

Dracut Public Schools

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

DEFINITION

Aggressor is a student or a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional 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 cyber bullying.

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, cyber bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

II. LEADERSHIP

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan: As required by M.G.L. chapter 71, section 370, this Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, and parents/guardians. Proper notice of a public comment period was given before the Plan was adopted by the Dracut School Committee.
- B. Assessing needs and resources: This Plan outlines the district's desire to increase awareness of bullying, to improve the district's capacity to prevent such incidents and to respond if there is an occurrence. The process and Plan will continue to be under review through a collection of relevant data, a review of training programming, and an assessment of available resources within the District and the community.
- C. Planning and oversight: The following school-based and district personnel will have oversight of the areas indicated.
 - 1. Building principals will review and retain all reports of bullying.
 - 2. Building principals will be responsible for training all other building-based staff each fall.
 - 3. School counselors and/or school adjustment counselors will provide educational support for any and all repeat aggressors and will meet, as needed, with targets of bullying incidents.
 - 4. Building principals will review building-based student and staff handbooks to develop a consistent code of conduct. Particular attention will be given to age-appropriate language and consistency in student handbooks.
- D. Priority statement: The Dracut Public School District is committed to foster a safe and caring learning environment where tolerance, respect, and cooperation are valued. As such, it is our top priority to provide all students with a safe learning environment, free from bullying and cyber bullying. We will respond promptly to all reports and complaints of bullying and cyber bullying.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is comprehensive in its scope and commits the district to working with students, staff, parents/guardians, law enforcement officials, and the community to train and educate all stakeholders in preventing and eliminating all forms of bullying that impede the learning process.

III. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual staff training and Professional Development: Annual staff training on the Plan will include

- an overview of the reporting and investigation process of a bullying or cyber bullying complaint or report
- an overview of the curricula offered throughout the district
- Staff hired after the initial fall training will also be trained by the building principal or designee.
- an overview of current research findings involving bullying, cyber bullying, and related internet safety issues
- information regarding the complex interaction and peer differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target and a witness to bullying
- information on incidents and nature of cyber bullying
- internet safety issues with regard to cyber bullying
- developmentally or age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying will be offered by school adjustment counselors or building counselors. This training will include a focus on students with disabilities and/or those under an IEP.

B. Written notice to staff: Copies of the Plan will be included in school and district employee handbooks and will include the adopted code of conduct.

IV. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The Dracut Public Schools recognizes that the educational and emotional needs of all students must be considered and will endeavor to support students who may be targets, aggressors or bystanders of bullying or cyber bullying through the following steps.

A. Identifying resources: School guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors, school nurses, and building administrators will identify each school's capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. Each school will conduct an annual review of its staffing and programmatic resources, making recommendations for any changes to curriculum or resource needs that will help fill service gaps.

B. Counseling and other services: Each school building has access to school adjustment counselors who are able to provide guidance related to social skills programs and education to faculty and staff to support students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation. Additionally, at the secondary level students and families have as needed access to school guidance counselors to assist with student needs. Counselors are equipped to provide links to community based organizations as they are needed, behavioral intervention plans, and social skills groups.

- C. Students with disabilities: As required by M.G.L. Chapter 71B, section 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.

V. **ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

- A. Specific bullying prevention approaches: The Dracut Public Schools 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 student 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 cyber bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
 - Emphasizing cyber safety, 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.
- B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts: *The Dracut Public Schools will provide age and developmentally appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade, incorporated into each school's evidence-based curricula. This instruction includes classroom instruction and adaptation of curricula vocabulary, school initiatives, and assemblies or other methods to focus on bullying prevention and social skills development.*

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

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all 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.

VI. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyber bullying, are prohibited:

- A. Conduct On School Grounds: 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 bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by the Dracut Public Schools; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the Dracut Public Schools, and
- B. Conduct Off of School Grounds: 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 the Dracut Public Schools, 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 the 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. chapter 71, section 370, nothing in this Plan requires the Dracut Public Schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VII. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO 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 written or oral. 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/guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. Each school in the district has a variety of reporting resources available including, but not limited to an Incident Reporting Form (See Appendix A), a bullying box, and the building administrator's email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. Each school will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents/guardians; 2) make the Incident Reporting Forms available in each 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 district's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents /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/Guardians, or Others: The Dracut Public Schools 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 will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents/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 aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. The student will meet with an administrator or a counselor to determine the need for and type of safety plan.

2. Obligations to Notify Others:

- a. 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.

- b. 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 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, interviews students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee 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 district policies and procedures for investigations.

- d. Determinations: The principal or designee will make a determination based upon a preponderance of the evidence. 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.

- E. **Notice of the Outcome of the Investigation:** 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.

F. Responses to Bullying

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. chapter 71, section 370(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;
- Provide 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

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.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and 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.

VII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources The Dracut Public Schools 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 Dracut Public Schools. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTOs, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council and other parent groups.
- B. Notification requirements These educational programs will enhance the information and policies stated in each student handbook. Each year the school will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber bullying and online safety. Parents and students are asked to acknowledge receipt of the information provided in the student handbook for their school at the beginning of the school year by signing and returning to the school the "signature page" of the student handbook. The district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Dracut Public Schools, 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, age, gender identity or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the Dracut Public Schools 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 Dracut Public Schools to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. chapter 71, sections 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.

Dracut Public Schools

BULLYING INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. Name of Reporter: _____

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

3. Check whether you are a: Student Staff member (specify role) _____
 Parent Administrator Other (specify) _____

4. State your school or work site: DHS Lakeview Englesby Campbell
 Greenmont Parker Brookside

5. Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior) _____

Name of Aggressor (alleged bully): _____

Date(s) of Incident(s): _____

Time When Incident(s) Occurred _____

Location of Incident(s) (Be specific.) _____

6. Witnesses (List of people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

7. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on the back, if necessary.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

8. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

9. Form given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Dracut Public Schools

BULLYING INCIDENT INVESTIGATION FORM

Signature: _____ Date Received: _____

1. Investigator(s): _____ Position(s): _____

2. Interviews:

Interviewed aggressor Name: _____ IEP/504 Date: _____

Interviewed target Name: _____ IEP/504 Date: _____

Interviewed witnesses Name: _____ IEP/504 Date: _____

Name: _____ IEP/504 Date: _____

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor? Yes No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? Yes No

Any previous incidents with findings of bullying or retaliation? Yes No

Summary of Investigation:

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed.)

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation: YES NO

Bullying Incident documented _____

Retaliation Discipline referral only _____

2. Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian Date: _____

Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: _____

Law Enforcement Date: _____

3. Action Taken:

Loss of Privileges Detention Suspension Dates Excluded: _____

Community Service Education Other _____

4. Describe Safety Planning: _____

Follow-up with Target: Scheduled for _____ Initial & date when completed: _____

Follow-up with Aggressor: Scheduled for _____ Initial & date when completed: _____

Report forwarded to Principal: Date _____

Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date _____

(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: _____ Date: _____

Adopted by Dracut School Committee: October 28, 2013