SECTION J
STUDENTS
6. Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Retaliation
(Voted 3/16/17, #17-28; 1/7/21, #21-5)
Replaced *Safe Schools Policy* (10/26/06, #06-98; Revised 5/5/11, #11-41)

General Statement of Policy

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment, as well as other benefits, programs, and activities, that are free from discrimination and harassment based on a protected category, and retaliation for engaging in a protected activity.

To ensure compliance with federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational program or activity, The PSB has developed internal policies and procedures that provide a prompt, fair, and impartial process for those involved in an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of protected class status, and for allegations of retaliation.

The PSB values and upholds the equal dignity of all members of its community and strives to balance the rights of the parties in the grievance process during what is often a difficult time for all those involved.

This policy applies to all persons employed by, attending, or otherwise affiliated with the Public Schools of Brookline, including volunteers, interns, and partnering organizations.

I. Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment

The core purpose of this policy is the prohibition of all forms of discrimination. Sometimes, discrimination involves exclusion from or different treatment in activities, such as athletics, or employment. At other times, discrimination takes the form of harassment or, in the case of sex-based discrimination, it can encompass sexual harassment. When an alleged violation of this nondiscrimination policy is reported, the allegations are subject to resolution using district procedures.

PSB prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment in all of its programs, activities, and services based on a person's protected class under the law. Harassment prohibited by the PSB includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental status, military and veteran status. Prohibited discrimination under this Policy includes discriminatory harassment and bullying. Prohibited discriminatory harassment and bullying is motivated by or expresses a negative attitude toward a person's

membership in a protected class or protected characteristic and creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Conduct prohibited may include, but is not limited to, written, verbal or electronic express or physical act or gesture such as:

- Use of epithets, slurs or nicknames that refer to a person's protected characteristic such as, but not limited to, race or sexual orientation;
- Jokes that have the purpose or effect of demeaning or making fun of a person based on a protected characteristic;
- Graffiti or other visual messages or displays that degrade a person based on a protected characteristic, and;
- Any other verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating a hostile work environment based on a person's protected characteristic.

Nothing in this policy shall limit the ability of PSB to enforce violations of its code of conduct in areas that may not legally qualify as discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or retaliation under state and federal law (e.g., harassment based on housing status, receipt of public benefits, economic class, etc.)

a. Disability Discrimination and Accommodation

The PSB is committed to full compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination against qualified persons with disabilities, as well as other federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to individuals with disabilities.

b. Nondiscrimination

The PSB adheres to all federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination in public institutions of education. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Discrimination against persons with disabilities is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities, whether or not they receive federal financial assistance). Discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

c. Prohibited Sexual Harassment Massachusetts

While PSB prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment, federal and state law require additional protections for sexual harassment. In Massachusetts, the legal definition for sexual harassment refers to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

a. submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or,

b. such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

The Massachusetts legal definition of sexual harassment is broad and in addition to the above examples, other sexually-oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work place or educational environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating may also constitute sexual harassment. While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances -- whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comment on an individual's body, comment about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, touching, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences, and
- Discussion of one's sexual activities
- Taking or posting of photographs, videos or images of a sexual nature without consent

It should be noted that retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment, and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization.

d. Prohibited Sexual Harassment Title IX

Pursuant to regulations promulgated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, PSB shall adopt and publish a grievance process for responding to formal complaints of Sexual Harassment as defined under Title IX. Title IX requires that schools use a separate, but similar definition of Sexual Harassment when responding to formal complaints. According to Title IX, Sexual Harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- A PSB employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the PSB's education programs or activities; or
- Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking (as defined under the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act)

Title IX also requires that the incident occurred in the United States, at PSB or during its programming, and the complainant must have been actively participating in or attempting to participate in PSB's educational programming or activities during the incident.
The Title IX Coordinator has the primary responsibility for coordinating the PSB's efforts related to the intake, investigation, resolution, and implementation of supportive measures to stop, remedy, and prevent discrimination, harassment, and retaliation prohibited under this policy. Any District employee with knowledge of an allegation of sexual harassment must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. The District will promptly respond to all reports alleging Sexual Harassment to ensure a fair and equitable resolution to the report, provide support to the complainant, eliminate harassment, and impose discipline if necessary. Discipline may range from verbal reprimand to suspension or termination, in the case of an employee.

II. Policy Coordinators / Notice of Rights

Inquiries about this Policy or applicable law (including Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act) may be directed to the designated PSB administrators listed below.

