

Dartmouth Public Schools

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan



***Based on MA DESE Guidelines and developed in accordance with the
Massachusetts Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan***

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Statement of Purpose

Dartmouth Public Schools recognizes the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment for all students and will not tolerate any form of bullying (which includes cyberbullying) or retaliation in our schools, on our school grounds, or during our school related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying and/or retaliation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. We invite members of our learning community and the Dartmouth community as a whole to partner with us to create a school culture of safety, respect, and sense of belonging for all.

The Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan was developed to reflect [Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014](#), which amended G.L. c. 71, §37O, the anti-bullying statute, and was signed into law on April 24, 2014. G.L. c. 71, §37O, as amended, requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to recognize in their bullying prevention and intervention plans that 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.

Leadership

Leadership at all levels will play a critical role in developing and implementing Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans (“the Plan”) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership should be defined by the district or school, depending on existing roles and responsibilities and locally identified priorities for this initiative. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan.

Public Involvement in Developing the Plan

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan must be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation must include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the school committee or equivalent authority. Schools and districts may choose to involve representatives from each of these constituencies in other aspects of Plan development,

including needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings. The Plan should identify the ways that each of the various constituencies will be involved. Dartmouth's plan was developed collaboratively with district leaders and staff and reviewed for compliance prior to a review by the School Committee and a request for community feedback.

Assessing Needs and Resources

The Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is the district's blueprint for enhancing our capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed our current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. We follow similar processes when updating this plan at least biennially.

As part of our ongoing work, Dartmouth Public Schools regularly collects and analyzes data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying. This data is also used to monitor the experience of key student groups who may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. This information is used to understand the overall impact of our programming and the current needs of our student population with respect to bullying.

Each year, through the mandatory training modules that are required by all staff and district leaders, Dartmouth Public Schools employees are trained on the implementation of this bullying prevention and intervention plan as well as any revisions or updates to anti-bullying legislation. Leaders are also provided a checklist for responding to reports of bullying and are trained on the implementation. Central records and reports of bullying are maintained by the Office of Student Services as well as at respective school buildings.

When available, DPS may also use various social emotional screening tools in order to collect data related to perceived student safety (emotional and physical) and bullying. This data will be collected at various times throughout the year and will be comprehensively reviewed by the leadership team and/or counseling staff each spring in order to identify both immediate and future needs. Screening information is also shared with district and school leaders in order to identify patterns of behavior and areas of concern. This informs future decision making for prevention and intervention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

Planning and Oversight

The Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan identifies the building principal (or their designee) as the individual who is responsible for receiving all reports on bullying. The building principal or designee is responsible for collecting and analyzing building data to assess the presenting problems and to measure outcomes. They are also responsible

for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors. The Dartmouth Public Schools, through the Office of Teaching and Learning, is responsible for planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law. The building principal or their designee is responsible for planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors. Each building principal or designee is responsible for implementing the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and for amending student handbooks and codes of conduct in their buildings. The district is responsible for developing parent/family engagement efforts and parent information materials and reviewing/updating these materials each year. The Superintendent or designee is responsible for developing new or revised policies and protocols under the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and for designating key staff to be in charge of reviewing and updating them on an annual basis. The School Committee is responsible for the approval of any new policy.

DPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Priority Statement

The Dartmouth 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, school resource officers, law enforcement agencies, and the community to provide 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 to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. We have therefore established this plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation. The building principal or their designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this plan. Each school in the district expects that all members of the school community will treat one another in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

Definitions

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

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:

- 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;
- 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.

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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in 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.

School Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

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

Training and Professional Development

The Dartmouth Public Schools ongoing professional development plans reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisor to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals.

Annual Staff Training on the Plan

Annual training for all school staff on the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include: current research on bullying and effective intervention; staff responsibilities under the law; 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 building. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are 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 within the last two years. Midway through each school year, the leadership team will assess whether the administrators tasked with investigating reported incidents are following all protocols and procedures with fidelity. The team will collaborate with one another in order to ensure that we can support each other when needed.

