The Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Districts

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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I. PREFACE

This plan represents one component of the Amherst, Pelham, and Amherst Regional School Districts comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and harassment. The districts are committed to fostering a safe learning environment for all students. Even if an individual investigation does not meet the legal definition of bullying, the districts will implement necessary safety measures, support systems, and intervention strategies to address behaviors that compromise the safety and wellbeing of students.

II. INTRODUCTION

All schools must provide a welcoming, caring and safe environment, whereby each member of the school community is respected, valued, supported and challenged academically. The mission of our schools is to provide all students with a high-quality education that enables them to be contributing members of a multiethnic, multicultural, pluralistic society.

We seek to create an environment that achieves equity for all students and ensures that each student is a successful learner, is fully respected, and learns to respect others. Our staff is committed to working together to create, monitor and support such a welcoming and safe environment for all students; and to support students in developing the skills necessary to maintain such an environment.

III. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Consistent with *M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O* and *603 CMR §49.00*, the Districts have developed this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Any and all acts of bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation based upon the reporting of bullying to the school administration are prohibited.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

1. on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
2. 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, § 37O*, nothing in this Plan requires the districts or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

IV. DEFINITIONS

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

B. Bullying 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:

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 themselves or of damage to their 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.

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

C. 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.

D. 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.

E. 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.

F. 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.

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

V. LEADERSHIP

A. Public Involvement in Developing the Plan.

The Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Districts clearly recognize that leadership at all levels will play a critical role in the development and implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the Plan) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climates. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and in promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leaders are responsible for setting priorities and for staying up to date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

As required by *M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O*, this plan has been developed in consultation with all district staff, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians by providing notice and a public comment period before being adopted by the School Committee. A 15-day review period will be given to all stakeholder groups to review the plan and submit comments.

B. Assessing Needs and Resources

The Plan will serve as the blueprint for enhancing the districts' capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of positive behavior and intervention supports that the schools currently have in place. Bullying and other behavioral incidents are routinely analyzed and assessment of available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services is ongoing.

C. Planning and Oversight

The Plan identifies the school and district leaders responsible for the following tasks:

1. Receiving reports on bullying;
2. Collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes;
3. Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
4. Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law;
5. Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors;
6. Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use;
7. Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation;
8. Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct to make clear that bullying of students by school staff or other students will not be tolerated;
9. Leading the family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials;
10. Reviewing and updating the Plan annually, or more frequently.

D. Developing Priority Statements

The districts are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. We recognize that certain groups of students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnancy or parenting status or mental, physical or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible.

The accountability structure for implementation and oversight of this Plan, including the roles and responsibilities at the building, central office, and governance levels, and the reporting and monitoring cycles, is set forth in Appendix B: Accountability Structure and Oversight.

VI. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual staff training on the Plan.

The districts will provide annual training on this plan for all school staff, including staff duties; responsibility to report bullying witnessed or known; an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report; and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout districts. 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.

All district volunteers, mentors, tutors and substitute teachers will be provided with information on the Bullying Policy, the Plan, the Anti-Discrimination and the Anti-Harassment Policy, and Grievance Procedures, and will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form with a copy maintained by the Human Resources department.

B. Ongoing professional development.

There will be on-going school-based and district-wide professional development to improve staff skills in the areas of prevention, identification and response to bullying. The goal of professional development is to create a common understanding of the tools necessary 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 district-wide professional development shall include information on:

1. strategies to prevent bullying that are responsive to students' developmental level, social-emotional capacity, and individual learning needs;
2. strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents, including de-escalation approaches that account for students' social-emotional development;
3. strategies to support bystanders in developing the social-emotional skills needed to intervene successfully in bullying events, including empathy, self-regulation, and responsible decision-making;
4. the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses, including how social-emotional factors such as self-awareness and relationship skills contribute to or mitigate those dynamics;
5. research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and the relationship between social-emotional skill development and bullying behavior;
6. information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying, including how the social-emotional dimensions of online interaction differ from in-person contexts; and
7. internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying, including strategies to build students' capacity to recognize, resist, and report cyberbullying through responsible digital citizenship.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities, with particular attention to students whose disability affects social-emotional skill development, including students on the autism spectrum. Staff will be supported in understanding how Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and 504 accommodations intersect with bullying prevention and response obligations.

