Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Franklin Public Schools

ANTI-BULLYING TASK FORCE

October 26, 2010

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I. 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.

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, this Plan was developed by the ANTI-BULLYING TASK FORCE, which consists of teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. We met on several occasions to research, review, and consider the items identified in the School Committee charge dated March 9, 2010:

Prior to adoption of the Plan, the School Committee should conduct a public hearing, and, at a minimum, provide notice and a public comment period. The Plan should identify the ways that each of the various constituencies will be involved.

B. Assessment of needs and resources.

The Plan is the district's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, we researched the following:

- Review of new Massachusetts anti-bullying legislation
  - review current policies and procedures
  - assess the adequacy of current programs
  - assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services
- Bullying in Franklin (review anecdotal and statistical evidence)

    - review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents
- Identify items to include in new policy
- Identify potential costs associated with implementation of various recommendations in following areas:
    - Annual distribution of written policy
    - Collecting data and reporting
    - Investigation of reports of violations and complaints
    - Counseling or referral to appropriate services
    - Programs and other initiatives regarding anti-bullying efforts
    - Annual training for school employees and volunteers
    - Annual confidential surveys of students
- Identify grants or other sources of funding for anti-bullying efforts
- Identify how the school district policy can be implemented in a manner that is ongoing throughout the school year and integrated with
    - a school's curriculum,
    - a school's discipline policies, and
    - other violence prevention efforts.
- Identify acts which acts of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying which may constitute criminal activity.
- Address first amendment, due process, and other concerns
- Develop resource manual on bullying for use by the district

The Task Force Report includes a review and analysis of these items. Based on our findings, we make recommendations relative to revision and or development of policies and procedures; urge the district to continue its practice of establishing partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

We relied on MetroWest Health Survey results, but urge the District to conduct periodic needs assessments by 1) surveying students, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues; and 2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses). This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

C. Planning and oversight.

The following school or district leaders responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

1) receiving reports on bullying	Administrators
2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes	Contingent upon funding; building based
3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors	Administrators, school counselors, school-based teams.
4) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law	Director of instruction
5) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors	Administrators and School Committee
6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use	Administrators and School Committee
7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them	Administrators and School Committee
8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct	Administrators
9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials	Administrators and school counselors
10) reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently	Anti-Bullying Task Force

D. Priority statements.

Priority statements can be used to communicate within the Plan the school's or district's vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies. The following are priority statements that the Task Force recommends for inclusion in the Plan:

- The school or district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

- The school or district is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.
- 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 investigate promptly 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. 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.
- The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O requires the district to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. The law lists six topics that must be included in professional development. Additional topics may be identified by the school or district leadership as they consider the unique needs of the school or district community. Plans should also identify which trainings will be provided districtwide and which will be school-based.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan.

Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year 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.

B. 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 schoolwide and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

(i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;

(ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;

(iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;

(iv) 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;

(v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and

(vi) 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 that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of 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 school or classroom planning and decision-making; and

- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

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, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The Plan should describe the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the school's or district's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services should reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors. Plans must include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students. These locally established strategies should be reflected in the school or district Plan.

A. Identifying resources.

The Plan should include the school's or district's process for identifying its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. This will include a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Once this mapping of resources is complete, the school or district can develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. This may include adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services. The Plan should outline the local processes for identifying existing and needed resources.

A variety of personnel including Principals, assistant principals, central office administrators, school psychologists, school adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, nurses, teachers, special educators, related service providers, behavioral specialists and support staff work together to support the creation of positive school environments within the Franklin Public Schools.

At the elementary level, each of the district's six elementary schools are staffed with a principal and head teacher who assists the principal in administrative duties part- time and teaches part-time. Keller, JFK, Oak, and Parmenter Schools have full-time school psychologists and Davis Thayer and Jefferson Schools have school adjustment counselors (.8 and 1.0 FTE's respectively). In addition, there is a full-time adjustment counselor assigned to support students in the substantially separate special education classrooms at the Oak Street-Horace Mann complex. All of the elementary schools have school nurses who are on-site full-time, and at the three elementary-middle school complexes, there are also part-time health aides assigned.

The district's three middle schools are under the leadership of full-time principals and assistant principals. There is a school psychologist and adjustment counselor assigned at each middle school, and as mentioned above, school nurses and health aides are on site full-time at the elementary-middle school complexes.

Franklin High School is led by the principal and three assistant principals to oversee approximately 1600 students. There are two school psychologists, two school adjustment counselors, a director of guidance and five guidance counselors. In addition, there is a third adjustment counselor who is assigned full-time to the Alternative Learning Program at the high school. There is a full-time school nurse and part time health aide assigned as well.

