



# **Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

**October 2025**

**Statutory Basis: M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O**

## **Statement of Purpose and Core Beliefs**

The Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan meets the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and is modeled after the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Plan for dealing with bullying behaviors in our schools. The plan supports and aligns with the Pembroke Public Schools Core Beliefs:

### **OUR CORE BELIEFS**

We believe:

- In creating and maintaining safe and inviting schools;
- All children can learn and may demonstrate learning in different ways;
- Every student should contribute to our democratic society and the global community;
- In making decisions and acting in the best interest of students;
- Every member of the school community should be valued and respected;
- In a school community that is ethical, civil and respectful of individual differences;
- In strong civic, business and community partnerships that support student achievement.

Pembroke Public Schools prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, religion, national origin, disability, or homelessness.

The Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and each school in the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of bullying. The Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for identifying, reporting and responding to bullying behaviors. The building principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan. Each school in the district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

## **Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation**

The Pembroke Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of **bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation**, in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, at school bus stops, or in school-related activities. Schools will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety.

The Pembroke Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. The Pembroke Schools will provide specific supports identified in this document to support vulnerable students and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. The Pembroke Public

Schools will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

## **Prohibited Locations and Activities:**

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

1. On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
2. At a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds;
3. At a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district;
4. 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, 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.

## **Prohibition on Retaliation:**

**Retaliation** against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school-related activities, functions, or programs.

## **Key Definitions**

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted below. Please note that the use of the words “**target**” instead of “victim” and “**aggressor**” instead of “perpetrator” is used throughout this document to be consistent with the language used by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- **Aggressor:** is 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, cyberbullying, or retaliation.
- **Bullying** (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O): is the **repeated use** by one or more students or by 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:
  1. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;

2. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
  3. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
  4. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
  5. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- **Cyberbullying:** is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings.
  - **Hostile environment** (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O): is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student’s education.
  - **Retaliation:** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
  - **Staff:** includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, and advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.
  - **Target:** is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **Leadership**

### **Public Involvement in Developing the Plan**

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians.

### **Assessing Needs and Resources**

Every two years, our schools will utilize various data collection tools to include surveys to obtain input from students, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues. Data from each school will be collected and analyzed on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses). This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform future decision-making for prevention strategies, including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, and age-appropriate curricula and in-school support services. Surveys may be completed anonymously and will be forwarded to DESE as required.

### **Planning and Oversight**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>School Principal / Assistant Principal</b>	Primary responsibility for receiving all reports, overseeing the investigation, recording and tracking incidents, and implementing the Plan.
<b>Pembroke Public Schools Strategic Leadership Team</b>	Planning for the ongoing professional development required by law.
<b>Superintendent or Designee</b>	Developing new/revising policies and protocols (including Internet safety), and ensuring annual review/updates.
<b>School Committee</b>	Responsible for the approval of any new policy.

## **Training and Professional Development**

The Pembroke Public Schools' ongoing professional development plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and provides ongoing professional development for all staff (educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals).

### **Annual Staff Training on the Plan**

- All staff must participate in annual training on the Plan, covering staff responsibilities and administrative response steps.
- Each staff member hired mid-year is required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program.
- Each school shall have one staff member certified to provide bullying prevention and intervention professional development to all building staff.
- Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities, in the school wide resources folder/handbook.

### **Ongoing Professional Development Content**

Content will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying and for immediate,

effective interventions.

- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses.
- Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk.
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying and Internet safety.
- Awareness of categories of students who may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics.

## **Access to Resources and Services**

Available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors, and bystanders. The schools provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for students who are aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

### **Counseling and Other Services**

School counselors, nurses, school psychologists, and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services including:

- One-on-one and small group counseling, case management, and crisis intervention.
- Elementary curriculum, including Second Step, Restorative Justice Practices, Social Thinking Curriculum.
- High School Guidance/Advisory seminar curriculum on issues of respect, harassment, and student success skills.
- Consultation with the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office and the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) at Bridgewater State University.

### **Categories of Vulnerable Students**

As required by M.G.L. 71B, § 38O as amended in April of 2014, the school will take specific steps to include individual, small group and school/district wide supports to vulnerable students with "differentiating characteristics" that may make them more vulnerable to bullying to include: race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity, 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 1 or more of these characteristics. This plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, the IEP Team (or 504 Accommodation Plan Team) must consider what should be included in the plan to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing if the student's disability affects social skills or makes the student vulnerable.

## **Academic and Non-Academic Activities**

The Pembroke Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade.

