

# Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

## Our Commitment

New Directions School is committed to creating a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all. We will treat all members of our community with civility, respect and acceptance. Keywords that represent our actions and our words are kindness, respect, responsibility, caring, courage, empathy, honesty and inclusivity. Our learning community strictly enforces a prohibition against bullying of any of its students, staff or visitors. New Directions School, will develop and implement a plan for education and discipline, including curriculum, to prevent bullying and to help adults and students to respond effectively to reports and observations of bullying. Our actions and words are guided by three simple sentences: “Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?”

The school 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.

## Definition of Bullying

Bullying is the severe and repeated use by one or more students of written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or exclusion (defined as repeated omission, ignoring, and an unwelcoming environment), or any combination of the above directed at another student that has the effect of:

- (a) causing physical or emotional harm,
- (b) placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to their property,
- (c) creating a hostile environment at school for another person,
- (d) infringing on the rights of another person at school, or
- (e) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

## Bullying Prohibited

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs on or off school grounds, at school bus stops, on school buses or her vehicles owned, leased or used by the district, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school district.

Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school if the act or

acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringe on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Leadership at New Directions School will make clear to students and staff that bullying will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination of employees. Students who engage in bullying will be expected to engage in repair work in addition to receiving other disciplinary actions.

New Directions School will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of harassment, including bullying. The Education Director and/or his or her designee will be responsible for handling all complaints by students alleging harassment, including bullying. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited. Consequences for retaliation behavior could result in immediate suspension (internal or external) and the development of a written plan with the student, parent and sending school district for re-entry.

Reporting of incidents of bullying can be made orally, in writing and/or anonymously. No disciplinary action will be taken until a full investigation warrants such an outcome.

#### Prevention and Intervention Plan

New Directions School shall develop a bullying prevention and intervention plan in consultation with school staff, students, parents, and community members. The bullying prevention plan shall:

1. include descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.
2. include descriptions of bullying – what it is and what it is not, especially having to do with exclusionary practices.
3. establish clear procedures for reporting of bullying or retaliation, to include the specific process to be followed.
4. state that any and all paid staff are responsible for following said procedure.
5. include a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously, provided that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely based on an anonymous report.
6. establish clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation.
7. identify the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation.
8. establish clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that student's needs for protection.

9. establish strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

10. establish procedures for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a victim and a perpetrator, for notifying the parents or guardians of a victim of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying, and for notifying local law enforcement officials when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.

11. include a provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action and include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of the students.

### Staff Development and Training

Staff will receive annual training and professional development on the Anti-Bullying Policy. The goal of this work is to enhance the skills of all members of the school staff to prevent, identify and respond to bullying and to implement the bullying prevention and intervention plan. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bully incidents; (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; (3) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among the perpetrator, the victim, and any witnesses to the bullying; (4) research findings on bullying; (5) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (6) internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying. The school staff shall receive annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention policy. This policy will be included in the staff handbook.

### Parent/Guardian Education

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include provisions for educating parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum, how they can reinforce the curriculum at home, how they can support New Directions School's prevention and intervention plan, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyber-bullying.

The district shall provide to students and their parents or guardians in age-appropriate terms and in the most prevalent languages of families, annual written notice of relevant sections of the bullying intervention plan in the student handbook. This is done annually.

### Problem Resolution Resource at DESE

Parents have the right to reach out to DESE in their problem resolution system and file an electronic claim. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>. Emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu)

## **PROCEDURES**

- Annually, staff, students and parents are provided with a copy of the Anti-Bullying Policy, which includes the Bullying Prevention Plan.
- Annually, staff will be trained on this plan.
- Annually, the Education Director will communicate this plan with the local police department, prior to the start of the school year.
- The plan and all communications will be translated into the parent/guardian native language.

### **Procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving**

School staff will immediately, as soon as it is safe to do so (e.g., the staff person has no student responsibilities) report any instances of bullying or retaliation that the staff member has witnessed or which the staff member has become aware of through a report from another or her individual. The report can be made anonymously, in writing or verbally. Staff are required to complete the “Bullying Preventions and Intervention Incident Reporting Form” which is attached to this Policy and Procedure document. Failure to report and act of said allegation can result in disciplinary actions for the staff member.