The school district also has a K-12 Health Wellness Coordinator who is working with the Director of Instructional Services to develop and implement Health Curriculum at the elementary level and to review/revise the Health Curriculum grades 7-12.

The school district also has an Early Child Development Center (ECDC) that services pre-school aged children in both integrated and specialized classroom settings. The ECDC is staffed with a full-time Principal/Director, a school nurse, .2 FTE School adjustment counselor, and a full-time board certified behavior analyist (BCBA).

At the Central Office level, the Franklin Public Schools is served by the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Instructional Services, Director of Special Education, Director of School Finance, Director of Human Resources and Director of Technology. Twice monthly, the district's Administrative Team, consisting of all of the central office administrators and building principals, meets to discuss and make decisions and share resources around relevant school-based and district wide concerns and initiatives, instructional practices, curriculum implementation, and services and interventions for students.

The district has a fully developed emergency plan which is updated annually, and works closely with School Resource Officers to review school safety procedures with school staff and students. There are four School Resource Officers who work closely with school administration throughout the school year to address specific issues that arise involving individual students or groups of students. They are also available to participate in school-wide presentations or initiatives which focus on school safety, making healthy choices and other relevant topics.

At the elementary level school staff are trained in the Open Circle Social Competency Curriculum. Open Circle is utilized in a proactive manner as an instructional tool to teach students age appropriate social interaction skills. It is also used by school counselors and teachers to address specific school or classroom issues as they present themselves.

At the middle school level, there are student programs such as Teen Angels, which is a student driven program focused on awareness and prevention of cyber-bullying, and Best Buddies, which pairs typical peers with special needs students having significant disabilities. The Wired Teens Program is a new club established this year led by the Teen Angels. The purpose of this club is to get more students involved in a proactive manner in bullying awareness and prevention activities. Through the Advisor-Advisee program, staff work with small groups of advisees on conflict resolution skills. The middle schools also offer a peer mediation program.

Students at Franklin High School recently were able to participate in "Rachel's Challenge," a nationally acclaimed presentation about a young woman who was the first victim in the shootings at Columbine High School. As a result of this presentation, the students are forming a "Rachel's Challenge Club," whose mission is to reflect on how we treat one another and to show kindness in our day to day interactions with people. Other student clubs and activities include Gay-Straight Alliance, Peer Mentors, and Peer Leaders.

The school district collaborates on a regular basis with the local YMCA around health and wellness programs for students and families both within the schools and at Y.

Since September 2010, the Franklin Public Schools has established an Anti-Bullying Task Force which has been meeting regularly to assess the district's current resources and to develop the district's bullying prevention plan. Once the intervention plan is completed, the task force will continue to meet to develop recommendations and action steps about how to find resources to fulfill service gaps and needs. The task force members will also engage in exploration of various curricula, safety planning, grant writing, and other activities related to prevention of bullying in school.

B. Counseling and other services.

The Plan should identify the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district. If resources need to be developed, the Plan should identify linkages with community based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, the Plan should identify staff and service providers who assist 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. Schools may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

District-wide, the School Psychologists and Adjustment Counselors meet monthly with a licensed, clinical psychologist for student case consultations and training on relevant school-based interventions to address student needs. Within their schools, they work with both general education students and students identified as having special needs.

School Psychologists spend the majority of their time performing tasks related to special education to include: evaluating students for special education services; participating in IEP TEAM meetings; and writing and scoring evaluation reports. Additionally, they are involved in student instructional support teams, parent meetings, social skills groups, crisis intervention, and consultation with outside therapists and other outside service providers.

School Adjustment Counselors work with students on IEPs and within general education to provide school-related counseling services. They may work with students individually or in small groups to address issues which primarily impact them in the school setting. Adjustment Counselors interface as needed with outside service providers, law enforcement, parents, social services to address student and family needs and to provide referrals for families for outside services as appropriate. They identify students who require supports around social skills and pragmatics in individual and small group settings and help to develop safety plans for students who have been the targets of bullying and to offer bullying prevention, education programs and intervention programs for targets and aggressors.

Guidance Counselors function mainly in the role of assisting students with post-secondary school options and transitional services. Their services run the continuum of college entrance and application activities to assisting non-college bound students with career exploration. When needed, Guidance Counselors assist in crisis interventions, safety planning, communication with law enforcement and outside service agencies, and referral to community based agencies for needed services for students and families.

Whenever necessary, both School Psychologists and Counselors work with teachers, administrators, parents and students to develop individual behavioral intervention plans and other supports to assist with student success.

For parents/families whose primary language of the home is not English, the School District provides written translations of written documents and communications on the district and individual school web pages using Yahoo Babel Fish and Google Translate. The district is able to make arrangements for a translator to be present at a school meeting to assist with translation for parents/guardians if needed.