### **Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches**

Curricula utilize the following approaches:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop intervention skills.
- Empowering students to take action as bystanders, including seeking adult assistance.
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance.
- Emphasizing cyber safety and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies.
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications.

### **General Teaching Approaches**

These general approaches support a safe and supportive school environment:

- Setting clear expectations and establishing routines.
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors.
- Using positive behavioral supports and positive approaches to behavioral health (e.g., collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution).

## **Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation**

### **Reporting Bullying or Retaliation**

- **Reporters:** Staff, students, parents or guardians, or others. Reports may be oral or written.
- **Staff Mandate:** All staff members must immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation they witness or become aware of to the school Principal or Assistant Principal.
- **Anonymous Reports:** Reports from non-employees may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken based solely on an anonymous report.

### **Reporting to DESE**

The district keeps records of all reports and reports required data to DESE annually, including the number of reported allegations, the number and nature of substantiated incidents, and the number of students disciplined.

### **Responding to a Report: Initial Safety Assessment**

Before a full investigation, school personnel will immediately take steps to support the **target, reporter, witness (es)** and protect them from further potential incidents of bullying or retaliation. Supportive measures to promote safety may include:

- Creating a personal safety plan.
- Pre-determining seating arrangements (classroom, lunch, bus).
- Identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person”
- Altering the **aggressor’s** schedule and access to the **target/reporter/witness (es)**.

## Investigation Flowchart

The Principal or Assistant Principal shall promptly investigate the report.

Action	Decision Point / Check	Result / Next Step
<b>1. Incident Reported</b>	Administrator receives Incident Report.	Go to Step 2.
<b>2. Investigate &amp; Interview</b>	Interview all parties involved in the incident.	Go to Step 3.
<b>3. Assess for Criminal Conduct</b>	Was there physical contact, weapon use, serious threat, stalking, harassment, or property damage?	YES: Immediately contact the police. Inform parents. NO: Go to Step 4.
<b>4. Assess Aggression</b>	Was there aggression (physical, verbal, or social)?	NO: Not Bullying. Consider another infraction. YES: Go to Step 5.
<b>5. Assess Repetition</b>	Was this aggression repeated (more than one incident)?	NO: Not Bullying. Consider another infraction. YES: Bullying is substantiated. Go to Step 6.
<b>6. Substantiation/Action</b>	Bullying is substantiated.	Assign Consequences (if appropriate). Contact Parents. Complete Investigation Report/Action Plan. Copy and file a report with the Principal.
<b>7. Follow Up</b>	Monitor behavior and	Ongoing.

	communicate with parents and staff.	
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## Obligations to Notify Others

- **Target’s Parents/Guardians & Aggressor’s Parents/Guardians:** Prompt notice of the report, investigation procedures, findings, and resulting actions upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred.
- **Law Enforcement:** If the Principal/Assistant Principal has a reasonable basis to believe the incident may involve criminal conduct, notification occurs promptly.
- **Another School/District:** If an incident involves students from another district and Pembroke is informed first, the Superintendent or designee must promptly notify the appropriate administrator.

## Teaching Appropriate Behavior (Skills-Building)

Upon substantiating bullying, the school will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior, which may include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions.
- Implementing academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports.
- Meeting with parents and guardians to reinforce anti-bullying curricula.
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and making a referral for evaluation.

## Taking Disciplinary Action

- Disciplinary action (warnings, detentions, suspensions, expulsions) will be consistent with the Plan and the school’s code of conduct.
- Students knowingly making a false allegation of bullying or retaliation may also be subject to disciplinary action.
- Specific information about disciplinary action generally will not be released to the target's parents/guardians unless it involves a "stay away" or other directive vital for the target's safety.
- Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

## Grievance Procedures

If Parents/Guardians disagree with the principal’s decision or process, the principal will share information about the process to file a claim through the DESE’s Problem Resolution System (PRS).

**Description of PRS:** The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) The Problem Resolution System (PRS) Office provides students, families, school districts, and other community members with easy access to information regarding students' rights and

educational options and access to a forum for the resolution of disputes that is prompt, accurate and fair. Further information can be found at:  
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/guide/default.html>

## **Collaboration with Families**

The Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families.

- Parents and guardians will be annually informed in writing about the student-related sections of the Plan and the Pembroke Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
- Schools will collaborate with appropriate parent organizations to offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula.
- Information will be provided to families on: (i) how to reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyber bullying.
- The Plan will be posted on the school website.

## **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 or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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.

In addition, nothing in the Pembroke Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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, 37H½ or 37 H ¾, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this Plan covers the behavior.