



## **Lawrence Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Lawrence Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, administrators, school nurses, counselors, parents, police department representatives, students, and community representatives. The 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. This Plan is the district's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school initiatives. As part of the process, the planning group assessed the adequacy of current programs, reviewed current policies and procedures, reviewed data on bullying and behavioral incidents and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. These activities assisted the planning group in identifying resources, gaps in services, and areas of need in order to assist the district in revising and developing procedures and setting priorities to address bullying prevention and intervention. Prevention strategies include professional development, age-appropriate curricula and in-school support services.

Lawrence Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. This plan includes the specific steps that each district school shall take to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.

This plan also extends protections to students who are bullied by a member of the school staff. School staff include, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

This plan, and the related appendices, includes the specific steps that each district school shall take to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent and/or respond to bullying or harassment.

## **I. LEADERSHIP**

There will be annual surveying of students, staff, and parents on school climate and school safety issues. Middle and high school students will also participate in the biennial Youth Risk Behavior Survey to gather more specific data on issues of concern at these levels. Principals will be responsible for conducting the needs assessments and data will be analyzed by the Office of Student Support Services.

The following district leaders are responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- Superintendent, Director of Behavioral Health and Principals receive reports on bullying
- Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, Director of Behavioral Health, and Principals collect and analyze building level and system-wide data on bullying to assess the present baseline data and to measure improved outcomes
- Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, Director of Behavioral Health and the and Assistant Superintendent for Community, Family, and Student Engagement create a process for recording and tracking bullying incident reports and for assessing information related to targets and aggressor(s)
- Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Behavioral Health, and Principals plan for the ongoing professional development as is required by law
- Principals, Director of Behavioral Health and the Director of Community, Family, and Student Engagement plan supports that respond to the need of targets or aggressor(s)
- Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services and the Director of Behavioral Health choose and oversee the implementation of the curricula that the district will use to addressing bullying
- Superintendent, with input from the Director of Information Systems and Technology, will develop procedures and protocols that address internet safety
- Superintendent and Principals will oversee the amending of student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct relative to bullying and cyberbullying issues
- Principals and the Assistant Superintendent for Community, Family, and Student Engagement lead the parent and family engagement efforts and draft parental information materials
- Superintendent or designee review and update the Plan at least biennially

## **II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

There will be annual staff training on the Plan, which will include: staff responsibilities, an overview of the reporting and investigation steps that will be taken 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 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 were hired.

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. The content of district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on the following:

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witness to the bullying;
- research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment; information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation issues for students with disabilities. This will be considered when developing a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), especially focusing on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school 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;
- managing classroom behaviors effectively;
- 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; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct and to instill accountability in the school setting and bullying behaviors.

The district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan via handbooks and by publishing information about it on the district website. The written notice will include sections related to staff duties under the plan, which also covered bullying of students by school or district employees.

### **III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

The district will review current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early intervention and intensive services in order to develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. Referral protocols will be evaluated to

assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed to ensure that the needs of students and families are addressed through in-house services or referral to outside agencies.

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.

The District will identify available culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the district and community to support students and families, as well as identifying staff and service providers to assist schools in developing safety plans for students, who have been targets of bullying or retaliation. This will be completed through the provision of social skills programs to prevent bullying and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. The available resources will be updated annually and posted on the District website and at each school site.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

Bullying prevention curricula will emphasize 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 engage in acts of bullying and/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 communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

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 and, including students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy behaviors, including collaboration problem-solving, conflict resolution, 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**

### **Reporting Bullying or Retaliation**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, or others, and may be made orally or in writing. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. All staff members are required to report immediately to the principal or his/her designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents, or others who are not district employees, may be made anonymously. The district will provide a variety of reporting resources 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 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 his/her designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent native language(s) 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 his/her 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.

### **Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or his/her designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report bullying or retaliation does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

### **Reporting by Students, Parents or Others**

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

## **Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation**

**Safety:** Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal, Superintendent, or his/her 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 his/her designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal, Superintendent, or his/her 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.

## **Obligations to Notify Others**

**Notice to parents:** Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee will promptly notify the parents of the target and the aggressor of the incident and the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

**Notice to Another School or District:** If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or his/her designee, when first informed of the incident, will promptly notify by telephone the principal or his/her designee of the other school(s) of the incident, so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations and 603 CMR 49.00.

**Notice to Law Enforcement:** At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal or Superintendent 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 his/her 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 applicable district policies and procedures, consult with the superintendent, school resource officer, if any, and other individuals he or she deems appropriate.

## **Investigation**

The principal or his/her 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. In the event that the reported bullying incident involves the principal, assistant principal, or other school-based administrator, the investigation will be handled by the Superintendent or his/her designee, including the steps necessary to implement the plan and to address the safety of the alleged target.

During the investigation the principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or his/her 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, Superintendent, or his/her designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or his/her designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practical, given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or his/her designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process and maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district procedures for investigations of other harassment or discrimination issues. If necessary, the principal or his/her designee will consult with the Superintendent about the investigation and the need for possible legal advice.