Additional areas for professional development include:

a. promoting and modeling the use of respectful, inclusive language that affirms students' identities and builds a positive school climate;
b. fostering an understanding of, and respect for, diversity and difference as a foundation for equitable and inclusive school communities;
c. building relationships and communicating with families, including culturally and linguistically responsive approaches;
d. managing classroom behavior constructively using positive behavioral supports and restorative approaches rather than purely punitive responses;
e. applying Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks to classroom instruction, including explicit teaching of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making;
f. applying constructive disciplinary practices that balance accountability with skill-building;
g. teaching students skills including positive communication, conflict resolution, perspective-taking, and empathy as part of embedded SEL instruction;
h. engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making as a strategy for building investment in a positive school climate;
i. maintaining a safe and caring classroom environment in which all students feel known, valued, and supported;
j. teaching bystander intervention skills, including the social-emotional competencies that support students in moving from passive witness to active upstander;
k. understanding how staff interactions with students may be perceived as bullying or harassment, and developing the self-awareness to recognize and correct those dynamics; and
l. distinguishing between acceptable managerial and corrective behavior and conduct that constitutes bullying, with particular attention to the power differential inherent in adult-student relationships.

C. Written notice to staff.

The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

VII. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, student aggressors, families, and others are addressed through timely, appropriate, and culturally responsive supports.

A. Identifying resources.

The District works with principals, the student services department, the curriculum department and the student and family engagement office to survey and map all of the available resources. As appropriate, the District develops recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.

B. Counseling and Other Services.

In addition to school-based counseling services, the District collaborates and consults with staff and community-based service providers, who may assist the schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. The district works to develop and maintain partnerships with community-based organizations who can provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources given our District's demographic population.

The District also considers a variety of tools including, but not limited to: behavioral intervention and support plans, social skills programs, and individually focused curricula.

C. Students with Disabilities.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, the IEP Team shall consider bullying prevention and intervention when a student's disability: (a) is on the autism spectrum; (b) affects social skills development; or (c) makes the student vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Teams should be aware that students with emotional impairments, developmental delays, health impairments, communication disorders, and neurological impairments are likely to fall within one or more of these categories. For students on the autism spectrum, this consideration is required in all cases.

Where bullying is found to have occurred and a student has an IEP or 504 Plan, the District will promptly convene the relevant team to determine whether the student's educational needs have changed as a result of the bullying such that the student is no longer receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and will ensure that any needed changes to services or supports are made promptly. A bullying investigation may also prompt evaluation for eligibility where none previously existed.

D. Referral to Outside Services.

The District has established a referral protocol to support school staff. Each school maintains referral protocols to connect students and families with outside services when needs exceed what can be appropriately addressed within the school setting. School counselors and other specialists assist students and families in accessing appropriate and timely services. Referrals comply with relevant laws and policies, are communicated to families as a choice rather than a requirement, and are reviewed periodically for alignment with this Plan.

VIII. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The districts provide evidence-based, SEL-integrated bullying prevention instruction at every grade level, embedded within the broader curriculum as part of a whole-school commitment to safe and supportive learning environments. Bullying prevention is addressed through universal, targeted, and individualized strategies consistent with the districts' Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework.

A. Periodic Student Survey on School Climate

In accordance with *M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b),* the district will conduct a student survey at least once every two years to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying. The survey will:

1. gather data on students' experiences with bullying and cyberbullying, perceptions of safety, sense of belonging, and overall school climate;
2. disaggregate findings by school, grade level, and student population to identify disparities in safety and belonging for vulnerable groups;
3. inform district policies, curricula, and intervention strategies by identifying trends and areas needing improvement;
4. support data-driven decision-making aligned with the district's MTSS framework; and
5. be made available to stakeholders as part of the district's commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

Survey data will be reviewed by district and school leadership teams and used to guide professional development priorities, resource allocation, and updates to this Plan.

B. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

Bullying prevention curricula shall be evidence-based, selected from DESE's list of recommended programs or other evidence-based programs determined appropriate by district and school leaders, taking into account students' developmental levels, social-emotional capacities, individual learning needs, and community context. Instruction shall emphasize:

a. building the social-emotional competencies most directly linked to bullying prevention, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
b. helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including power imbalances, the role of bystanders, and harm to targets, aggressors, and the broader school community;
c. developing students' skills as active upstanders through structured practice including role plays, peer discussion, and scenario-based learning
d. building capacity for healthy relationships and respectful communication, including in digital environments, grounded in empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict resolution;
e. developing responsible digital citizenship, including recognition of cyberbullying and strategies for seeking help when online harassment occurs;
f. teaching students the student-related sections of this Plan, including how and to whom to report bullying or retaliation; and
g. ensuring instruction is responsive to the needs of students at heightened risk of being targeted, and that all students develop the awareness and skills to support their peers.

