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HARVARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

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Harvard Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

I. BACKGROUND

Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, was signed into law on May 3, 2010 and took effect immediately. With passage of this bill Massachusetts became the 42nd state to pass anti-bullying legislation. The law is aimed at addressing the issue of bullying and cyberbullying in schools. While Massachusetts lawmakers had been considering versions of this bill for quite some time, two bullying-related suicides in South Hadley and Springfield caused this legislation to receive top priority. The law requires that each school district develop and implement a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention.

Respect for individual differences and the right of each and every student to learn in an environment free of threats, intimidation and harassment have long been core values of the Harvard Public Schools. This plan affords all students the same protections regardless of their status under the law.

While we as a district have historically taken a proactive stance toward eradicating bullying in our schools, we realize there is still much work to be done and our challenge is ongoing. The Plan outlined in this document is designed to help focus our efforts and insure that we are doing everything necessary to address the problem of bullying in our schools.

II. DEFINITIONS

To help make the language in this document as explicit and clear as possible, the following definitions are referenced:

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

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students and/or school staff members 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/herself or of damage to his/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. Bullying includes cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any 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.

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 the student's education.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is directed.

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.

III. BULLYING PREVENTION

The District has a proactive approach to preventing bullying and educating students and families regarding anti-bullying strategies.

- The Bromfield School and the Hildreth Elementary School Student Handbooks provide information regarding Code of Conduct, anti-bullying, and services available to students/families
- Research- based pro-social programs are taught in Kindergarten to 7th grade
- Students in 8th-12th grade participate in Roundtable Advisory groups
- Counseling services are available at each school as appropriate
- Social skills training is available at each school as appropriate
- School personnel collaborate with community-based providers to support students/families
- Student/family resources are available on the counselor's website
- Anti-bullying plan and Student Handbooks are posted on each school's website
- Periodic cyberbullying and internet safety trainings are offered in conjunction with the District Attorney's office

School Climate Survey

At least once every four years, beginning with the 2015/16 school year, the District will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the DESE.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The District will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

IV. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Prohibition Against Bullying

As noted in district policy, Bullying is prohibited:

- on school grounds,
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
- at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether it takes place 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,
- through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by a school district or school (for example, on a computer or over the Internet),
- at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education processor 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 prohibited.

Reporting Bullying

Anyone, including a parent or guardian, student, or school staff member, can report bullying or retaliation. Reports can be made in writing or orally to the Principal or another staff member, or reports may be made anonymously. Contact information for school Principals is listed below:

The Bromfield School, Principal Scott Hoffman, shoffman@psharvard.org, 978-456-4152

Hildreth Elementary School, Principal Sue Frederick, sfrederick@psharvard.org, 978-456-4144

School staff members must report immediately to the Principal or his/her designee if they witness or become aware of bullying or retaliation. Staff members include, but are not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessionals.

When the school Principal or his/her designee receives a report, he or she shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the school Principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he or she shall (i) notify the parents or guardians of the target, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; (ii) notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor; (iii) take appropriate disciplinary action; and (iv) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school Principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

V. 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 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 which may include, but are not limited to, The Harvard Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, the TBS online helpline, and the HES online anonymous reporting form. If a person does not have internet access, they may call or mail a report to the principal.

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.

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, nonpublic 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 practical, 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 the Superintendent and/or legal counsel about the investigation.

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, and if the alleged bullying involves student(s) the Principal or designee may choose to consult with the student's 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.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-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 or a staff member, 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.

Counseling or referral to appropriate services for either the aggressor and/or target.

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 this Plan and with the District's Code of Conduct (located in each school's Student Handbook). If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate and it involves a staff member, the matter will be referred to the Superintendent of schools to administer said discipline in accordance with established contractual protocols and personnel policies. 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. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/STAFF TRAINING

The success of the Harvard Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan rests in large part on how well trained students, staff, and parents are regarding prevention, reporting, investigation, and intervention. We recognize that while we currently have many successful programs and strategies in place, research will continue to inform us regarding model anti-bullying programs, many of which are currently being developed and field tested. In that regard our plan, training, and implementation are dynamic, rather than stagnant, processes.

