



Weston Public Schools
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Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Updated: Spring 2023

Weston Public Schools prohibits all forms of harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes based on the following protected categories: race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or ability.

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I. LEADERSHIP

Statement of Purpose:

The Weston Public Schools 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.

The Weston Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become a target of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, houselessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory ability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The Weston Public Schools will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for traditionally marginalized populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The Weston Public Schools will make every effort to prevent 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 promptly investigate 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 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. School principals are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan at their respective buildings.

A. Public involvement. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the original Plan and subsequent revisions were developed with various constituencies (Weston Public Schools administrators, faculty and staff; interested community representatives, parents, and guardians; and the Weston School Committee).

Public comment is welcome after each revision. Notice and public comment will occur after presentation to the Weston School Committee on June 12, 2023.

B. Assessing needs and resources.

The Superintendent, along with the Superintendent's designees, with input from administrators, faculty, and families, will regularly assess the adequacy of current programs, policies and procedures at least every other year. A Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force led by the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning and composed of 1 school committee member, 1 other district administrator, 2 school-based administrators, 4 faculty members, and 4 parents, guardians, or other community members will meet regularly, assist, and provide guidance to district administration in the areas listed below:

- Review of current policies and procedures;
- Review of available data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying and behavioral incidents;
- Assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services for designing ongoing professional development;

- Review of current and relevant research on best methodology to prevent, intervene and address bullying and cyber-bullying;
- Review current anti-bullying and social emotional learning curricula and instructional resources;
- Develop an easily accessible resource bank of relevant materials for both parents and students;
- Review of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Wellness Curriculum Frameworks to provide a working curriculum context for bullying prevention/social emotional learning curriculum;
- Assess initial and periodic needs, by surveying students, faculty, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety needs;
- Update the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan;
- Report to the School Committee at least every other year about the status, measures, and next steps.

C. Planning and oversight.

The building principal or designee is responsible for the following tasks under the plan:

- Receiving and responding to reports on bullying, including appropriately providing support and safety plan for alleged target(s), conducting an investigation, making a determination, and communicating findings and possible school responses to students and families
- Collecting and analyzing school-wide data on bullying to assess the present level of need and to measure improved outcomes;
- Following a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
- Implementing ongoing SEL/bullying prevention professional development that is required by the law;
- Identifying support strategies that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors;
- Monitoring the implementation, in partnership with central office administrators, social emotional learning and/or anti-bullying curricula that the school or district will use;
- Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; and
- Leading the parent or family engagement efforts and sharing information materials with caregivers.

The Director of Technology will be responsible for updating the Acceptable Use Policy.

The Assistant Superintendent, in partnership with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force, will be responsible for reviewing and updating the plan biennially, or more frequently if needed.

II. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

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 including 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.

III. DEFINITIONS

In order to work as collaboratively as possible to prevent and intervene on all acts of bullying, it is essential for administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, guardians, law enforcement agencies, and other interested parties to use common language. The following definitions are provided to facilitate this goal.

Aggressor is a student or school staff member 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 or staff 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 themselves or of damage to their 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.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, use of apps, 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.

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

Bystander is a student who witnesses a bullying situation. A passive bystander is someone who ignores a bullying incident while an active bystander tries to alter the situation by saying something, getting help, etc.

IV. 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, socioeconomic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H½ and 37H3/4, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5 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.

V. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Weston Public Schools will meet the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O 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, and long-term substitutes.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan.

Annual training will be conducted for all Weston Public Schools educators, including teachers, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. Training 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/social emotional learning 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 mandated 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 Assistant Superintendent will be responsible for oversight and implementation of the training used throughout the system. The goal of 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 celebration of 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:

- Opportunities for staff to learn and understand key vocabulary associated with bullying;
- 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 witnesses 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 cyberbullying, including new trends in this area;
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying;

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

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- Fostering an understanding and celebration of 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, emotional regulation, and empathy for others;
- Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students;
- Identifying the differences between bullying, harassment, and other incidents that are observed or reported in school;
- Supplying guidelines for how to respond to and report bullying incidents; and
- Engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between

acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc. and bullying behaviors.

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.

C. Written notice to staff.

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

VI. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The Assistant Superintendent will be responsible for researching, reviewing and adopting appropriate curriculum and instructional materials for use in the schools. This work will require consultation with other appropriate district and town resources.

The curriculum must be:

- Developmentally appropriate;
- Evidence based – based on research, or field tested; and
- Evaluated for effectiveness.
- Regularly updated

The resources will be evaluated on documented success rate, design that is engaging to students and in keeping with Weston Public Schools' core values and philosophies of pedagogy. Curriculum should have creative presentation and should encourage students to find solutions using critical thinking skills.

A. Identifying resources.

Resources for targets, aggressors, and their families may include, but are not limited to: adopting new curricula/approaches, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services.

The Assistant Superintendent will be responsible for creating and posting a bibliography of anti-bullying resources including, but not limited to:

- The Weston Public Schools Anti-Bullying Policy;
- The Weston Public Schools Anti-Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan;
- Instructional guides and materials;
- Research articles and materials on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying;
- Relevant and useful websites; and
- Community resources and related services.