Contact information (telephone number, office address, email address) shall be identified in a Notice of Rights for each school, and a separate one for the District, and shall be posted, on the school and district website, in each school building, and within public areas of PSB administrative facilities.

The PSB administrators are responsible for consulting regarding the handling of complaints for consistency with this Policy and applicable procedures and legal requirements, and for identifying and addressing any patterns or systemic problems that arise during the review of such complaints. The district's designated administrators are:

Regarding complaints of violations of a <u>student's</u> rights:

Dr. Karen Shmukler
Deputy Superintendent of Student Services
Title II, Title VI, and Title IX Coordinator
Town Hall, 333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617-730-2444
Fax: 617-730-2066
karen_shmukler@psbma.org

Dr. Matthew DuBois
Section 504 and McKinney-Vento Coordinator
Town Hall, 333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617-730-2433
Fax: 617-730-2066
matthew_dubois@psbma.org

Regarding complaints of violations of an <u>adult's</u> rights (staff, visitors, contractors, etc.):

Director of Human Resources
Title IX and Title VII Coordinator
Town Hall, 333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617-730-2410
Fax: 617-730-2601

III. Prohibited Retaliation

The PSB prohibits punitive action of any kind against a person for engaging in protected conduct such as reporting, filing a complaint, or opposing acts of discrimination, sexual harassment and/or retaliation, or for participating in an investigation into or proceeding relating to alleged discrimination, sexual harassment and/or retaliation. Prohibited retaliation may include, but is not limited to:

- disciplining a person, or taking any other adverse action against a person based on a person's protected conduct,
- discriminating against a person in the PSB services, programs and activities because of a person's protected conduct, and
- subjecting a person to harassment, bullying, shunning, hazing, or name-calling, or any other hostile verbal or non-verbal conduct on the basis of a person's protected conduct.

IV. Reasonable Accommodation

The PSB will reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities and with religious observance or practice requirements. A reasonable accommodation is one that would not pose an undue financial or administrative burden on the PSB by being unduly costly, extensive, substantial or disruptive, or by fundamentally altering the nature or operation of the PSB's programs, services or activities. Depending on the facts, examples of reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to, a modified work or break schedule, altering how or when job duties are performed, reasonable modifications to policies and procedures, supplying an auxiliary aid or service to permit effective communication, and providing assistive technology or removal of an architectural barrier.

Persons seeking reasonable accommodations should direct their request to the applicable Coordinator designated in Section II.

Students seeking a Section 504 accommodation or special education services in order to access the PSB's educational programs should contact the Office of the Deputy Superintendent for Student Services for more information about any special procedures (including complaint procedures) applicable to Section 504 accommodations and special education services.

V. Other Prohibited Actions

Also, prohibited by this Policy is knowingly making a false accusation of discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation, or interfering with the investigation into such conduct by, for example, pressuring, goading, or encouraging false denials or covering up such conduct.

VI. Duties and Responsibilities

In each school, the Principal is responsible for receiving complaints/reports of violations of this Policy at the school level. The Superintendent is responsible for receiving complaints/reports of violations by a Principal or a Deputy Superintendent. The Chair of the School Committee is responsible for receiving complaints/reports of violations by the Superintendent. Any other person designated by the Principal, Superintendent, or School Committee Chair to receive complaints/reports shall forward them to the person responsible for receiving them under this paragraph. A Coordinator identified in Section II will be consulted regarding next steps consistent with this Policy and applicable law.

PSB staff, independent contractors and school volunteers who witness or become aware of discrimination, sexual harassment and/or retaliation shall immediately report such conduct to their direct superior. If the reporting party does not feel comfortable reporting to their direct superior, they may report it to the Superintendent or a Coordinator identified in Section II. All allegations of Sexual Harassment shall be reported to the Title IX Coordinator.

Each member of the school community is responsible for cooperating with the PSB's investigation of reports or complaints of violations of this Policy and with the PSB's efforts to prevent, respond effectively to, and eliminate any such conduct.

The Superintendent is responsible for:

- developing procedures to implement this Policy, which shall be consistent with legal requirements and PSB Policy and procedures, including, but not limited to, the Bullying Prevention Policy and procedures, the Student Discipline Policy, and applicable collective bargaining agreements.
- Otherwise developing guidelines to effectively implement this Policy and comply with applicable law, which may include guidelines regarding:
- publication of this Policy and Notices of Rights to the entire school community in an age-appropriate manner and in the languages most prevalent within the school community, including in School Handbooks, and
- in-service training; and
- student training.

