WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS



BULLYING PLAN
(Revised 9/21/2025)

WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BULLYING PREVENTON PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENT pg. 1

I. RATIONALE and EXPECTATOINS……..…pg. 2

II. SCOPE: PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION……. pg. 2

III. DEFINITIONS……...……..... pg. 3

IV. REPORTING BULLYING and RETALIATION.....pg. 4

V. RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION ----------

ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING BY A STUDENT.....pg. 6

VI. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES.....pg. 8

VII. TRAINING and EDUCATION.....pg. 8

VIII. NOTICE.....pg. 10

WINTHROP BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM.....pg. 11- 13

I. RATIONALE and EXPECTATIONS

The Winthrop Public Schools is committed to keeping our schools a safe and caring place for all students. We expect students to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity and demonstrated capabilities with an appropriate regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, and the educational purpose underlying all school activities. All students deserve the opportunity to work and learn in an environment of mutual respect. To create and maintain such an environment, students must treat each other with courtesy, consideration and an appreciation of the rich diversity in our schools.

Bullying creates an atmosphere of fear for all members of the school community. It can also create unnecessary and unwarranted anxiety that affects the ability of a student to attend school, learn in school, feel safe in all areas in the school building and grounds, participate in or attend special or extra-curricular activities or travel to and from school. Bullying behaviors that are not addressed can lead to devastating consequences for young people including depression, drops in school performance and attendance. The failure to address bullying behaviors also gives other students the message that it is permissible to engage in negative behaviors.

Bullying of students occurring in schools is prohibited by law and members of the Winthrop School community refuse to tolerate bullying in any form. Winthrop Public Schools also will not tolerate retaliation against persons who act consistent with this policy including those who report bullying, who provide information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment in connection with filing a complaint or assisting with an investigation under this policy.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, Winthrop Public Schools will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and will impose corrective action as necessary. Corrective actions may range from requiring the perpetrator to work with school personnel on improved behavior, recommending the provision of counseling or other therapeutic services and/or disciplinary action where appropriate, up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or court involvement.

II. SCOPE: PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

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 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 or witnesses, infringe on their rights 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 bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is strictly prohibited.

III. DEFINITIONS

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; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;

ii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;

iii. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of physical, psychological or emotional power. Bullying may include but is not limited to: acts of intimidation such as taunting, name calling, verbal and non-verbal conduct that a reasonable person would find intimidating, humiliating and offensive, social isolation such as shunning/spreading rumors or false accusations; physically aggressive behaviors including interfering with the movement of another, stealing or damaging property. Bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

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

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

Bystander: person(s) who is witness to a bullying event.

Criminal harassment: "Willful and malicious engagement in a pattern of conduct or series of acts over a period of time directed at a specific person, which seriously alarms that person and would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress" (General Law Ch. 265). Conduct includes but is not limited to electronic communications.

Criminal stalking: "Willfully and maliciously engaging in a knowing pattern of conduct or series of acts over a period of time directed at a specific person which seriously alarms or annoys that person and would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress and makes a threat with the intent to place the person in imminent fear of death or bodily injury" (General Law Ch. 265). Conduct includes but is not limited to electronic communications.

Cyber-bullying: Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication which includes but is not limited to telephone calls, voice mails, instant messages, text messages, camera/video phones, 3 and 4 way conversations, profiles, secret taping of conversations, internet or facsimile communications, creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions contained in the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying also includes the electronic distribution 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 conditions contained within 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 conditions of the student's education. Prohibited conduct including bullying, which involves unwelcome and offensive behaviors and commentary related to an individual status in a protected class, including but not limited to race, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, color, genetics, military status, gender, sexual orientation/identity, and/or disability **may also** violate the School's Discriminatory and Sexual Harassment Policy.

Retaliation: Bullying directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, is a witness or has reliable information about bullying.

Confidentiality: Reports of bullying and retaliation shall be handled with the highest level of sensitivity by School Personnel. To the extent practicable, reports of bullying and retaliation will be kept confidential involving as few people as possible with the goal of protecting the target and stopping the behavior

IV. REPORTING BULLYING and RETALIATION

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. 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, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a

variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form,[1] a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The Winthrop Public Schools shall:

- Make available the Incident Reporting Form at the beginning of the year in all of the school's main offices for students and parents or guardians.

- make it available in other locations within each building, determined by the principal or designee, and

- post an anonymous bullying report form on the school's websites.

The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation, including a description of the reporting procedures and resources, the name(s) and contact information of the Superintendent, and complaint managers for each School within the District, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. All information will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal 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.

Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The 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 based on 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.

V. RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION – ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING BY A STUDENT

Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Superintendent 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 Superintendent or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Superintendent 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.

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 student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b. Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approve d 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 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 Superintendent 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. Investigations will be conducted promptly, and in most circumstances, no later than 24-48 hours after an initial complaint. Depending upon the extent and nature of the complaint, the District shall make every attempt to conclude the investigation within 30 days of the initial complaint.