C. 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.

D. Referral to outside services.

Schools and districts should establish a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies. Current local referral protocols should be evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed.

In Franklin, referral for students and families to outside services may be made under the following circumstances:

- Parent contacts school counselor, psychologist, administrator seeking assistance with identifying outside therapist, medical specialist, social services, etc.
- Parent contacts school to report serious concerns regarding the child in the school including but not limited to mental health issues, behavioral concerns, social issue, threats, bullying, etc.
- Child approaches school personnel and reports suicidal or homicidal ideation, bullying, abuse, neglect or other safety issues
- Child demonstrates extreme behavior, psychological issues, medical concerns, emotional or physical neglect or abuse
- Child demonstrates chronic attendance issues or school refusal
- Child demonstrates chronic anti-social behavior and disciplinary issues
- Child is participating in school-based counseling and additional outside services are recommended to address larger issues impacting the child in the home and community settings

- All outside counseling services and arrangements are between parent/guardian and private service provider. The Franklin Public Schools are not authorized to cover the cost of any outside counseling services.

Required referrals/reporting to Department of Child and Family Services (DCF) or Law Enforcement are made either by the School Principal or Designee (e.g. Psychologist, Counselor, and Assistant Principal). Copies of 51A Abuse/Neglect forms to DCF or Incidents of Bullying will be forwarded to the Office of the Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

The Franklin Public Schools complies with all relevant laws and policies in making referrals for students. School Personnel will procure the appropriate signed, parental consent before making referrals requiring sharing of school records and open communication between school and outside agencies or individuals. Copies of signed, parental consent will be maintained in the student record.

School Psychologists/Counselors assist families in arranging outside therapy or services through private insurance or through Community Service Agencies for Medicaid eligible students.

If appropriate, outside individuals, agencies or law enforcement may be invited to school-based meetings regarding individual students.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's or district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development. The Department will publish guidelines for implementing social and emotional learning curricula by June 30, 2011. Other resources are currently available on the Department's website at http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/bullying/.

A. 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 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.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

The Franklin Public Schools has re-introduced a K-5 Health Education program, effective for the 2010-2011 school year. The health program will provide comprehensive instruction in social competency skills and will include bullying education as an integral component of the curriculum. In the middle school health program bullying is addressed through the curriculum in place for students in grade 6, 7 and 8. The Franklin High School health curriculum includes the topics of bullying, dating violence and tolerance education.

When the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) releases updated heath frameworks a team of administrators and teachers will revise our local curriculum documents to reflect the DESE requirements. While awaiting the release of these documents a team of health educators have been extensively researching and reviewing a wide range of curriculum materials and instructional tools to support the implementation of the standards in our K-12 program. A review of those curriculum documents is included as an exhibit to the Task Force Report dated October 26, 2010.

In addition to curriculum interventions and explicit classroom instruction, the Franklin Public Schools supports a variety of extracurricular initiatives to raise awareness and educate students, parents and community members on the impact of bullying.

Programs Include:

- No Name Calling Week
- Teen Angels and Wired Kids Clubs at all three middle schools
- Best Buddies Clubs at MS and FHS
- Advisor-Advisee Program at all three middle schools
- Peer Mentors- FHS
- Peer Leaders-FHS
- Gay Straight Alliance-FHS

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

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

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

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, schools or districts must put in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. The Franklin School Committee is in the process of developing its anti-bullying policy. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. The task force has developed detailed procedures for staff reporting of incidents, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee once a report is made. The procedure is outlined in the student handbooks and in a flowchart developed by the Task Force (both depicted on the next two pages):

School Response to Reported Bullying/Cyberbullying

Administrative Steps:

- Take a complete statement from the student or parent/guardian reporting the incident
- Speak to other students involved
- Speak to other relevant adults – teachers, counselors, and/or bus drivers who may have information regarding the incident
- Make a determination regarding the incident
- Identify bully/cyberbully and bully/cyberbully-bystanders as appropriate
- Identify victim(s) as appropriate
- Include the School Resource Officer(SRO) as appropriate
- Notify Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and/or Director of Special Education as appropriate

Administrative Actions:

If it is determined to be a bullying incident the following administrative actions may take place but not necessarily in the order listed below.