Any student who believes that he/she/they has been subjected to bullying or retaliation, or who has witnessed or learned about bullying or retaliation toward a student, has the right to report the information to any adult or to report anonymously to an adult, who is then responsible to communicate it directly to the Education Director or his or her designee. Parents may also make a report of bullying anonymously, in writing or verbally.

No disciplinary action will be taken until the incident is fully investigated. All efforts will be made to protect the privacy of all parties.

The Education Director and/or his or her designee will be responsible for investigating reports of bullying and/or retaliation. The investigation shall occur immediately upon the receipt of said report. The investigation shall seek to understand the circumstances of the complaint, including the type, severity and frequency of the alleged bullying incident. The investigation should generally include interviews with the victim, the alleged perpetrator, witnesses, individuals who may have been named by the previous parties, and anyone else who may have knowledge about the incident. The investigator will take notes and write an factual and non-judgmental reflection of these interviews

The investigator shall review any documents that may be relevant to the allegations of bullying or retaliation in written or electronic form; including photographs, emails, voice mails, telephone records, etc. The investigator shall maintain a confidential file of the interview notes and documents pertaining to the investigation.

If the investigator determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the following steps will be taken.

We 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 identify or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical developmental sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

For student to student (or parent speaking for the student):

The Education Director or his or her designee will verbally inform the parent of the student who is the victim and the parent of the student of the perpetrator, sharing information only that is allowed by law including the steps that were taken and the outcome will be shared. Parents will be asked for their thoughts. This discussion, along with the investigation summary, will be shared, in written form, with parent(s)/guardian(s) and school district, and any other participatory agency, while always protecting the rights of all individuals. Students will have the opportunity to review the written document to add insight into how their perception was documented or to add their own narrative. The Education Director or his or her designee will:

1. Inform the school district verbally (followed by a written report)
2. Notify the local law enforcement agency if this or here is reason to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
3. Notify the students involved in the situation of the outcome, individually.
4. Provide for support, counseling, or referral to an outside service agency for students and parents, if appropriate.
5. Contact DSE and file incident reports as appropriate.
6. Depending upon the nature of the incident, the student or students may need to be safely separated from one another.

9. At each team meeting, the team will discuss if the student is at risk for being bullied or acting in ways that would label him/her/them as the perpetrator. That discussion is documented in the IEP. If the student is at risk, the IEP will have a social/emotional goal that will address the challenges the student faces, providing him/his or her/them with the skills and proficiencies to develop more effective interpersonal skills.

For staff to staff:

1. The Education Director and/or his or her designee will immediately investigate the allegation(s). All involved will be interviewed and a written document will be created, in which the statements of the interviewees will be documented without bias.
2. Staff will have the opportunity to review the written document to add insight into how their perception was documented or to add their own narrative.
3. Local law enforcement agencies will be notified if this or here is reason to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
4. The staff involved in the situation will be informed of the outcome, individually.
5. Provide each with a written summary that protects the rights of every individual.
6. Provide further support, counseling, or referral to an outside service agency, if appropriate.
7. Contact DSE and file incident reports as appropriate on the Security Portal (due by June 15<sup>th</sup> of each school year).
8. Depending upon the nature of the incident, the staff may need to be safely separated from one another.

For student to staff or staff to student:

1. The Education Director and/or his or her designee will immediately investigate the allegation(s). All involved will be interviewed and a written document will be created, in which the statements of the interviewees will be documented without bias.  
The parent of the student who is the victim or perpetrator will be informed of the allegations and investigation, sharing information only 1. that is allowed by law. The perceptions of the parent will be documented in the report.
2. All participants will have the opportunity to review the written document to add insight into how their perception was documented or to add their own narrative.
3. The narrative will be shared with all participants and any involved outside agencies, protecting the anonymity of all individuals.