B. Counseling and other services.

The Weston Public Schools has a variety of appropriate resources within the district. The Weston Public Schools utilizes adjustment counselors, youth counselors and school psychologists who assist in developing safety plans for students who have been or who are at risk of being targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors, and following up with students and families after a bullying incident. The Weston Public Schools utilizes a variety of tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused approaches. Translators are provided as are translations of materials for Weston families as 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 their 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.

The Weston Public Schools has 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 will be evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed.

VII. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches.

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or school staff 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 celebrates diversity and difference.

Specific examples include but are not limited to:

Elementary

- All staff trained in Responsive Classroom and *Culturally Responsive Teaching*
- Daily Morning Meetings focus on cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control.
- All School Meetings focused of specific SEL themes
- School wide positive behavior support plan
- Mindful Minute
- All school books about belonging
- Body Regulation Stations and circuits
- Parent education on media literacy
- Digital literacy curriculum
- Fly Five SEL curriculum
- SEL infused throughout the day, including in special areas.
- Counselors available to help students with SEL deficits in small groups and in classrooms
- Classroom Support Team

Middle School

- Assistant Principal leads bullying training by grade level
- Media Literacy class
- Advisory

- Health curriculum
- Parent forums - technology conversations/media literacy
- Positive Behavior matrix and support plan
- Grade level morning meetings
- Sources of strength
- Unity Day

High School

- Positive Behavior matrix and support plan
- Principal/AP lead bullying policy, prevention and response training by grade level
- Health class - relationships/healthy relationships
- Advisory
- Guidance Seminars
- Center for Service and Civic Engagement
- SEL and Team Culture training for athletic coaches
- DEI Student Alliance
- Student led Assemblies

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Under the guidance of principals, faculty and staff will teach/review student-related sections of the plan with students in each school by October 1st of each school year.

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 the Weston Public Schools bullying intervention and prevention initiatives.

Create responsive classrooms and schools by:

- Utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices
- 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, students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender fluid, intersex, and queer students, and houseless students;
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral supports to behavioral health, including collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social emotional development;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Modeling, teaching, and acknowledging pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using the internet safely; and
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

VIII. 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 or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, 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. The Weston Public Schools has a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including an anonymous electronic option.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The Weston Public Schools 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.

The Weston Public Schools will: 1) take all reported incidents either verbal or written and will record necessary information to document the information as reported, and 2) will provide information on how to report incidents both on the website and in the handbook for each school.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, 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, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, 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 Faculty and Staff

A faculty or staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided 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, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. 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, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student.

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 for all parties involved.

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 principal or designee will communicate the safety plan to the student, their parent/guardian, and staff members responsible for implementing the safety plan.

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 student 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 they have a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student 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, the superintendent or designee, 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 student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation 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 their 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, including the preservation of all email and electronic communications.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with Weston Public Schools policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will, with the consent of the superintendent, consult with 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, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or counselor(s), and the target's or student 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.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

E. 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. 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.

0. 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.

0. 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.

F. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff

When a report of bullying alleges a school or district staff member as the aggressor, policies for reporting, responding to a report, investigation, determination, and response are the same as outlined in previous sections with the following exceptions:

1. Reporting

In the case where the alleged aggressor is a staff member, the faculty or staff member who generated the report or received an oral or written bullying report from a student or parent, will report immediately to the principal if the alleged aggressor is a school-based employee or to the superintendent if the alleged aggressor is a district-wide employee. The principal or superintendent will either lead the investigation or designate another administrator to do so. The director of human resources also will be notified and may be called on to assist with the investigation, determination, and response.

2. Safety

In cases where the alleged aggressor is a staff member and the alleged target is a student, further measures may be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged target, as power differentials between staff and students are significant.

Safety interventions may need to prevent the alleged aggressor from any interaction with the alleged target, up to and including providing the alleged aggressor paid administrative leave pending the results of the bullying investigation.

3. Investigation

In cases where the alleged aggressor is a staff member, investigations will be conducted by the principal or designee for a school-based employee or by the superintendent or designee for a district-level employee. The director of human resources will work together with the principal/designee or superintendent/designee during the investigation. Staff members have due process protections and union members have a right to representation while under investigation.

4. Disciplinary action

In the case where a superintendent/designee or a principal/designee determines that a staff member bullied a student or another staff member, disciplinary action will be taken. Discipline for the staff member can range from a written reprimand to suspension without pay to termination. Staff members may have the right to appeal the bullying determination or the disciplinary action. Disciplinary records for staff members are confidential and are maintained in the staff member's personnel file. The superintendent/designee or the principal/designee cannot report specific information to a 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.

IX. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM:

Any parent or 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 Problem Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/prs/>. 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.

X. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent education and resources.

The Weston Public Schools in collaboration with parent associations will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the bullying prevention curricula/approaches and social competency curricula/approaches used by the district or school.

B. Notification requirements.

Each year the Weston Public Schools will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the bullying prevention and social emotional learning curricula/approaches 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 district will post the plan and related information on its website.

C. Additional parent outreach.

Parents will be invited to learn about the district's bullying policies at a forum in the fall of each year. Feedback will be solicited from parents through bi-annual surveys that seek to better understand the scope and nature of bullying incidents in grades K-12.