



**WESTFIELD  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**BULLYING PREVENTION  
AND  
INTERVENTION PLAN**

***A GUIDE FOR STAFF, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS***

***2024-25 and 2025-26***

**WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Approved September 16, 2024

# **BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN**

## **INTRODUCTION AND PRIORITY STATEMENT**

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (Plan) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. The plan prohibits all discriminatory harassment or bullying of students and staff members on the basis of 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.

The Westfield Public School District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to address these issues. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. Principals are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan in their respective buildings.

The District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment both in person and remote 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. While activities described in the Plan are intended to address the specific requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the District has chosen to use this legislation as an opportunity to strengthen and expand its longstanding focus on school safety.

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 school or 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.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) created a Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, in consultation with state agencies, school personnel, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties. The Model Plan was used by the Westfield Public Schools as a framework for developing this local Plan.

Please note that in this plan we use the word “target” instead of “victim” and “aggressor” instead of “perpetrator”.

The Department issued an update<sup>1</sup> to reflect Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter86>, which amended G.L. c. 71, §370, the anti-bullying statute, and was signed into law on April 24, 2014. G.L. c. 71, §370, as amended, requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to “recognize” in their bullying prevention and intervention plans that certain enumerated categories of students<sup>2</sup> may be more vulnerable to being targets of bullying based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. Such districts and schools must also include in the plan the specific steps they will take to support these vulnerable students and provide all students the skills, knowledge and strategies they need to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. Under the new law, school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools must notify parents and guardians of targets of bullying of the availability of the Department’s problem resolution system and assist these parents and guardians in understanding the problem resolution process. Chapter 86 also addresses the data reporting and collection obligations of school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, requiring them to collect and report the following data to the Department: 1) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; 2) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation; 3) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation, and 4) other information required by the Department.<sup>3</sup> (The Department is required to analyze the data and to issue a report annually to the legislature which contains statewide aggregated data on the nature and frequency of bullying in schools.) 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.”<sup>4</sup> (The Department will use survey results to, among other things, assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention curricula and instruction and identify long-term trends and areas of improvement, and will make its findings available to school officials.) The law also authorizes school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to adopt an anti-bullying seal to represent its commitment to bullying prevention and intervention.

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<sup>1</sup>The **Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** was also revised in 2013 to reflect the change in the definition of “perpetrator” to include a member of the school staff.

<sup>2</sup> Newly amended G.L. c. 71, §370(d)(3) reads in relevant part: *Each plan shall recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.*

<sup>3</sup> G.L. c. 71 §370(k). *The Department is required to analyze the data and to issue a report annually to the legislature which contains statewide aggregated data on the nature and frequency of bullying in schools.*

<sup>4</sup> G.L. c. 71, §370(k).

*If you need assistance understanding this information, please contact your building principal to arrange translation services.*

*Russian: Если Вы нуждаетесь в переводе, пожалуйста, сообщите директору школы, и школа обеспечит вас переводчиком.*

*Ukrainian: Якщо Вам необхідний переклад даної інформації, будь ласка, повідомте директору школи, і школа забезпечить вас перекладачем.*

*Spanish: Si Ud. necesita ayuda para entender esta información, favor de comunicarse con el Principal para los servicios de traducción.*

*Swahili: Kama unahitaji usaidizi katika kuelewa taarifa hii, tafadhali wasiliana na kinara wako wa jengo ili akupangilie huduma za tafsiri.*

**Tamil:** இந்தத் தகவலைப் புரிந்துகொள்வதற்கு உங்களுக்கு உதவி தேவையானால், மொழி பெயர்ப்பு சேவைகளை ஏற்பாடு செய்வதற்கு தயவு செய்து உங்களுடைய கட்டிட முதல்வரைத் தொடர்புகொள்ளவும்.

**Nepali: नेपाली:** तपाइलाइ यो जानकारी बुझ्नका निम्ति सहयोग चाहिएमा कृपाया तपाइ अवस्थीत कार्यलयको प्रिन्सीपललाइ संपर्क गरी अनुवादका सेवाबारे सोध्नुहोला।

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## I. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- On school grounds or remotely 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 any 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 whether owned or not, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the act creates a hostile environment at school or remotely 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.

## II. DEFINITIONS

### **Aggressor:**

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

### **Bullying:**

The repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school or remotely for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school or remotely; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school or remote setting. Bullying shall include cyberbullying.

### **Cyberbullying:**

Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person

or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to one or more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons.