VII. Investigations / Corrective Action / Recordkeeping / Reporting

The PSB shall take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end any discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation and prevent any such conduct from

recurring. The decision to discipline, the nature of any disciplinary action, and the disciplinary procedures followed shall comply with the PSB's disciplinary policies (including, but not limited to, Section J(8), PSB Policy Manual), applicable collective bargaining agreements, and federal and Massachusetts state law (including, but not limited to, Title IX, M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H ½, and 37H ¾, and in the case of students with disabilities, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Records regarding any actions taken in response to report or formal complaint of discrimination or harassment investigations must be retained and available to parties for a minimum of seven years.

The Coordinators will each prepare an annual report to the Superintendent and School Committee (without personal identifying information) regarding the number and resolution of any complaints or reports of violations under this Policy, along with any measures taken in the prior year, and/or anticipated for implementation in the coming year, to systemically address and prevent violations under this Policy. Both substantiated and unsubstantiated complaints or reports of violations of this Policy shall be included in the annual report to the Superintendent and School Committee. In assembling the annual report, the Coordinators shall include all written complaints or reports of violations under this Policy to which the Coordinators become aware, irrespective of whether the complaints or reports of violations comply with the formal procedural mechanisms for reporting. The Coordinators shall make their best effort to include subtotals and subcategories of reported violations in the annual report to the Superintendent and School Committee, so as to best inform the Superintendent and School Committee of the state of reported discrimination and harassment in the schools.

For allegations of sexual harassment specifically, the report shall include at minimum: (i) the total number of allegations of sexual harassment reported to the district's Title IX coordinator by a student or employee of the district against another student or employee of the district; (ii) the number of allegations made by a student or employee of the district against another student or employee of the district investigated by a local or state law enforcement agency, if known; (iii) the number of students and employees found responsible for violating the district's policies prohibiting sexual harassment; (iv) the number of students and employees found not responsible for violating the district's policies prohibiting sexual harassment; and (v) the number of disciplinary actions imposed by the district as a result of a finding of responsibility for violating the district's policies prohibiting sexual harassment. Such incident data shall be reported in the form and manner that complies with state and federal privacy laws.

The annual report to the Superintendent and School Committee shall be submitted no later than June 15 of each year and shall be publicly posted in a manner accessible to the general public by July 1 of that same year.

VIII. Contact Information for State & Federal Agencies

PSB urges all individuals in the school community to bring any concerns or complaints of discrimination or harassment to the attention of school personnel so that they can be

addressed. If either party to the complaint is dissatisfied with the results or progress of the PSB's investigation, they may discuss this directly with the Superintendent of Schools. Below are the relevant state and federal agencies if the party is unsatisfied with PSB's response or would rather contact them directly.

The state agency responsible for enforcing laws that prohibit harassment in the workplace is the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), One Ashburton Place, Suite 601, Boston, MA 02108-1518; telephone (617) 994-6000; TTY Users (617) 994-6196. The time frame for filing a complaint with the MCAD is within 300 days from the date of the most recent incident of alleged harassment. The state agency responsible for ensuring that Massachusetts public schools do not discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics is the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906; telephone (781) 338-3300; TTY Users (800) 439-2370. The MA DESE's Program Quality Assurance Services (PQA) accepts complaints when the alleged violation occurred no more than one year before PQA received the written complaint.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the federal agency that enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. The deadline for filing a complaint with the EEOC is within 300 days from the day of the alleged discrimination The EEOC is located at JFK Federal Bldg., 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203; (617) 565-3200 or (800) 669- 4000; TTY Users (800) 669-6820. The US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is a federal agency that enforces five federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the US Department of Education. In most cases, a complaint must be filed with OCR within 180 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination. OCR is located on the 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02109-3921; telephone (617) 289-0111, fax (617) 289-0150.

Legal References
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 100; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e *et seq.*; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.,* and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 106; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794 *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 28 CFR Parts 104 and 300; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Acts (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12131 *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 35; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, 29 U.S.C. § 621 *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 29 C.F.R. 1625 and 1626 *et seq.*; the Age

Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. § 6101 *et seq.* and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 110; the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, 42 U.S.C. 2000ff *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations, 29 C.F.R. Part 1635 *et seq.;* the Uniformed Services and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), 38 U.S.C. § 4301 *et seq.*, and 20 C.F.R. Part 1002; Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 76, § 5; M.G.L. c. 151B; and M.G.L. Chapter 151C.