Each school will teach students about the student-related sections of the Plan. Instruction shall occur across multiple lessons per school year at every grade level and shall be reinforced through daily classroom practices, morning meetings, advisory programs, and cooperative learning structures consistent with DESE's SEL implementation guidelines.

C. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment.

a. establishing clear, consistent behavioral expectations across all school settings — classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, buses, and extracurricular activities — using positive behavioral supports;
b. creating safe and inclusive environments for all students, with particular attention to students who may be more vulnerable due to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnancy or parenting status, mental, physical or sensory disability, immigration status, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics;
c. building strong, trusting relationships between adults and students as a foundation for early identification of bullying and students' willingness to report;
d. modeling, teaching, and affirming pro-social, inclusive, and respectful behaviors, recognizing that adult conduct sets the tone for school climate;
e. using restorative practices as complements to disciplinary responses, with a focus on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships;
f. integrating trauma-sensitive practices consistent with DESE's Safe and Supportive Schools framework; and
g. supporting students' participation in extracurricular activities and leadership opportunities, recognizing that connection and belonging are among the most effective protective factors against bullying.

IX. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The specific procedural timelines, documentation requirements, and responsible parties for each stage of the investigation and response process described in this section are set forth in Appendix A: Investigation and Response Procedures. Appendix A is incorporated by reference into this Plan and shall be followed by all staff responsible for receiving, investigating, and responding to reports of bullying and retaliation.

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others and may be oral or written.

Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. The school or district will:

1. include a link to the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians;
2. make it available in each school's main office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and
3. post it on the school's website.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

The districts will maintain an online incident reporting and tracking system to document all reports of bullying and retaliation, investigations, safety plans, determinations, written notices, and follow-up actions. The procedural timelines and documentation requirements for the use of this system are set forth in Appendix A: Investigation and Response Procedures.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will 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 — when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. This requirement does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, or Others

The school or district expects students, parents/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. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action can be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit personnel's ability to call 911 where a threat to safety is present. If there is concern about anyone's immediate physical safety, please call 911 first, then notify an administrator.

B. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation — Allegations Against a Student

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations, the principal or designee shall 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 immediately upon receiving the report, pre-determining seating arrangements for the alleged target and/or the alleged 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 alleged target. Other steps to promote safety may be taken, as appropriate, if the alleged aggressor is a staff member. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during and after the investigation, as necessary. When the alleged target or alleged aggressor is a student with an IEP or 504 Plan, the principal or designee shall involve the student's special education case manager or 504 coordinator in the development of the safety plan to ensure consistency with the student's existing supports and accommodations.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a. **Notice to parents or guardians.** Upon receipt of a bullying report, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of both the target and the student aggressor of the report and the procedures for responding to it. The principal or designee shall, within three (3) school days of receiving a report, inform the parents or guardians of the alleged target and alleged aggressor of the actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b. **Notice to another school or district.** If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, collaborative school, or school within the Amherst, Pelham, or Amherst-Pelham Regional School Districts, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s). All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and *603 CMR 49.00*.
c. **Notice to law enforcement.** At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal or designee 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.

C. 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. The principal or designee will prioritize bullying investigations, and will aim to complete them within five (5) to ten (10) school days from the date of the report, unless extended by the principal or designee for good cause. If the investigation extends beyond ten (10) school days, the principal or designee will document the reason for the extension. At a minimum, the principal or designee shall contact the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis. During the investigation the principal or designee will interview relevant students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary, and will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

Investigations will consider the student-specific needs of the target and the aggressor, including disability, communication needs, and developmental level. Coordination with relevant staff (i.e., special education) may occur as appropriate. The principal or designee will maintain a written record during the investigation and will maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable and appropriate.

D. Determinations

The investigator, the building principal, and the principal's designee will make a determination based upon a preponderance of the evidence. If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, 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.

E. Notice to Parents

Upon determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and, where the aggressor is a student, the parents or guardians of the aggressor, of the determination and the district's procedures for responding to it. The principal or designee will inform the target's parents or guardians of the actions school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notices to parents or guardians must comply

with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations, including 603 CMR 49.00 and 603 CMR 23.00. Notice will be provided in the primary language of the home.