**Electronic Communication:**

Any handwritten, or printed material, visual representation, live performance or sound recording, including but not limited to books, magazines, motion picture films, pamphlets, phonographic records, pictures, photographs, figures, statues, plays, dances or any electronic communication including but not limited to electronic mail, instant messages, text messages and any other communication created by means of use of the Internet or wireless network, whether by computer, telephone, or any other device or by any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic, or photo-optical system.

**Hostile environment:**

A situation in which bullying causes the school or school-related remote learning environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

**School grounds:**

Property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, commonwealth charter school, or nonpublic school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

The law allows the school to enforce its policies for students going to and from school.

**Retaliation:**

Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or a staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**Staff:**

Includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

**Target:**

Means a student or staff member against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated. Certain individuals may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

At the beginning of each school year, written notice of this policy and the bullying prevention and intervention plan will be distributed to all employees, and a summary will be provided to consultants, contractors and volunteers. A summary of this policy in age-appropriate terms has been incorporated in the Code of Conduct Handbook, and it states explicitly that a violation of the policy is subject to disciplinary action under the student code of conduct. To the extent practicable, the summary is translated into the non-English languages spoken at home by a significant number of students and parents/guardians.

This policy will be posted on the Westfield Public Schools' website, on each individual school building website, in each school building office, and within the Westfield Public Library and City Hall Clerk's office.

### III. LEADERSHIP

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan has been developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation has included team input sessions, notice to parents and other interested members of the community and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the School Committee. Each of the various constituencies will also be involved in future plan review and refinement.

District and school leadership at all levels in the Westfield Public Schools will play a critical role in the ongoing development, implementation, and evaluation of the Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership also has the responsibility for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to communicate to the greater school and local community regarding the Plan and to solicit input from stakeholders.

At least once every four years beginning with the 2015/16 school year, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-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 Department. Similar tools to the student survey can be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs.

**The Superintendent** - the Superintendent shall require a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention to be developed, adhered to and updated at least biennially. The plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals. The plan shall be developed and updated in consultation with a range of school employees, professional support personnel, volunteers, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students and parents/guardians. Such consultation shall include notice and a public comment period. Staff and student handbook/ code of conduct will be amended to reflect any updates. Annual written notice of the Plan will be provided to parents and students.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- Descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation.
- Clear procedures for students, staff, parents/guardians and others to report bullying or retaliation.
- A provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously: provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- Clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation.
- The range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation: provided, however, that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
- Clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a target and assessing that target's needs for protection.
- Strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying.
- Procedures consistent with state and federal law for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a target and an aggressor; provided that the parents or guardians of a target shall also be notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; and provided, further, that the procedures shall provide for immediate notification pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Principal or person who holds a comparable role to the local law enforcement agency when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
- A provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- A strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors and targets and for appropriate family members of said students. The Plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.
- A plan for ongoing professional development that is required by the law.

The superintendent shall:

- Ensure the development of new or the revision of current policies and protocols required under this law.
- Ensure the review and update of the Plan biennially.
- Ensure the provision of annual notice of the Plan to all staff by publishing information about it, including the sections related to staff duties, in the district Personnel Policy Handbook.
- Ensure that the Plan and the Incident Report Form are available on the district website. The incident report form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of student's or guardians.
- Communicate, before the first day of each school year, with the chief of police about the implementation of 603 CMR 49.06. Such communication may include agreeing on a method for notification, a process for informal communication, updates of prior written agreements, or any other subject appropriate to the implementation of 603 CMR 49.06.

**Principals** - Principals in the Westfield Public Schools are responsible for implementing the Plan at their schools and will take the following actions to integrate bullying prevention into the culture of each

school and respond to any incidents:

- Ensure a physically and emotionally safe and supportive environment is established and sustained by holding everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behavior.
- Ensure staff, parent, and student knowledge of the bullying prevention and intervention plan.
- Ensure that the Student Code of Conduct Handbook, containing a summary of the Plan, is distributed annually to students and parents/guardians.
- Ensure that the Handbook includes a copy of the Incident Report Form.
- Ensure that copies of the Incident Report Form are available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the nurse's office, and online at the school and district websites.
- Provide students, parents/guardians, employees, consultants, and volunteers with training each year, emphasizing bullying awareness, prevention and intervention procedures and reporting mechanisms, and the importance of making our schools free from bullying behaviors.
- Provide staff with an overview of the bullying prevention curricula specific to the respective grade levels in the school.
- Receive and investigate all reported incidents of bullying and respond to all situations on a case-by-case basis.
- Receive and investigate all reported incidents of retaliation against students who report bullying and provide immediate consequences for such retaliation.
- Upon substantiation of bullying or retaliation, take steps reasonably calculated to prevent reoccurrence and to ensure the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefitting from school activities.
- Determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.
- Record and track incident reports for accessing information related to targets and aggressors.
- Review building-based data on bullying to assess the present problem as well as measure improved outcomes/response to interventions (i. e. Office Discipline Referrals/Bully Incident Reports).
- Notify police immediately, when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
- Notify parents/guardians of the student who is reported to be a target of bullying.
- A principal's notification to a parent about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**Educators** - All teachers, professionals and paraprofessionals in the Westfield Public Schools will take the following actions to prevent bullying and to create a climate that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning:

- Develop meaningful relationships with all students.
- Instruct the selected curriculum according to implementation guidelines and recommendations.
- Supervise students throughout the school day according to building or remote expectations.
- Encourage students to report any potential bullying and seek help from adults.
- Respond quickly and sensitively to reports of bullying or retaliation. Complete Incident Report Form and give form to the Principal.
- Intervene safely and effectively in all bullying situations – do not ignore.
- Ensure safety of the target if appropriate.
- Communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents/guardians.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR

Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

- When a student has a disability that affects social skill development and the student participates in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of her/his disability, the educational team will consider what should be included in the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

**All Staff Members** - All employees in the Westfield Public Schools will take the following actions to prevent bullying and to help children feel safe at school and in a remote environment:

- Develop meaningful relationships with all students.
- Intervene safely and effectively in all bullying situations – do not ignore.
- Immediately report any instances of bullying or retaliation that the staff member has observed or has become aware of to the Principal or his/her designee by completing a Bullying Prevention & Intervention Reporting Form. Every employee of the Westfield Public Schools is a mandated reporter.
- Closely observe children during transitions, recess, lunch time, and dismissal.
- Take seriously any concerns about bullying or retaliation that are received from students or parents/guardians.
- Encourage students to report any potential bullying and seek help from adults.
- Engage in professional development activities to learn more about bullying.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**School Counselors** - The school counseling department will take the following actions to assist in the prevention of bullying and to support a site-based and remote climate that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning:

- Lead parent or family engagement activities/efforts including facilitating the parental components of the social competency and anti-bullying curricula used by the district and/or schools.
- Plan professional development for staff in regards to the implementation of anti-violence & anti-bullying programs in collaboration with the professional development committee.
- Draft parent information materials.
- Develop and plan supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors.
- Encourage students to report any potential bullying and seek help from adults.
- Establish partnerships with community mental health agencies.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**Students** - All students in the Westfield Public Schools will be taught, through an evidence-based, age appropriate curriculum, strategies to identify, to refuse to tolerate, and to report bullying behavior. In all schools, interventions for students who engage in bullying behaviors will be clearly outlined, and behaviors will be assessed on a continuum that is appropriate to the developmental level of the student(s). The skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and to respond to bullying, harassment and teasing will be addressed for students with disabilities in their Individualized Education Programs and/or Section 504 Plans. All students will be instructed and will be expected to adhere to the following procedures and strategies to prevent bullying:

- Become familiar with policies within the student handbook.
- Treat each other respectfully.
- Refuse to bully others.
- Refuse to stand by and let others be bullied.
- Refuse to watch, laugh, or join in when someone is being bullied.
- Try to include everyone, especially those who are often left out.
- Report any potential bullying and tell someone who can help.

**Parents/Guardians** - Parents/guardians, as partners of the Westfield Public Schools, are strongly encouraged to take the following actions:

- Become familiar with the policies within the student Code of Conduct Handbook.
- Become familiar with the Westfield Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan.
- Attend school-sponsored and district-sponsored parent events on matters of bullying.
- Listen to your child if he or she reports being bullied.
- Encourage your child not to exclude others or to spread rumors and gossip.
- Help your child understand how hurtful it feels to be excluded, bullied or harassed.
- Encourage your child to report any potential bullying and seek help from adults.
- Report signs of bullying to your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal.
- Support the school if your child is identified as having engaged in bullying behavior.
- Do not leave your child unsupervised at the computer for any great length of time.
- Monitor your child's use of technology, including but not limited to instant messaging, text messaging and social networking sites. Be mindful that cell phones, tablets, and smart watches are mobile computers.
- Communicate regularly with the school.
- Become familiar with the confidentiality requirements of the school.