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 (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.

Determinations. The Superintendent or designee will decide based upon all 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 Superintendent or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) 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.

The Superintendent 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. 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.

VI. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The Winthrop Public Schools is committed to ensuring all students, staff and personnel involved in incidents of bullying and retaliation receive comprehensive services, referrals and supports. This includes services for targets, student aggressors, and their families. In coordination with parents, school personnel, and targets of bullying and retaliation, the School shall promptly identify and refer impacted individuals to available resources including but not limited to:

a. Counseling and other services. Culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district including linkages with community-based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, the Plan should identify staff and service providers who assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. Schools may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

b. Students with disabilities. 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.

c. Referral to outside services. Schools and districts should establish a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies. Current local referral protocols should be evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan and revised as needed.

VII. TRAINING and EDUCATION

The Winthrop Public Schools will endeavor to provide age appropriate instruction/curriculum on bullying prevention in each level.

The Winthrop Public Schools will develop and update a bullying prevention and intervention plan in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, behavioral health specialists, local law

enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. The consultation will include a public comment period. The bullying prevention and intervention plan will be updated biennially.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include:

- Definitions and examples of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation including the similarities and differences between bullying and discriminatory/sexual harassment, and sexual violence

- Establish clear procedures for students, staff, parents, guardians, and others to report incidents of bullying or retaliation

- Include a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously, provided that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report

- Establish clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation

- Identify the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation

- Establish clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that student's needs for protection

- Establish strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying

- Establish procedures consistent with state and federal law for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a victim and a perpetrator, provided that the parents or guardians of a victim shall also be notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying; and provided further that said procedures must provide for immediate notification to the local law enforcement agency where criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator

- Include a provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action; and

- Include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of said students.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan will afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

Professional Development: The bullying prevention and intervention plan will include ongoing professional development to build the skills of all members of school staff to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The content of such professional development will include, but not be limited to:

- Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents
- Developmentally 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 the bully, the target, and any witnesses to the bullying
- Research findings on bullying
- Information on the incidence and nature of bullying
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying;

The bullying prevention and intervention plan will include provisions for educating parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of the Winthrop Public Schools, how they can reinforce said curriculum at home, how they can support the Winthrop Public Schools' prevention and intervention plan, the dynamics of bullying, and online safety and cyber-bullying.

All staff, in collaboration with parents, students and community members will integrate strategies for student recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success.

Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing

VIII. NOTICE

The Winthrop Public Schools will provide to students and their parents or guardians, in age appropriate terms and in the most prevalent languages of the students, parents or guardians, annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention policy.

The Winthrop Public Schools will provide to all school staff annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention policy. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be included in any Winthrop Public Schools employee handbook.

The bullying prevention plan shall be posted on the Winthrop Public Schools website

VIII. Problem Resolution System:

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

Any parent 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: https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

WINTHROP BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: _____**
   (Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely based on an anonymous report.)
2. **Check whether you are the:** ☐ **Target of the behavior** ☐ **Reporter (not the target)**
3. **Check whether you are a:** ☐ **Student** ☐ **Staff member (specify role)**
   ☐ **Parent** ☐ **Administrator** ☐ **Other (specify)** _____

   Your contact information: telephone number/email address:_____
4. **If student, state your school: _____ Grade: _____**
5. **If staff member, state your school or work site: _____**

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6. **Information about the Incident:**

   Name of Target (of behavior): _____

   Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior)**: _____**

   Date(s) of Incident(s): _____

   Time When Incident(s) Occurred: _____

   Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible)**: _____**

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7. **Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it)**:**

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

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8. **Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.**

WINTHROP BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT

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9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10: Form Given to: _____Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date Received: _____

II. INVESTIGATION

1. Investigator(s): _____Position(s):_____

2. Interviews:

□ **Interviewed aggressor Name: _____ Date: _____**

□ **Interviewed target Name: _____ Date: _____**

□ **Interviewed witnesses Name: _____ Date: _____**

Name: _____ Date: _____

3. Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor? □ Yes □ No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? □ Yes □ No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION □ Yes □ No

Summary of Investigation:

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

□ **YES** □ **NO**

□ **Bullying** □ **Incident documented as _____**

□ **Retaliation** □ **Discipline referral only_____**

2. Contacts:

□ **Target's parent/guardian Date: _____**

□ **Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: _____**

□ **District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: _____**

□ **Law Enforcement Date: _____**

3. Action Taken:

□ **Loss of Privileges** □ **Detention** □ **MTSS/SST referral** □ **Suspension**

□ **Community Service** □ **Education** □ **Other _____**

4. Describe Safety Planning:

_____

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for **_____ Initial and date when completed: _____**

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for **_____ Initial and date when completed: _____**

Report forwarded to Principal: Date_____

Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date_____
(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: _____
Signature

_____
Title