The notice to the target shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") Problem Resolution System and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents or guardians of the target should be provided the following contact information: Problem Resolution System, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370.

The confidentiality of student records is governed by the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C § 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99. Accordingly, the principal or designee may not disclose specific information to the target's parent or guardian about disciplinary action taken against the aggressor, except where a Harassment Prevention Order issued pursuant to M.G.L. c. 258E, or other court-issued directive, requires the target to be aware of its terms in order to report violations.

Upon a determination that bullying or retaliation has not occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the alleged target and the alleged aggressor of the determination. The principal or designee will communicate with the family of the alleged target any concerns that remain and any supports or interventions that may be appropriate to address the reported behavior, consistent with this Plan's commitment to implementing safety measures and intervention strategies to address behaviors that compromise student safety and well-being, even when an individual investigation does not meet the legal definition of bullying. The principal or designee will still consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the alleged target's sense of safety and that of others.

F. Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon 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 may include:

a. offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;

b. providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance/adjustment counselors and other appropriate school personnel;

c. implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;

d. meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;

e. adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills.

2. 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 district's or school's code of conduct outlined in our Student and Family Handbooks.

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 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.

3. 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.

Within 2-4 weeks 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 there is evidence of recurrence, supportive measures will be implemented immediately.

4. Other Restorative Practices

Where appropriate, offer the target and the aggressor opportunities to engage in voluntary restorative practices with a focus on repairing the harm done to people and relationships that are consistent with the District's policies and procedures.

G. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff.

An investigation into bullying allegations against a member of the staff will be conducted promptly by the employee's supervisor or designee and/or the Director of Human Resources, consistent with the collective bargaining agreement and any applicable policies and protocols. If bullying is substantiated, the staff member shall be subject to discipline consistent with the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, if applicable, as well as any applicable statute.

X. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent Education and Resources

The school districts, in collaboration with SEPAC, MLPAC, and PGOs, will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school.

B. Notification Requirements

Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents annual

written notice about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or districts' internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

XI. APPEAL PROCESS

Any parent/guardian wishing to appeal the outcome of the bullying investigation may do so by submitting a written request to the superintendent within 10 school days of receiving notification of the outcome.

XII. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Any parent/guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). Information is available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs, by email at compliance@doe.mass.edu, or by calling 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's office.

XIII. 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.

Appendix A: Investigation and Response Procedures

This appendix establishes the specific procedural timelines, documentation requirements, and responsible parties for implementing the investigation and response procedures described in Section IX of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. All timelines are stated in school days unless otherwise noted. These procedures are consistent with Policy JICFB and M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

Phase 1: Receipt and Initial Response (Day 0-1)

Trigger: A report of bullying or retaliation is received by any means (oral, written, online reporting system, or anonymous report).

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Record oral report in writing	Immediately	Receiving staff member	Written record
Notify principal or designee	Immediately	Receiving staff member	Verbal + written confirmation
Enter report into online incident reporting system (if not already filed through the system)	Within 24 hours	Principal or designee	System entry with incident #
Conduct preliminary safety assessment for alleged target	Within 24 hours	Principal or designee	Safety plan uploaded to system
If alleged target or aggressor has an IEP or 504 Plan, notify special education case manager or 504 coordinator for involvement in safety planning	Within 24 hours	Principal or designee	Notification logged in system
Preliminary determination: Do the facts as alleged, if true, constitute bullying or retaliation under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O? If yes, commence investigation. If not, document rationale and take appropriate action under other policies.	Within 24 hours	Principal or designee	Screening determination documented in system
Screen for protected class characteristics: Does the alleged conduct involve race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or religion? If yes, also refer to Title IX or Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures as applicable.	Within 24 hours	Principal or designee	Screening documented; referral logged if applicable

Phase 2: Notification (Days 1-3)

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Contact parents/guardians of alleged target to inform of the report, communicate safety measures in place, and explain the investigation process and timeline	Within 3 school days	Principal or designee	Contact date, method, and summary logged in system
Contact parents/guardians of alleged aggressor to inform of the report and the investigation process	Within 3 school days	Principal or designee	Contact date, method, and summary logged in system
If incident involves students from another school or district, notify that school's principal or designee by telephone and collaborate as needed *The building of the target is the investigating building	Promptly upon learning of cross-school involvement	Principal or designee	Date, time, and name of contact logged
If reasonable basis to believe criminal charges may be pursued, notify local law enforcement	At any point during or after investigation	Principal or designee, in consultation with Superintendent	Notification documented per 603 CMR 49.00

