be disciplined on the basis of an anonymous report.

The District will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an incident reporting form, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address(es) for each school's designee.

The District will: 1) include a copy of an incident reporting form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) will post it in the school's main office, counseling office, school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on District's website. An incident reporting form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the District will provide the school community, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity, and paraprofessionals, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the Principal or designee, Superintendent or designee (if the Principal is the alleged aggressor), and school committee (if the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor), will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the District website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

Nothing in this Plan shall be construed to limit an individual's ability to call 911 where a threat to safety of a student and/or other individuals is present. If there is concern about anyone's immediate safety, please call 911 first, then notify an administrator. Nothing in this Plan prevents an individual from reporting to the police a crime. Nothing in this Plan prohibits an individual from exercising their responsibilities as a mandated reporter under M. G. L. c. 119, § 51A and nothing in this Plan shall be used to deter an individual from reporting neglect or abuse to the appropriate state agency.

B. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The Fall River Public School 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, 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.

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, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

C. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

After receiving a report of bullying, and clarifying the allegations, the District may dismiss the allegation of bullying if, after considering all of the allegations as true, the allegations do not constitute bullying under Massachusetts law.

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D. 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 alleged target and/or the alleged aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the alleged target; altering the alleged aggressor's schedule and access to the alleged target; and other steps to promote safety may be taken, as appropriate, if the alleged aggressor is a staff member. The Principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies, which may include the safety strategies listed above, for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student or staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student or staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

E. Investigation

After clarifying the allegations and making a preliminary determination that the facts as alleged, if true, would meet the statutory definition of bullying or retaliation, the Principal or designee will promptly commence an investigation. The Principal or designee will gather evidence, including, if necessary, interviewing students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and/or others.

During any interviews, the Principal or designee will inform the alleged aggressor, alleged target, witnesses, and any other individual involved in the investigation, that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

The Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigation to the extent practicable, and in accordance with state and federal law regarding the privacy of student records and mandated reporting.

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.

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

F. Determinations

The Principal or designee will make a determination as to whether the preponderance of the evidence supports a finding that bullying occurred, and if so, what remedial action is required including any necessary responsive and/or disciplinary action. If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take reasonable steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in school activities.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may consult with the students' teacher(s)

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and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

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.

1. Report of Bullying Substantiated

Notice to Parent/Guardian

Upon the determination that bullying or retaliation occurred, the Principal or designee shall promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor. In the event that an allegation of bullying or retaliation by a staff member is substantiated, the Principal or designee will promptly notify the staff member. The Principal or designee may, but is not required to, contact parents or guardians prior to a determination. Notice shall be in the primary language of the home. Notice shall include the following information: determination and actions taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Notice for the target's parents/guardians shall include the following information about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program's (DESE's) Problem Resolution System and the process for seeking assistance or filing a PRS claim: *Any parent/guardian wishing to file a claim/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 or individuals can call 781-338-3700.*

Notices to parents/guardians will comply with federal and state law regarding the confidentiality of student records, and other privacy laws and regulations. To this end, the principal or designee cannot inform the target's parents/guardians about any disciplinary action taken against the aggressor, unless the information is directly related to the victim (e.g., stay away or no contact order).

Responses to Bullying

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the District will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. 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. The Principal or designee may also implement a safety plan.

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2. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

The Principal or designee may consider the following skill-building strategies, and other individualized interventions to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the District's anti-bullying curriculum;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with adjustment counselors/guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills;and/or
- providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors and targets, and for appropriate family members of said students, regardless of their status under the law.

3. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on the facts and findings of the investigation, 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 District'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 and statutes regarding student discipline.

Discipline procedures for staff members will be referred to the Human Resources Department consistent with applicable policies and procedures.

4. Follow-up with Target

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If there is evidence to support recurrence, supportive measures will be implemented immediately.

5. Report of Bullying Unsubstantiated

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.

The Principal or designee may consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the alleged target's sense of safety and that of others.

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G. Notice

1. 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.