## **Determinations**

The principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances discovered during the investigation. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal, Superintendent, or his/her designee will take reasonable steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the student target is not restricted in participating in school activities or in benefiting from their educational program. The principal, Superintendent, or his/her 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, Superintendent, or his/her designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the student 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, Superintendent, or his/her designee will promptly notify the parents of the student target and the student 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 notices 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, Superintendent, or his/her designee cannot report specific information to the student target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the student target must be aware of in order to report violations.

## **Responses to Bullying**

**Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skills-building:** Upon the principal or his/her designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

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

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and non-academic 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 antibullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- creating behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and ■ making a referral for evaluation or services.

**Taking Disciplinary Action:** If the principal or his/her designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or his/her 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 code of conduct.

Disciplinary procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which must be considered in conjunction with state laws regarding student discipline. These procedures are outlined in the district's code of conduct.

If the principal or his/her designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

**Promoting Safety for the Target and Others:** The principal or his/her 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 his/her 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 his/her 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 his/her designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

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## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

The Lawrence Public Schools will offer education programs for parents that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, Presidents' Council, School Leadership Teams/Councils, and Special Education Parent Advisory Council.

Each year the school district will inform parents 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. The school district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents in hard copy and electronic formats and will be available in the common native languages of families served in the district. The district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

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

- 1) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school related activities, functions or programs whether on or off school grounds, at a 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 or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringes on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, and/or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, s370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school(s) to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## DEFINITIONS

**“Bullying”** is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of the school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- infringes on the rights of the target at school
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

**“Cyber bullying”** is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber bullying shall also include:

- The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person
- The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses above, of the definition of bullying
- The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the clauses above, of the definition of bullying

**Aggressor** is a student or a member of the school staff who engages in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

**Hostile Environment** 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 on bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**School Staff** includes, but 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.

### Physical Aggression

Pushing	Kicking	Punching	Shoving
Hitting	Stealing	Spitting/objects	Tripping
Hiding property	Slapping	Hiding/property	Pinching
Inflicting bodily harm	Threatening with a weapon	Throwing objects	Knocking possessions down off desk
Committing demeaning or humiliating physical acts that are not physically harmful (e.g. depanting)			

### Social/Relational Aggression

Gossiping	Embarrassing	Ignoring	Laughing at
Giving the silent treatment	Spreading rumors	Excluding from the group	Maliciously excluding
Publicly embarrassing	Taking over a space (hallway, seats)	Setting up to look foolish	Malicious rumor mongering
Social rejection	Manipulating social order to achieve rejection	Setting up to take the blame	Threatening with total isolation by peer group
Making rude comments followed by justification or insincere apology		Humiliating on a school-wide level (e.g., choosing homecoming candidate as a joke)	

### Verbal/Nonverbal Aggression

Mocking	Name calling	Writing notes	Rolling eyes
Insulting	Slander	Taunting	Ethnic slurs
Slamming books	Writing graffiti	Making putdowns	Swearing at someone
Teasing about appearance	Teasing about clothing or possessions	Making disrespectful and sarcastic comments	Threatening violence or bodily harm
Threatening aggression against property or possessions			

### **Intimidation**

Defacing property or clothing	Stealing/taking possessions (lunch, clothing, books)	Posturing (staring, gesturing, strutting)	Taking over a space (hallway, lunch table, seats)
Extortion	Blocking exits	Publicly challenging someone to do something	Invading one's physical space by an individual or crowd
Threatening coercion against family or friends		Threatening bodily harm	Threatening with a weapon

### **Hazing**

Verbal abuse	Forced behaviors	Public humiliation	Taunting
Making fun of	Enforced servitude	Deprivation	Forced sexual acts
Isolating or ignoring	Restraining	Sexual assault	Extreme physical activity
Requiring one to do embarrassing or degrading acts	Over consumption of food or drink	Dangerous or illegal activity	Torturous physical abuse or assault

### **Dating Violence**

Rape	Threatening violence	Put-downs or criticism	Pinning against a wall
Emotional or mental abuse; 'mind games'	Physical coercion (e.g.; twisting arm)	Threatening other relationships	Refusing to have safe sex
Punching walls or breaking items	Pressuring for sexual activity	Restraining, blocking movement or exists	Actual violence, e.g.; hitting, slapping

**Plan Public Comment Period: December 3 – 17, 2010**

**Plan Approved by School Committee: December 20, 2010**

**Amended Plan Approved by School Committee: April 30, 2012**

**Amended Plan Approved by School Committee: August 11, 2014**

**Plan Updated: May 7, 2021**

**Plan Updated: September 26, 2023**

**Appendices: Available on the Lawrence Public School's Website [www.lawrence.k12.ma.us](http://www.lawrence.k12.ma.us)**

- A) Lawrence Public Schools Policy on Bullying in Schools
- B) List of Prevention Curricula
- C) Designated Contacts for Reporting Incidents of Bullying
- D) Bullying Incident Report Form
- E) Bullying Incident Administrative Form