The goal of ongoing professional development is to establish a common understanding of the 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. 71 370, the content of schoolwide and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- i. developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
- ii. developmentally 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 finding 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 cyber-bullying; 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 development.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development may 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 programs;
- 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.

The schedule identified below presents an annual process by which we can keep our plan vital and monitor its implementation:

Annual staff training on bullying prevention and intervention will occur at the start of each school year. Additionally, the 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 and employee handbooks.

The District-wide Task Force will meet at least every other year. The goals will be to review the status of the prevention and intervention plan, review implementation, consider alternative programs/models, and make recommendations to administration/school committee regarding curriculum and resources. Also, they will be charged with analyzing survey data from climate surveys to synthesize recommendations. The Task Force may meet more often if deemed necessary by the District or if the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education implements regulation changes. Members of the Task Force will include:

Bromfield Principal
HES Principal
Director of Pupil Services
TBS Guidance Counselor
HES Guidance Counselor
TBS Teacher
HES Teacher
Harvard Police Chief
Parent Representative of TBS, HES, and SEPAC
One to Two - TBS Student Representatives

The Harvard School Committee has a five year school policy review cycle which ensures that all policies are reviewed and amended, if necessary, at least every five years.

VII. BULLYING PREVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Act amended Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71B 3 to include the following language:
Whenever the evaluation of the Individual Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

As noted in the law, Teams need to consider developing an IEP whenever an evaluation indicates that (1) a student has a disability that affect social skills development; or (2) if an evaluation indicates that a student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing due to the disability.

As with all decisions relating to students with disabilities, there must be an individual determination as to what types of disabilities will likely require strategies by included in the IEP. One group of student likely impacted will be those on the autism spectrum, since the need for remediation in the area of social skills development is often required. However, even the evaluation of a student with a learning disability may, for example, note social vulnerabilities due to self-esteem issues relating to keeping pace with other students in their classes.

This amendment does not address only victims of bullying. The use of the phrase “avoid...bullying, harassment, or teasing the statute supports the proposition that the special education Team should look at addressing the skills and proficiencies needed to assist the student in preventing the student from becoming a target of bullying in the first place.”

There is no single clear answer in regard to the question of what are the “skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing”. Teams will consider input from a school behaviorist, guidance counselor, school psychologist, and/or speech and language pathologist for guidance on the language that the IEP should contain. While this change in law cannot guarantee that children on IEPs will never be bullied or bully other students, it does mandate that the Team consider these issues in appropriate circumstances and include services on the IEP to assist the student with developing skills to avoid and respond to bullying.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Pupil Services to insure that annually all special education staff receives appropriate training regarding these requirements. Also, as part of the annual training for all staff, the importance of being aware of the unique issues regarding bullying and students with special needs will be emphasized.

In conjunction with Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC), the Director of Pupil Services will provide training and information for parents of students with special needs with regard to bullying prevention.

VIII PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Any parent/guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqu>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's office.

LEGAL REFS.:

[Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended](#)
[Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission](#)
[Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#)
[603 CMR 26.00](#)
[M.G.L. 71:370; 265:43, 43A; 268:13B; 269:14A](#)

REFERENCES: [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)

CROSS REFS.:

[AC, Nondiscrimination](#)
ACAB, Sexual Harassment
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing
JK, Student Discipline
GBEB, Staff Conduct
Contract of the Harvard School Committee and the Harvard Teachers Association
Hourly Employee Work and Salary Guidelines

APPROVED: December 13, 2010

AMENDED: September 16, 2013

REVIEWED: May 12, 2014

AMENDED: July 11, 2016

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

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

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

Indicate if you are a: Student ___ Staff member (specify role) _____

Parent _____ Administrator _____ Other (specify) _____

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

If you are a student do you attend HES _____ Bromfield _____ Grade _____

Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior) _____

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior) _____

Date(s) of Incident(s) _____

Time When Incident(s) Occurred _____

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible) _____

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

Name _____ student ___ staff ___ other ___

Name _____ student ___ staff ___ other ___

Name _____ student ___ staff ___ other ___

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 back if necessary.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

Signature of Person Filing this Report _____ Date _____

Form Given to: _____ Position: _____ Date _____