The parents/guardians of a student who is a target of bullying or retaliation will be notified and, to the extent consistent with state and federal law, will be told of the action(s) taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation. The parents/guardians of a student who is alleged to have engaged in bullying will be invited to attend a meeting at which the activity, words or images subject to the complaint will be reviewed.

#### IV. **TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ongoing professional development builds the skills of staff members in preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying. As required by law, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development is informed by research and includes information on:

- Developmentally/age appropriate strategies to prevent, intervene in, and stop bullying behaviors including training in the implementation of programs such as PBIS, Botvin Lifeskills Training, and Global Compliance Network, etc.;
- 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 and remote learning environment;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and

- 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) and/or Section 504 Plan. This will include a particular focus on the needs of those whose disability affects social skills development.
- Anti-discrimination statutes (Title VI – prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin; Title IX – prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender identification; Section 504 & Title II – prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability).

#### School-Based:

- Annually - All building-based staff training on the Plan, which includes responsibilities and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and 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/district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.
- Review with staff the bullying prevention curriculum and evidence-based social competence curriculum offered at each grade level within the school.
- Review staff duties under the Plan and an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation.

#### District-Wide:

- Annually – All district staff, including such positions as lunch monitors, bus drivers, custodians, etc. will receive training in regards to Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention, procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation, and other aspects of the Plan.
- Annually - New staff will be trained on the bullying prevention and intervention plan and bullying prevention curriculum appropriate to each respective grade level.
- Annually - Training of special education teachers addressing ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' IEPs.

## V. RESPONSES TO BULLYING AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES/SERVICES

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.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building - Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:
  - Implement a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals.
  - Offer small group and/or individualized skill-building sessions based on the Bullying Prevention curriculum.
  - Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel.
  - Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the Bullying Prevention curricula and social skills building activities at home.

- Adopting behavioral plans to address the function of the behavior and to include a focus on developing specific self-regulation and/or social skills.
2. Taking Disciplinary Action - If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the plan and the district's Code of Conduct as outlined in the student handbook.
- Progressive discipline procedures - Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and permit the steps of disciplinary action to occur at the lowest level possible. Through the process of progressive discipline, if any additional bullying behavior occurs, the next resulting consequence may be more significant than the preceding consequence. It is our goal to help students learn to make better decisions.
  - Disciplinary actions may include loss of privileges, meeting with parents, detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, referral for evaluation, expulsion, and police notification.
  - Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education 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 or remote learning 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 including remote learning environments, where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.
  - Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the implementation of intervention strategies 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.
4. Other
- Referral of either the target and/or aggressor for an evaluation under Section 504 or Special Education.
  - Conducting a Risk Assessment of the Aggressor, if deemed necessary by the Principal, to determine the level of safety for the aggressor and the school environment.

Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously.

## VI. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed by the following:

In district supports:

- School Counselors
  - Prevention strategies
  - Small group interventions
  - Individualized interventions
  - Evening hours for parents' sessions
  - Parent groups/training
- School Nurses
- School Psychologists
- Health/PE department

MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs:

- Peer Mediation when appropriate
- Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)
- Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention training for staff
- District level data meetings

Community based supports:

- Health care agencies
- Counseling agencies
- Westfield Police Department
- Hampden County District Attorney's Office
- Department of Children and Families
- Crisis hotlines
- Church groups

## VII. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A whole school approach, evidence-based classroom curricula, and focused strategies for bullying prevention is all a part of the Westfield Public School's approach to bully prevention. Approaches and curricula presently being implemented within the Westfield schools both on site and remotely include:

- ***MA Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Program*** –this model intends to guide school administrators and counselors in the development of a measurable, effective school counseling program. The MA Model Mission Statement includes the statement that school counselors will develop and deliver counseling programs and services that provide all students with the requisite knowledge and skills for success in the academic/technical, workplace readiness, and personal/social domains. Specifically Goal 3 states, "To promote the positive personal and social development of all students within a safe learning environment, school counselors will provide programs, classroom-based interventions and group and/or individual counseling that allow students to (1) feel supported and safe at school, (2) develop interpersonal skills for positive social interactions, and (3) understand their personal strengths and challenges. Additionally, the Westfield Public Schools support the recommended ratio of 1 school counselor per 250 students and endeavors to meet and maintain that ratio. A developmental counseling curriculum has been written and school counselors are providing classroom lessons, facilitating small group skill focused interventions, and individualized interventions when appropriate.
- ***Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)***- an intervention/practice that provides a

decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. In general, PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) socially valued and measurable outcomes, (b) empirically validated and practical practices, (c) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices, and (d) continuous collection and use of data for decision making. These four elements are guided by six important principles:

- Develop a continuum of scientifically based and academic supports;
  - Use data to make decisions and solve problems;
  - Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior
  - Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors;
  - Implement evidence-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability;
  - Screen universally and monitor student performance and progress continuously.
- 
- **Check In/Check Out (PBIS secondary tier intervention)** – for students who need support beyond what is provided by the universal system. It is an intervention that increases adult feedback and interaction through a daily in-class or out-of-class check in. There is a home component with a corresponding increase in the home school connection. Students are provided explicit expectations for behavior at the beginning of each day and receive increased feedback from adults throughout the day. Students check out with an adult and data is collected and summarized daily.
  - **Social Emotional (SEL) Learning Programs** - All students receive regular social emotional learning instruction every school year that includes anti-bullying instruction. In grades PreK-6, the SEL program is Choose Love, and in grades 7-12, the SEL program is Trails to Wellness.
  - **Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs)** –A functional behavior assessment is an analysis of the circumstances in the environment (teachers, students, events, etc.,) that tend to predict a behavior and help explain why the student engages in that behavior at that particular time. Why a student engages in that behavior is known as the function. The FBA is used to plan an effective and efficient individual intervention for those students who have not responded to the universal and secondary interventions. The intended outcome of a functional assessment is an effective behavioral intervention plan (BIP) that prevents failure and facilitates student success. An important key to creating an effective intervention plan is to determine appropriate behaviors to teach the student to enable him/her to get his/her needs met with appropriate behaviors.
  - **School-Wide Information System (SWIS)** – a web-based information system designed to help school personnel to use office data to design school-wide and individual student interventions. The three primary elements of SWIS are (1) an efficient system for gathering information, (2) a web-based computer application for data entry and report generation, and (3) a practical primary process for using information for decision making. Data that is collected and summarized includes the number of office discipline referrals per month, the type of problem behaviors that lead to office referrals, the location of the problem behaviors, the time of the day that the behaviors occurred, and the student(s) involved.
  - **PowerSchool School Administrative Software** – a preK-12 student information software system to manage information and streamline administrative tasks. Data is stored over time and across schools enabling longitudinal data to be accessed. There is a discipline module that enables the district to track bullying incidents as well as harassment and civil rights violations.
  - **Cybersafety** – This NetSmartz Workshop is an interactive, educational safety resource that uses

age-appropriate activities to teach children how to stay safer on the internet.

- **Peer Mediation** – a group of students trained to mediate conflicts between students at the middle and high school.

It is recognized that the effectiveness of these programs and curriculum depends on the fidelity to which they are implemented. The Westfield Public School District emphasizes the importance of fidelity of implementation and principals work with the counseling department and the Staff Development Committee to ensure the appropriate training of staff as well as the implementation of programs at the school level.

#### VIII. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, guardians, or others, and may be oral, written, or digital. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. However, no disciplinary action will be taken against a student solely based on an anonymous report. 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 principal or designee will promptly investigate all reported incidents using the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Incident Investigation Form and determine whether bullying actually occurred. Other related complaints, if any, will be reviewed in making this determination.

- When an allegation of bullying is inclusive of an allegation of sex-based harassment under Title IX, the District will follow the investigatory process outlined in the District's Title IX grievance process and will issue a bullying determination within the Title IX determination.
- During the investigation the principal/designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. The principal/designee shall 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/designee, other staff members as determined by the principal/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
- Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal/designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.
- Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal shall promptly notify the parents of the target and aggressor the determination and the school district or school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. The principal/designee shall inform the target's parent of actions the school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.05(l) prohibits the principal/designee from contacting a parent of a target or aggressor about a report of bullying or retaliation prior to a determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred. The principal shall notify parents/guardians of the target about a report of bullying or retaliation. Notice required in 603 CMR 49.05 shall be provided in the primary language of the home.
- 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.

- Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal/designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or aggressor in the classroom, at lunch or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal/designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. 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/designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal/designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communication will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

Confidentiality - A principal/designee’s notification to a parent about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

- A principal/designee may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent unless the information is about the parent’s own child.
- A principal/designee may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his/her parent. The principal shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
- At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, the principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against an aggressor. Notice shall be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. The principal shall document the reasons for her/his decision to notify law enforcement. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.06 shall be interpreted to require reporting to a law enforcement agency in situations in which bullying or retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.
  - In making the determination whether notification to law enforcement is appropriate, the principal may consult with the school resource officer and any other individuals the principal deems appropriate.
  - Nothing in 603 CMR 49.06 shall prevent the principal from taking appropriate disciplinary or other action pursuant to school district or school policy and state law, provided that disciplinary actions balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
  - The principal shall respond to the incident as set forth in relevant provisions of the local plan consistent with 603 CMR 49.06.
- If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds or remotely and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in the school district or school, the principal of the school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

- Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal/designee will promptly notify the parents/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/designee contacts parents/guardians prior to any investigation.
- Upon substantiation of bullying or retaliation, the principal/designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent reoccurrence and to ensure the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefitting from school activities.
- The principal/designee will determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

#### **IX. 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: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto: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**

The Westfield Public Schools offers parent workshops and speakers. Additionally, a number of parent and family events are held at each individual school. Each year the Westfield Public Schools notifies parents/guardians about the anti-bullying curriculum delivered by our schools. We collaborate with existing School Councils, PTOs, Special Education Parent Advisory Council and other such organizations in offering education programs that are focused on the parental components of the district anti-bullying curricula and social competency curricula used.

#### **XI. 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, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in this 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 this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other such action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

## **APPENDIX A: REFERRAL TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

The following is a list of possible referrals for support outside of the school environment. The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

### **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

**Domestic Violence Advocate**, Mary Krol at Hilltown Safety (413)667-2203 x341

**YWCA ARCH Program** (413)733-7100 (24-hours) Shelter, counseling and information for battered women and their children, sexual assault services

**New Beginnings(YWCA)** (413)562-5739 counseling and information

**SafeLink** 24-hours 1-877-785-2020-Dial 711 in Massachusetts

### **Psychiatric Services**

**Westfield Crisis Program** (413)568-6386 (24-hours) service for psychiatric crisis and suicidal behavior

#### **Individual, group and family counseling for youth and**

**Families: Carson Center for Children and Youth, Westfield** (413)568-6141

**Center for Human Development, West Springfield** (413)781-6556

**CHD Outpatient and Behavior Health Services, West Springfield** (413)737-4718

**Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Holyoke** (413)532-9446

**Agawam Counseling Center, Feeding Hills** (413)786-6410

### **Substance Abuse Services**

**Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information Helpline** 1-800-327-5050 (information and referral for inpatient and outpatient services in Massachusetts)

**MiraVista Behavioral Health Center, Holyoke**

- Psychiatric Services and Acute Care for inpatient and outpatient services: (413)701-2600 (24 hour)

**Baystate Medical Center** Central Intake for inpatient and outpatient services: (413)794-5555

**Alcoholics Anonymous** meeting schedule: [www.westernmassaa.org](http://www.westernmassaa.org) or listed in your local paper

**Al-Anon and Alateen** (413)782-3406 (self-help organization for those living with a substance abuser)

### **Hotlines and Other Support Services**

**United Way of Pioneer Valley** (413)737-2691      **MASS 211 Information:** dial 211

**AIDS information and support** 1-800-235-2331

**Missing Children Hotline** (24 hour) 1-800-843-5678

**National Runaway Switchboard** (24 hours) 1- 800-RUNAWAY

**Department of Children and Families** Holyoke Office (413)493-2600, Springfield Office (413)452-3200

**Children at Risk Hotline** (24 hours) 1- 800-792-5200

**Parents Helping Parents and Parental Stress Line** 1-800-632-8188

**Western Mass Legal Services** (413)781-7814, 1-800-639-1109 (Legal Aid)

Appendix B

WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

3. Check whether you are a:  Student  Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent  Administrator  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information/telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. If student, state your school: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If staff member, state your school or work site: \_\_\_\_\_

6. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. INVESTIGATION**

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interviews:

- Interviewed aggressor      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed target      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed witnesses      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor?     Yes     No
- If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?     Yes     No
- Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION     Yes     No

Summary of Investigation:

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

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

YES

NO

Bullying

Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_

Retaliation

Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Aggressor's parent/guardian    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

- Loss of Privileges     Detention     Suspension
- Community Service     Education     Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe Safety Planning: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_