Phase 3: Investigation (Days 1-10)

The principal or designee will prioritize the investigation and will aim to complete it within **five (5) to ten (10) school days** from the date of the report.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Assign a named investigator in the online reporting system	Day 1	Principal or designee	Investigator name recorded in system
Interview alleged target (again if necessary)	Days 1-5	Investigator	Interview notes uploaded to system
Interview alleged aggressor	Days 1-5	Investigator	Interview notes uploaded to system
Interview witnesses (student and adult)	Days 1-7	Investigator	Interview notes uploaded to system
Interview parents/guardians (if necessary)	Days 1-7	Investigator	Interview notes uploaded to system

Gather and review all relevant evidence (written records, electronic communications, social media, surveillance, etc.)	Days 1-7	Investigator	Evidence log uploaded to system
Remind all interviewees that retaliation is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action	During each interview	Investigator	Noted in each interview record
Provide weekly status update to parents/guardians of target and aggressor	Weekly from date of report	Principal or designee	Date, method, and summary logged in system
If investigation cannot be completed within 10 school days, document the reason for extension and notify parents/guardians of the expected completion date	By Day 10	Principal or designee	Extension reason and new target date documented in system

Phase 4: Determination (Days 5-10)

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Investigator, building principal, and principal's designee review evidence and make determination based on preponderance of evidence	Upon completion of investigation	Investigator + Principal + Principal's designee	Determination recorded in system; incident status updated
If allegations involve protected class characteristics, consult with Superintendent or designee regarding Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures	Prior to or concurrent with determination	Principal or designee	Consultation logged in system
Determine remedial action required (if any)	Upon determination	Principal or designee	Actions documented in system
Determine responsive and/or disciplinary action necessary	Upon determination	Principal or designee	Actions documented in system
If bullying is substantiated and target or aggressor has an IEP or 504 Plan, convene relevant team to assess whether educational needs have changed	Promptly upon determination	Principal + Special Education Case Manager / 504 Coordinator	Team meeting and any changes documented

Phase 5: Post-Determination Notice and Response (Days 10-14)

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation

Notify parents/guardians of target of the determination, actions taken to prevent further bullying/retaliation, and information about DESE Problem Resolution System	Promptly upon determination	Principal or designee	Written notice sent; copy uploaded to system
Notify parents/guardians of aggressor of the determination and the district's response procedures	Promptly upon determination	Principal or designee	Written notice sent; copy uploaded to system
If bullying is NOT substantiated: notify parents/guardians of both parties of the determination and coordinate with parents/guardians to identify any supports or interventions appropriate to address the reported behavior.	Promptly upon determination	Principal or designee	Written notice sent; copy uploaded to system
Implement skill-building, disciplinary, and/or restorative responses as determined	Promptly upon determination	Principal or designee	Interventions documented in system
Update incident status in online reporting system and close investigation	Upon completion of all Phase 5 actions	Principal or designee	System status updated to closed

Phase 6: Follow-Up and Monitoring (Weeks 2-4)

Action	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Reassess effectiveness of disciplinary actions and other recommended actions	Within 2-4 weeks of determination	Principal or designee	Reassessment documented in system
Contact the target to determine whether there has been recurrence of prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed	Within 2-4 weeks of determination	Principal or designee	Follow-up contact logged in system
If recurrence is identified, implement additional supportive measures immediately and re-open or create new incident in reporting system	Immediately upon identification	Principal or designee	New incident or re-opened case in system

Note on Online Reporting System: All documentation referenced in this appendix (safety plans, interview notes, evidence, written notices, determination records, and follow-up logs) shall be uploaded to the districts' online incident reporting and tracking system. The system serves as the centralized record for compliance monitoring by the central office and for annual reporting to DESE. If an alternative reporting system is adopted in the future, these documentation requirements remain in effect.

Appendix B: Accountability Structure and Oversight.

This appendix describes the chain of responsibility for implementation, oversight, and accountability under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. It is organized by role to clarify who is responsible for each function at each level of the system.

