

**Lynn Public Schools
Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plans– November 2014**

The Lynn Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, 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.

Additionally, in accordance with An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, this anti-bullying plan recognizes that certain students, including LGBTQ students, may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. Additionally, Chapter 86 requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, to administer a Department-developed student survey at least once every four years to assess “school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools.” In accordance with An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, the Lynn Public Schools will ensure that specific steps are taken to “support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.” The sections that follow address these very topics.

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I. LEADERSHIP

The Lynn Public School Department is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying. The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Health/PE will coordinate the Plan centrally for the district. The principal of each school will ensure the Lynn Public Schools Plan is followed. Each school will also have a bullying coordinator to assist the principals.

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan

The Lynn Public School department created a bullying task force to help formulate our bullying prevention and intervention plan. The bullying task force consists of teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. This bullying plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff including educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

B. Assessing needs and resources

The Lynn Public School Department relies on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, student behavioral incident data, and Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) parent, student and staff surveys to help assess our bullying needs. The bullying task force, along with the school leadership teams will review the data biannually and make any necessary changes. This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

C. Planning and oversight

The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction-Health/PE, the bullying task force, school based bullying coordinators and the school principals are responsible for the following Planning and oversight:

- receiving reports on bullying;
- collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes;
- creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
- planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law;
- planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors;
- choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use;
- developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them;
- amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct;
- leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials;
- reviewing and updating the Plan each year or more frequently.

D. Developing priority statements

The Lynn Public School Department will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, 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.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All of the Lynn Public Schools have a bullying coordinator. The bullying coordinators are there to assist the principals in all bullying investigations and are responsible for providing the professional development at each of their schools. All of the coordinators are certified through the MARC center bullying training. The professional development is held once a year on the first or second professional development day. The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction-Health/PE will provide the professional development district wide to anyone who missed the training. The district wide professional development courses will be offered many times throughout the school year. All professional development will be reviewed annually to address identified additional areas of training based on needs and concerns identified by school and district staff. The Lynn Public School system is also in the process of creating a new professional development course that will combine de-escalation techniques, classroom management and bullying professional development.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan

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

B. Ongoing professional development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L.c.71, § 37O, the content of school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- 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 cyber-bullying; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.
- 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 (IEP's). This will include a particular focus on the needs of the students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the Lynn Public School Department 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 constructively;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills that include 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 Lynn Public School district has developed a plan to provide annual professional development to all staff members, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals, to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The content of the professional development includes, but is not limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (ii) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, victim and witness to the bullying; (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about 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 cyber-bullying.

C. Written notice to staff

The Lynn Public School Department will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and in an email to all staff.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. Identifying resources

The Lynn Public School Department is currently working with the bullying taskforce, principals, bullying coordinators and the special education department to survey and map all of the available resources. Once completed, the Lynn Public School Department can develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.

B. Counseling and other services

The Lynn Public School Department is currently working with our bullying taskforce, school adjustment councilors, social workers and communities groups to identify staff and service providers who can assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

C. Students with disabilities

The Lynn Public School Department is currently working with our bullying taskforce, special education coordinators, the special education attorney and IEP teams to comply with the new legislation. As required by M.G.L.c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skill and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. All students with disabilities will have language in their IEP's stating the team has addressed the bullying issue at the IEP meeting and will state no action is necessary at this time or there will be steps outlining their needs.

D. Referral to outside services

The Lynn Public School Department is currently evaluating local referral protocols to assess their relevance to the Plan and will revise as needed. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals will comply with all relevant laws and policies.

IV. 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:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;

- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. On the first day when the student handbook is distributed all elementary classroom teachers will review the Plan with their classes. In middle and high schools the Plans will be reviewed by their homeroom teacher. All of the information will be included in the 2010-2011 student handbooks. The Lynn Public Schools requires all parents/guardians to sign and return the student handbook with the understanding that they have reviewed the handbook with their child.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives.

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including those with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

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

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing by the teacher, bullying coordinator, and/or the principal. 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 Lynn Public Schools have a variety of reporting resources available to the school community. Including an Incident Reporting Form, an anonymous online reporting system linked to our website (www.lynnschools.org) and dedicated mailing address (100 Bennett Street, Lynn, MA 01905, with attention to Michael Geary, Assistant Director of Health and Physical Education).

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 Lynn Public Schools 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 Lynn Public School Department 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.

3. Reporting a false allegations

Any student who knowingly makes a false allegation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action; and a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of said students.

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 are not 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. The bullying task force, bullying coordinators and principals are in the process of establishing local student safety Planning policies and procedures for the Lynn Public Schools.

2. Obligations to notify others

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

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

c. Notice to law enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the School Safety Liaison or the School Attendance and Discipline Officer as well as other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. Investigation

The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

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: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All 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 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 skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L.c 71 § 37O(d)(v). Skill building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula; providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel; implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals; meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral Plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking disciplinary action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the Lynn Public Schools Disciplinary Code.

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 other

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction-Health/PE and the School Security Liaison for the Lynn Police Department have created a parent workshop series in collaboration with school based PTO's,

PTA's, School Councils and Special Education Parent Advisory Councils to be hosted at elementary, middle and high schools throughout the district. The parent workshops will address: 1) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and district Plan; 2) the dynamics of bullying; and 3) online safety and cyber-bullying.

Parents and guardians will be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents and guardians.

VII. PROHIBITIONS AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The following statement is included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L.c. 71§ 37O(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- 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
- at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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

As stated in M.G.L.c. 71 § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, function, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

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

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

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

- cause 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 herself or of damage to his or her property;
 - 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 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, and internet posting. See M.G.L.c. 71 § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Differentiating Characteristics – As identified in An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, there may be categories of differentiating characteristics that may make certain students more vulnerable to bullying 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.

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.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Lynn Public Schools, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the Lynn Public Schools from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the Lynn Public Schools to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L.c. 71, § § 37H, or 37H ½, other applicable laws, or Lynn Public Schools policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive, behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

X. REPORTING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Pursuant to An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 at Section 4(k), the Lynn Public Schools will report the following information to DESE per their reporting protocols:

- The number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation;
- The number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying or retaliations;
- The number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation; and
- Any other information required by the department