Bully/Cyberbully and Bully/Cyberbully-bystanders:

- Inform student(s) about the consequences for bullying or cyberbullying in school
- Have an educational discussion with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Inform all relevant adults – teachers, counselors, and/or bus drivers
- Student(s) may be required to engage in educational activities such as readings, written reflection and/or research about bullying/cyberbullying
- Students may be asked to give back to the community by being asked to participate in a community service project or activity
- Student(s) are informed about further consequences if any form of retaliation were to occur
- Student(s) may be referred to School Adjustment Counselor or School Psychologist
- Student(s) may be assigned a disciplinary consequence but not limited to:
    - Lunch Detention
    - Bus Suspension
    - Exclusion from extra-curricular activities and/or special events
    - After School Detention
    - Suspension

Victim(s):

- Have an educational discussion with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Establish a safety and comfort plan with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Inform all relevant adults – teachers, counselors, and bus drivers
- Future follow-up with student(s) and parents/guardians

Response to Bullying/ Cyberbullying Flow Chart

Report of an incident is received
↓
Ensure safety of all students involved
↓
Take a complete statement from the student, parent/guardian or staff member reporting the incident
↓
Interview other students who are involved in the incident → Interview bystanders → Interview other adults-teachers, counselors and/or bus drivers who may have information regarding incident → Review student cumulative folder, discipline files, action plans and/or other relevant documents
↓
Evaluate credibility of report
↓
Make a determination regarding the reported incident

Is this bullying?

One time incidents may be deliberately mean, cruel or developmentally inappropriate but they may not be bullying. However, some other behaviors may violate other school rules so it should be reported to an adult as soon as possible. For behavior to be deemed bullying, it needs to include all of the following elements (MGL Chapter 92, Acts of 2010).

- Must be repeated action(s) by one or more students
- Must be a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture
- Must be directed at a victim so that it causes one or more of the following:
- Physical or emotional harm to the victim;
  Damage to the victim's property;
  Places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property;
  Creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
  Infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or
  Disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

- **When should you report?**

In the event that a bullying incident has occurred get as much information as possible from your child and report it to a counselor, administrator, and/or teacher.

If it is determined that a bullying incident has occurred...

Identify bully/cyberbully → Identify bully/cyberbully and bully/ cyberbully-bystanders as appropriate → Identify victim(s) as appropriate
↓
Provide education and/or take disciplinary action as appropriate for bully/cyberbully
↓
Notify and include School Resource Officer (SRO) as appropriate
↓
Notify Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and/or Director of Special Education as appropriate
↓
Notify parent(s)/guardian(s) of bully/ cyberbully
↓
Establish safety and comfort plan with victim and parent(s)/guardian(s)

Administrative Steps

If it is determined to be a bullying incident the following administrative actions may take place but not necessarily in the order listed below.

Bully/Cyberbully and Bully/Cyberbully-Bystanders:

- Inform student(s) about the consequences for bullying or cyberbullying in school
- Have an educational discussion with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Inform all relevant adults – teachers, counselors, and/or bus drivers
- Student(s) may be required to engage in educational activities such as readings, written reflection and/or research about bullying/cyberbullying
- Students may be asked to give back to the community by being asked to participate in a community service project or activity
- Student(s) are informed about further consequences if any form of retaliation were to occur
- Student(s) may be referred to School Adjustment Counselor or School Psychologist
- Student(s) may be assigned a disciplinary consequence that is consistent with school handbooks as appropriate at each level

Victim(s):

- Have an educational discussion with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Establish a safety and comfort plan with the student(s) and parents/guardians
- Inform all relevant adults – teachers, counselors, and bus drivers
- Future follow-up with student(s) and parents/guardians

The following is sample language that may be included in a Plan, and is based on the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. In addition to this language, the Task Force Report includes a variety of samples for use in crafting the policy.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation.

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 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. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, 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, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee 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.

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

The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. 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.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

1. 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. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a. 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 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.

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, 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.

c. 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 if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal 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.

C. Investigation.

The principal or designee will investigate promptly 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 or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation 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 his/her 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 legal counsel about the investigation. (Align this with school or district procedures.)

D. 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 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.

E. Responses to Bullying.

Use this section of the Plan to enumerate the school's or district's chosen strategies for building students' skills, and other individualized interventions that the school or district may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation. The following is sample language that may be included in school or district Plans:

1. 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 pro-social 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.

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 school's or district's code of conduct.

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 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.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Effective Plans will include strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying. The Task Force has developed a Resource Handbook for families. This Handbook includes parent resource and information networks that the school or district will collaborate with in working with parents and guardians. Student and parent handbooks shall inform parents or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention resources and curricula used by the school district or school including: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyberbullying. Parents and guardians will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents or guardians. School- or district-specific approaches to collaboration should take into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and the parents.

A. Parent education and resources.

The school or district 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. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

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 written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's 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.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The law requires each Plan to include a statement prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The statement must be included in the Plan and included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

> (i) 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
>
> (ii) 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 district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted below. Schools or districts may add specific language to these definitions to clarify them, but may not alter their meaning or scope. Plans may also include additional definitions that are aligned with local policies and procedures.

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;

ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;

iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;

iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or

v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber¬bullying, 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.

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.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. 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, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.