Tier 1: Building Level

Principal or Designee

- Receives all reports of bullying and retaliation
- Ensures reports are entered into the online reporting system
- Assigns a named investigator for each report
- Oversees or conducts investigations consistent with Appendix A timelines
- Implements safety plans, with special education staff involvement when the alleged target or aggressor has an IEP or 504 Plan
- Makes determination (with investigator and designee) based on preponderance of evidence
- Issues written notice to parents/guardians using district template letters
- Orders and oversees remedial, disciplinary, and/or restorative responses
- Conducts 2-4 week follow-up with target
- Completes all required documentation in the online reporting system
- Provides weekly status updates to parents/guardians during active investigations
- Screens all reports for protected class characteristics and refers to appropriate grievance procedures when applicable

Teaching and Support Staff

- Reports suspected bullying or retaliation immediately to the principal or designee
- Records oral reports in writing
- Participates in annual training on the BPIP
- Implements classroom-level bullying prevention instruction and SEL curricula
- Cooperates with investigations as necessary

School Counselors and Specialists

- Assist with safety planning and support for targets and aggressors
- Provide skill-building sessions and social-emotional interventions
- Facilitate referrals to outside services when needs exceed school capacity
- Consult with investigators on developmental and social-emotional factors

Special Education Case Managers / 504 Coordinators

- Participate in safety plan development for students with IEPs or 504 Plans
- Convene IEP or 504 team when bullying determination may affect student's educational needs or FAPE

- Ensure bullying prevention is addressed in IEP development consistent with M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3

Tier 2: Central Office

Superintendent or Designee

- Holds ultimate authority over BPIP implementation across the districts
- Receives compliance reports from district mental health administrator
- Takes action when building-level compliance gaps are identified
- Serves as investigator/decision-maker when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor
- Serves as appeals decision-maker
- Reports bullying incident data to DESE annually in the form and manner established by DESE
- Presents updated BPIP to the school committee at least biennially, as required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.
- Ensures BPIP is developed and updated in consultation with all statutorily required stakeholders

District Mental Health Administrator

- Monitors online reporting system data for compliance with Appendix A timelines across all buildings
- Identifies trends, patterns, and disparities in bullying reports, investigations, and outcomes by school, grade level, and student population
- Reports compliance data to the Superintendent on a regular cycle
- Coordinates and delivers annual staff training on the BPIP and retraining as needed throughout the school year
- Provides consultation and technical assistance to building administrators on investigations, determinations, and evidence-based interventions
- Supports fidelity of implementation through coaching, data review, and feedback
- Coordinates periodic student climate survey administration and analysis
- Does not hold decision-making authority over building principals; serves in a consultation, training, and oversight capacity

Executive Director of Human Resources

- Leads or co-leads investigations when a staff member is the alleged aggressor, or assigns a designee
- Ensures staff bullying investigations are consistent with collective bargaining agreements and applicable policies
- Maintains acknowledgement forms for volunteers, mentors, tutors, and substitute teachers

Tier 3: Governance

School Committee

- Adopts and periodically reviews Policy JICFB
- Receives the updated BPIP at least biennially in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O

- Receives compliance reports from the Superintendent or designee as directed
- Serves as investigator/decision-maker (or designates) when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor

Reporting and Monitoring Cycles

Report / Activity	Frequency	From	To
Online reporting system data review (timeline compliance, open cases, documentation completeness)	Monthly	District Mental Health Administrator	Superintendent
Building-level compliance summary	Monthly	District Mental Health Administrator	Superintendent
Bullying incident data (aggregate)	Annually	Superintendent / Designee	DESE
BPIP review and update	At least biennially	Superintendent / Designee	Required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O
Student climate survey	At least every 2 years	District Mental Health Administrator	District leadership + stakeholders
Annual staff training on BPIP	Annually (beginning of school year)	District Mental Health Administrator	All staff

Escalation Chain for Special Circumstances

The following escalation chain applies when standard building-level procedures are not appropriate due to the identity of the alleged aggressor:

If the alleged aggressor is...	Investigation is led by...	Determination authority rests with...
A student	Principal or designee	Investigator + Principal + Principal's designee
A staff member	Principal or designee and/or Director of Human Resources	Per collective bargaining agreement and district policies
The Principal or Assistant Principal	Superintendent or designee	Superintendent or designee
The Superintendent	School Committee or its designee	School Committee or its designee

This accountability structure is designed to ensure that every report of bullying or retaliation has a clearly identified responsible party at each stage, that oversight and data monitoring are built into the system rather than dependent on individual initiative, and that the chain of accountability is transparent to families and the school community. The structure reflects the statutory framework of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, which assigns implementation authority to the building principal while maintaining the Superintendent's overall responsibility for compliance, and the School Committee's role in adopting policy and receiving periodic updates.