



Dudley-Charlton Regional School District

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

October 2024

Dudley-Charlton Regional School District Priority Statement

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and the development of strong, resilient, kind citizens while preventing and eliminating all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the educational process.

I. 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.
- 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 also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

II. Leadership

Recognizing the importance of social and emotional well-being in the development of students,

the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District is committed to bullying prevention and intervention. The district goals specifically address the integration of social, emotional and wellness support. This includes professional development and curriculum integration for bullying prevention and intervention.

Teachers and other staff members report and intervene in incidences of bullying as well as implement anti-bullying curriculum. District administrators track investigations of allegations, document incidences of bullying, respond and intervene to keep targets safe, and ensure support services for both targets and aggressors. Police are pivotal in investigative procedures and identifying criminal/harassment charges.

Planning and Oversight

The Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent, and building administrators are responsible for the implementation of the Plan.

Principals Pre K – 4, Principal/Assistant Principals 5 – 8, and Principal/Assistant Principals 9 – 12 are the designees in each school who are responsible for receiving reports, conducting investigations, contacting the parents of targets and aggressors of confirmed incidences of bullying, and ensuring proper documentation of incidents.

School psychologists and guidance counselors provide and monitor progress of individual and group support for both targets and aggressors. Principals annually provide information on recognizing, responding and reporting procedures on bullying. The School Committee has approved the policy on Bullying Prevention and Intervention.

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District has posted parent resources to the website to address bullying and cyberbullying (www.dcrd.org).

III. Training & Professional Development

Annual Staff Training

Annual training on the Plan will be provided for all school staff and includes specific staff duties under the Plan, such as reporting and responding, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be trained in district procedures during the school year in which they are hired, unless they are able to demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years. Staff are reminded yearly of where they can view the Plan and the Policy on Bullying.

Ongoing Professional Development

Professional development is provided to staff in an effort to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. Currently the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District has trained or is in the process of training staff in the following programs that promote and model the use of respectful language, foster an

understanding of and respect for diversity and difference; build relationships and communication with families, constructively manage classroom behaviors, employ positive behavioral intervention and constructive disciplinary practices, teach students explicit skills for positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others, engage students in school or classroom-planning and decision-making, and maintain a safe and caring classroom for all students.

- During the 25-26 school year, Professional Development in Social Emotional Learning will take the form of training from Yale University's Center for Emotional Intelligence and the RULER program. This program is a proactive social emotional learning and bullying prevention curriculum spanning grades K-12 and will be used across the district in all seven schools.
- Special education administrators, teachers, and counselors are trained to address both the skills needed by targets of bullying and those whose actions meet the definition of bully or aggressor and the ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities in order to develop appropriate Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Special education leaders train other team members to address the necessary social, behavioral and self-advocacy skills to include in the special education student's IEP. Training includes skills to address the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development. Compliance procedures were developed according to DESE guidelines.

Written Notice to Staff

The district provides all staff with annual notice of the Plan at the beginning of each school year, posts it on the website at www.dcrsd.org, posts the Initial Bullying Report form at (www.dcsd.org), and includes information in the teacher handbook and student handbooks.

IV. Access to Resources and Services

Current Resources Identified in the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District

At each level, age-appropriate interventions are provided for all students, targets and aggressors, and parents:

- Each school has an Instructional Support Team designed to support teachers by providing strategies for students in need of either academic or behavioral support. District behavior support personnel, as well as building-based school psychologists, are available for all students including aggressors, targets, and parents.
- The middle school guidance counselors meet individually and lead groups for targets and aggressors as identified.
- At the middle and high school level, the school psychologist, guidance counselors, and administrators are available to meet with students and follow up on reports.

Parents are supported by the administration at each level. Resources for parents include, but are not limited to annual:

- Resources posted to the website for parents of regular education and students with disabilities (www.dcrsd.org).
- Parent forums on bullying legislation, cyberbullying and other anti-bullying programs.
- Essential information are be translated for parents in home languages other than English

Personnel Resources

- Teachers
- Guidance Counselors
- School Psychologists
- Speech and Language Pathologists
- School Nurses
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Collaboration with English Language Learners Department
- Advisory Leaders
- Police and School Resource Officer

Counseling and Other Services

Administrators in each school are responsible for creating safety plans for students who have been the targets of bullying or retaliation. Additionally, teachers provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and guidance counselors offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting early signs of bullying behaviors.