Ongoing Professional Development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff 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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, 37O, the content of school-wide and professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Developmentally/age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally/age 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 an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities. This will include a focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development. Dartmouth Public Schools provides professional development in a variety of ways including professional learning time, community partnerships, collaboration with Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) teams, outside courses and workshops, and training on specific curricula models and/or products.

Additional areas of professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in age appropriate planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining safe and caring classrooms for students.

Ongoing Assessment of Implementation

To ensure effective implementation of Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan the district will engage the school committee and greater community in several next steps:

- 1) On an annual basis, the leadership team will review all reports and investigations of bullying that occurred during that school year. The team will evaluate the processes that were implemented from the time the initial report was received through the conclusion of the investigation and the implementation of any ongoing safety and support plans.
- 2) The leadership team will also review how our interventions addressed the needs of the named aggressors, as well as the targets, to ensure that any lagging skills and/or social-emotional needs were addressed in a way that could interrupt the potential of future or repetitive incidents.
- 3) In addition, the district will survey the community on their experiences relative to the implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to solicit feedback on our communication, reporting and follow through to ensure that we are effectively addressing students' needs.

Written Notice to Staff

Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities, in applicable school employee handbooks or materials.

Access to Resources and Services

Creating a positive school climate requires that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors or bystanders of bullying or cyberbullying. In addition, the emotional needs of these students' families must also be addressed. The Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for providing support and services necessary to meet these needs and enhance the district's capacity to effectively prevent, intervene and respond to bullying.

The district currently has many services available for students and families that will be used to address the needs of targets, aggressors and bystanders. These services include counseling or referral to appropriate services for students and family members.

Identifying Resources

The district will work to assess each school's capacity to provide counseling, case management and other services for targets, aggressors, bystanders and their families. Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. The Dartmouth Public

Schools will work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced based curricula and to provide additional preventative services to students, parents/guardians, faculty and staff.

Counseling and Other Services

At the building level, administrators, counselors and staff possess knowledge and experience in preventing and responding to bullying behaviors. In addition, school psychologists, guidance counselors, and adjustment counselors within the district will compile and maintain a comprehensive list of community based agencies, counseling, and social skills development programs available.

School counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators currently provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that 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 collaboratively address students' academic, emotional and behavioral concerns. The district provides linguistically appropriate resources to identified families. English is the primary language of the students attending Dartmouth Public schools. For students for whom English is a second language, the district utilizes a contracted translation service, and additional agencies offering counseling services will be identified. The staff maintains up-to-date information on community-based mental health referrals, outside agencies and services for Medicaid eligible students.

School counselors, school psychologists, BCBA's and special educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and provide social skill groups for students. They also work to support parents, conduct parent workshops and inform parents of outside resources to enhance parenting skills and provide for the needs of children.

Among the services offered at various schools:

- One-on-one and small group counseling
- Check-In/Check-Out
- Crisis intervention
- Individual student success plans
- Facilitating classroom meetings to resolve problems
- Peer Mediation
- Lunch/friendship groups
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Transition planning
- Behavioral plan development
- Classroom observations
- Teacher consultation
- Second Step & Wayfinder
- Health and Wellness curriculum

- Restorative Circles
- Collaborative Problem Solving
- Individual and school-based PBIS initiatives

In addition, the Dartmouth Public Schools works in collaboration with multiple local community organizations. The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) provides professional development training, and information on their website, in support of staff, parents, and students. www.bridgew.edu/marc.

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.

If bullying is found to have occurred the District will promptly convene a Section 504 or IEP team meeting to determine whether a student's educational needs may have changed as a result of the effects of bullying such that the student is no longer receiving FAPE and, if so, the District will determine the extent to which additional or different services are needed; and ensure that any needed changes are made promptly.