2. Notice to Law Enforcement

Prior to the first day of school, the Superintendent or designee shall communicate with the police chief or designee regarding notices of bullying. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued, the Principal will notify the Fall River Police Department and document her/his reasons. Notice shall be compliant with any established agreements between the District and law enforcement and consistent with DESE regulations, including that a Principal may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to law enforcement without consent of a student or their parent. The Principal shall communicate with law enforcement in a manner that protects the privacy of the target, the aggressor, and any student witnesses to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The Principal is not required to report allegations or determinations of bullying or retaliation to law enforcement if such situations can be handled appropriately within the school. In deciding whether to notify law enforcement, the Principal may consult with the school's resource officer and any other individual deemed appropriate by the Principal.

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 school, the Principal shall immediately contact the Fall River Police Department if the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

3. Notice to Other Parties Regarding Health and Safety of Student

The Principal may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties, including law enforcement, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individual. This is limited to instances in which the Principal has determined that there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individual(s), and is limited to the period of the emergency. Any of these disclosures must be documented by the Principal, including the reasons that the Principal determined that a health or safety emergency existed.

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V. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual staff training on the Plan

Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties as reporters 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. In early September, an in-person, school-based professional development session will be held to inform all staff of the aforementioned topics as well as reporting requirements, investigation guidelines, ensuring the safety of the target and witnesses, education on power differentials, specific categories of students, cyberbullying, and the required documentation. Additionally, virtual, module-based training will be required for staff to complete as part of the onboarding process. All staff members hired after the start of the school year will participate in training via the human resources onboarding portal as a requirement to begin working in schools.

B. Ongoing professional development.

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of curricula, programs, school initiatives, and bullying prevention and intervention strategies necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will increase the skills and knowledge base of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development within the Fall River Public Schools will include, but not be limited to, information on the following:

- (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 students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

C. Notice to staff

Fall River Public Schools will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including relevant sections for staff in the District employee handbook. The Plan will be available on the District's website.

VI. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

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

A. Identifying resources

School counselors, together with building designees, will conduct an annual review of staffing and

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programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Fall River Public Schools will continue to work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced-based curricula and resources, and provide additional preventive services to students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff.

B. Counseling and other services.

School counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting, which include on-going emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community-based counseling referrals when appropriate. School counselors meet with parents and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, emotional, and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible. School counselors work with administrators to provide linguistically appropriate resources to identified families, including targets, aggressors, and their families. School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSA's) within the local vicinity, providing services to MassHealth/Medicaid eligible students. School counselors, school psychologists, and special needs educators may work collaboratively to develop behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula for students as needed and in line with the District's obligations under federal and state law.

C. Referral to outside services

The Fall River Public Schools has a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. School counselors will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies.

VII.ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches

Age-appropriate bullying prevention curricula for each grade will be evidence-based and include 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 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 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.

Students will be informed of the Plan at the start of each school year. Elementary and secondary students will receive additional instruction on developing prosocial skills, understanding the dynamics of bullying, and engaging with students of all backgrounds to respect diversity and difference within their morning meeting and advisory periods, respectively. Annual written notice of relevant student-related

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sections of the Plan will be provided to student and parents in age-appropriate terms and languages most prevalent.

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, including students who 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; 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.

VIII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

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

It will also focus on school and District-specific approaches to collaboration which will take into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and their parents.

A. Parent education and resources

The 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. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the Parent Academy, PTO, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

B. Notification requirements

Each year the school will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the bullying prevention curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the District and the Plan, and the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The Fall River Public Schools Student Handbook

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will include the student-related sections of the Plan and the District's Internet Safety Policy. Annual written notice will be in age-appropriate terms and languages most prevalent. In addition, 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 District will post the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Fall River Public Schools ("District"), the District does not tolerate discrimination against students, parents, employees or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age or immigration status. The District is also committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, age, genetic information, ethnic background, ancestry, disability, or any category protected by state or federal law. In addition, the District provides equal access to all designated youth groups. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, the District does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness. Nothing in the Plan prevents 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 District policies. If the alleged conduct is on the basis of a protected class (i.e., race, gender, disability, etc.), the alleged conduct should be addressed in a manner consistent with the District's Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the District to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H 1/2 or 37H 3/4, other applicable laws, or District policies, or collective bargaining agreements.

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

LEGAL REFERENCES:

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