Students with Disabilities

If the IEP Team determines that a student's disability adversely affects social skills development and/or the student may be found to be participating in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team considers what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing (i.e. "Social Thinking" program).

Referral to Outside Services

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District will assist in securing outside services. Please contact the school directly for possible referrals.

V. Academic and Non-Academic Activities

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District includes bullying prevention and social competency as part of its comprehensive health programming and school-wide cross-curricular initiatives. A goal of the district is to create school cultures that support staff to create safe classrooms and school environments that are conducive to building positive relationships that incorporate an appreciation of differences for all students, including gender, race, religion, students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homeless students. A variety of age-appropriate approaches are taken at the different levels.

Currently, the elementary schools use a combination of Responsive Classroom, Everyday Speech Social Emotional Learning and Social Thinking platforms, and positive behavioral interventions.

The programs listed above focus on the following skills and approaches to help prevent bullying:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills; empower 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; helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance; emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies; enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Components of the Plan and the law are reviewed with students annually, at the beginning of the year by the school principal or designee.

VI. Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District staff has developed a common plan for procedures on reporting and responding to bullying within the district. We educate staff, students, and parents annually on procedures for reporting and responding when bullying occurs.

Reporting Bullying or Retaliation:

- All school and district staff members are required to immediately report to the principal or designee any instances of bullying or retaliation about which the staff member becomes aware or witnesses. This includes bullying of a student by another student or by a staff member. If the Principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent.. In such circumstances, the Superintendent or designee will be responsible for taking appropriate actions in accordance with this Plan and other applicable district policies and procedures.
- Staff, students, parents or guardians, and others may report bullying or retaliation orally or by voicemail and/or in writing or by email. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be given to the principal or designee.
- Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members may be made anonymously, either orally or in writing.
- The Incident Report Form is posted on the district website for parents, staff, and students (dcrsd.org). The Incident Report Form is not required as a condition of making a report.
- A link to the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the Incident Report Form, including reporting procedures, is provided to staff and are included in student handbooks which are signed off on by guardians at the beginning of the year. Hard copies will be mailed home to those requesting. Report forms and the Dudley-Charlton

Regional School District's Bullying Prevention Plan are also available in the school's main office, counseling office and the nurse's office.

- A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the contact information of the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on school and district websites, and be available to parents or guardians, all staff, and all students.
- The Incident Report Form is made available in other languages upon request.

Reporting by Staff:

- Staff report promptly to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. This includes bullying of a student by another student or by a staff member. If the principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.

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 to report the matter to the principal or designee. This includes bullying of a student by another student or by a staff member. If the principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.
- 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 are provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an alleged incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation:

- 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 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 alleged aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee takes additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation as necessary.
- The principal or designee implements appropriate strategies to protect from bullying or retaliation any student who has reported bullying or retaliation, witnessed bullying or retaliation, provided information during an investigation, or who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

Obligations to Notify Others

Notice to Parents or Guardians:

- Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee promptly (no more than three school days) notifies the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the target and the student aggressor, 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 to a staff member who is alleged to be an aggressor will be made in accordance with district policies and procedures, including any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Notice to another School or District:

- If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non- public school, private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident promptly notifies by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident.

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 notifies 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 contacts the School Resource Officer or 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 consults with the school resource officer and other individuals the principal or designee deem appropriate, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures.

Investigation:

- The principal or designee investigates promptly (no more than three school days) 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 interviews students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee reminds the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
- The principal or designee, and other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, in consultation with the school counselor(s) as appropriate, may conduct interviews. To the extent practicable given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee and other staff maintains confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee and other staff maintain a written record

of the investigation. All acts of bullying by students that have been investigated and confirmed are documented. Any investigated and confirmed act of bullying by a staff member will also be documented in the staff member's file.