Occasionally, a bullying investigation may signal the need for further evaluation to determine if a 504 or IEP may be necessary to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing; or, to remediate and avoid aggressive and targeted behavior towards others.

Referral to Outside Services

When the student's needs exceed the counseling support appropriate to a school setting, and/or when the parent requests information to support their child at home a referral to outside services may be appropriate. Each school in the district has protocols for referring students and families to outside services. School counselors and other specialists help students and families access appropriate and timely services. As with all referrals, it will be communicated that this is a parent choice and not a requirement of the school system. Referrals comply with relevant laws and policies.

Academic and Non-Academic Activities

The Dartmouth Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each school.

Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

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

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students 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 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.
- rethinking how we utilize small group learning time in our schools for the purpose of preventing or addressing bullying
- revisiting our district-wide PBIS implementation to ensure it is research driven and strength-based

General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment and 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 for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;

- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

The Dartmouth Public Schools has established policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that all members of the school community, including students, parents, and staff know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

- [Bullying Report Form](#)

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. Dartmouth Public Schools will make an incident reporting form available in the main office, the counseling office, and/or the nurse's office at each school, at the central office, and on the district website.

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. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

Contact information for each school is as follows:

- Cushman School - Stephanie Riccardi, stephaniericcardi@dartmouthschools.org
- DeMello Elementary School- Elizabeth Correia- elizabethcorreia@dartmouthschools.org
- Potter Elementary School- Melissa McHenry- melissamchenry@dartmouthschools.org

- Quinn Elementary School- Audra Thomas, audrathomas@dartmouthschools.org
- Dartmouth Middle School- Peter Rossi, peterrossi@dartmouthschools.org
- Dartmouth High School- Ryan Shea, ryanshea@dartmouthschools.org

The district mailing address is as follows:

Dartmouth Public Schools

8 Bush St

Dartmouth, MA 02748

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 they witness or become 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 the 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.

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 principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include,

but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal 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. The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of bullying will be maintained to the extent possible given the school’s obligation to investigate the matter.

Obligations to Notify Others

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.

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.

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 or school resource officer 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 principal (or designee) will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal, designee, or whomever 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 the obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

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

Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will:

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 principal 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 principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what

action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

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.

Responses to Bullying

The Dartmouth Public Schools have a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's social skills or to prevent further incidents of bullying and/or retaliation.

Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d) (v).

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

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with 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
- making a referral for evaluation.

Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the plan and with the school's code of conduct as outlined in the student handbook as well as applicable state and federal laws.

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 regarding student discipline. If a student with a disability has been found to have engaged in bullying, the District will promptly convene a Section 504 or IEP team meeting to determine whether a student's educational needs may have changed and, if so, the District will determine the extent to which additional or different services are needed; and ensure that any needed changes are made promptly.

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.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the 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 so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Collaboration with Families

The Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of our schools and district to prevent and respond to bullying. Communication with families is necessary for effective collaboration. Provisions for informing parents/or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the schools include:

- how parents/guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the
- district plan;
- the dynamics of bullying; and
- online safety and cyberbullying.

Parents/guardians will also be notified each year about the student related sections of the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The district will collaborate with School Councils and parent organizations such as the PTOs, and SEPAC to offer resources, information and programs to parents/guardians on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and social skills curricula used by the district along with online safety and cyberbullying. Information will be made available to parents/ guardians in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language/s most prevalent among

parents/guardians. Each school will link the Dartmouth Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

The Dartmouth Public Schools will not tolerate unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in school buildings and grounds, on school buses or in school activities. The district will 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. Dartmouth Public Schools supports this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement. Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- on school grounds, at school-sponsored activities, functions or programs whether
- on or off school grounds, on schools buses, or through the use of technology or electronic devices owned, leased, or used by the district, 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.

Retaliation against a person who witnesses and reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, 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 non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Problem Resolution System

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: <http://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 are also available at the Superintendent's office.

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, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or 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. 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 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.