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

Determinations:

- The principal or designee makes a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances.
- If, after an investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee takes steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted from participating in school or benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee: 1) determines what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determines what corrective actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary. Disciplinary measures are left to the administrator's discretion, within the guidelines of the school's student handbook and age-appropriateness for students and within parameters of appropriate conduct for staff. Individuals will be afforded due process appropriate to the disciplinary action that is under consideration.
- Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the student's teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target or student-aggressor's parent(s) or guardian(s) 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 support for the student.
- The principal or designee promptly notifies the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the target and the student 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 and personnel 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.

Responses to Bullying:

- Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal, teacher, and/or school counselor work with students and relevant staff to ensure that the behavior stops. The school principal or designee follows up and monitors the behavior.
- The principal contacts the school counselor or other relevant staff member(s) to determine what appropriate intervention(s) and skill building should be put in place for both the target and student-aggressor.
- Guidance counselors, teachers, special educators, nurses, administrators and other relevant staff members respond to bullying incidents with a variety of individualized supports, group interventions, and techniques for students including, but not limited to,

the following:

- Individual counseling with counselors
- Small group counseling/ social skills training
- Other strategies and interventions developed by a school's student support staff
- Ongoing support and consultation for students, (i.e. check-ins with counselors, teachers, the nurse, and/or administrators)
- Assemblies and special programs that address school climate, bullying, bystanders, etc. District and school speaker forums, educational groups, and resources on websites and in school bulletins to support parents to reinforce the skills and techniques for social and emotional development at home
- Further intervention(s) when deemed appropriate
- Individual Educational Plans that focus on skill development and safety, and provide appropriate resources as determined by the IEP team

Taking Disciplinary Action:

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate for a student, the disciplinary action is 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.

- Disciplinary actions are consistent with the Plan and with the school or district's handbook.
- If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student is subject to disciplinary action.
- The special education department will be consulted to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 504, ADA, and state regulations.
- If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate for a staff member, the disciplinary action is determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee and appropriate standards and expectations in light of the staff member's role and responsibilities.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others:

- The principal or designee considers what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others
- The principal or designee increases 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 ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee contacts the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee works with appropriate school staff to implement these immediately.

VII. Collaboration with Families

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District strives to have a strong parent education program. As new issues arise, such as online safety and cyberbullying, and new curricula are implemented, programs will be offered to all parents in the community free of charge. The district recognizes that parent participation is a crucial component of a student's education, and that no school district is able to address all students' needs and development without parental support and involvement:

- The district website includes a number of resources regarding online safety, cyberbullying and bullying prevention.
- The district offers parent workshops on the social competency, school climate, diversity and other forms of bullying, in an effort to teach parents and guardians how to reinforce the social skills and strategies at home, respond to targets and aggressors, educate them on social media, and to support the school and district Plan. Parent programs are advertised and are posted on our district website (www.dcrsd.org). These programs may be offered in collaboration with school PTOs, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and other educational organizations.

Parent Education and Resources:

- The annual Parent Notification Letter sent home includes information about the dynamics of online safety, bullying and cyberbullying, the reporting process for a suspected bullying incident.

Report Forms:

- The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is posted on the district web site. This is in addition to written notice included each year in school handbooks regarding the student-related sections of the Plan and district's Internet safety policy.
- The "Internet User Agreement" references the student handbook that addresses cyberbullying, both of which require sign off by the student and parent/guardian.
- Accessibility of information at a variety of locations, in the language(s) most prevalent among parent(s)/guardian(s), and in multi-dimensional means such as email, hard copy, websites, cable TV, and workshops. PTO's, SEPAC, and School Councils will enhance communication and outreach to parents who don't typically participate in school events.
- Special education students receive all general education communication through the district school appropriate to their placement. They also have reports from special education service providers on the same schedule as those provided by general education providers. Additionally, IEP teams meet annually and develop communication plans related to all services as part of the annual IEP proposal. The social workers in each building provide a conduit or specialized communication based on individual student needs.

VIII. Definitions

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, as noted below:

- Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.
- Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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/victim 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.
- Perpetrator is defined as: 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.
- Cyberbullying is defined as: Bullying through the use of technology or an 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 communication, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying 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 cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on a distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.
- Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.
- Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
- Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, and athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.
- Target/victim is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. 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, homelessness, sexual orientation, or gender identity. 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. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H\12, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior by students or staff, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.