4. The school district will be given contacted verbally (followed by a written report)
5. The local law enforcement agency will be contacted if this or here is reason to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
6. All persons involved in the situation of the outcome will be informed of the outcome individually.
7. Provide further or her support, counseling, or referral to an outside service agency for students and parents, if appropriate.
8. Contact DSE and file incident reports as appropriate.
9. Depending upon the nature of the incident, those involved may need to be safely separated from one another.

For all people involved in an incident, it may be useful to teach social skills that are expected in interrelationships. Some possibilities may include the following.

- Choosing specific skills from the Social Thinking Curriculum that were found to be lacking in the behaviors of the individuals.
- Updating the individual student's behavior plan
- Making a referral for an evaluation.

Range of disciplinary actions for student:

If the Education Director or his or her designee decides that disciplinary action is required, the disciplinary action will be determined based on the facts identified in the investigation by the Education Director or his or her designee, including the nature of the behavior/infraction, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of expected behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the school's code of conduct. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline (that is, a student cannot be disciplined for acting in a way that is consistent with his/his or her disability. That is not to say that the behaviors are accepted. It is to say that a focus on teaching expected behavioral choices will be the action that is taken.).

If the Education Director or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

The target needs to feel safe in the school and the identified aggressor must be able to avoid continued behaviors, what his or her change in behavior is through not allowed contact with the

target or a change of behavior that is significant, or both. The needs of the targeted student will be at the forefront of any action that is taken.

### Consequences:

The range of consequences could include: a loss of free time to engage in repair work or social learning class; a removal from any less structured times or additional 1-1 support throughout the instructional day; alternate instructional space on campus with instructional staff; or an external suspension. If this is an external suspension, the student and the parent/guardian will meet with the Education Director to develop a re-entry plan that keeps all people safe. The student will receive educational tutoring during an external suspension, and even expulsion.

### Repair work:

If a student disrupts the safety and learning of the school environment, the Education Director may determine that engaging in repair work would be the most effective method for helping to re-create a safe environment. This would be a match to the infraction and will not be punitive in nature. This step is about helping the student embrace how he/she created an unsafe environment and how s/he can then help to re-create a safe environment. This process will include a discussion with the student to determine a plan. It is preferred that the plan is not developed only by adults because that perpetuates the concept of punishment instead of repair. And without the student's input into the creation of the plan, ownership by the student in a successful outcome is less likely.

### Range of disciplinary actions for staff:

It will be the intent of the process to re-create a safe environment. The staff person will need to engage with the Education Director to create a mutually agreed upon plan that the staff person will be responsible for implementing. The staff person will report to the Education Director weekly (or more frequently if that is determined) on the impact of the implemented plan.

Depending on the severity of the infraction, the staff person may be put on leave with pay, leave without pay, or removed from employment.

### Curriculum:

Social Thinking, the Michelle Garcia Winner curriculum, will be a guiding tool for our work. This work will be embedded throughout the day, in the language that we use and the actions that we help students navigate. The following strategies that will be used to promote healthy interactions will include:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;

- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness to students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Skills and proficiencies for all participants to support a healthy, safe, and respectful school community include the following:

- self-awareness,
- self-management,
- social awareness,
- relationship skills,
- responsible decision-making.

General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment.

- setting clear expectations for all members of the school community and establishing school and classroom routines.
- creating a safe school and classroom environment for all protected classes (race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, homelessness).
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, and discipline techniques that maintain dignity.
- 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.
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

### IEP team meeting determination

If the IEP team determines that the student has a disability that affects social development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his or her/their disability, the team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

**Every four years** the school will administer a student survey to assess "school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools."

This plan was developed in conjunction with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, students, parents/guardians, community personnel and local law enforcement agencies.

This plan will be updated biennially.

This plan will be provided to students in age-appropriate terms and to all in their native language.

Staff and parents/students will receive this plan annually.

This plan shall be posted on the website.

The Education Director and his or her designee are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan.

Incidents of bullying will be reported electronically to DESE using the Bullying and Retaliation link in the Application list. The certification of this information is July 15<sup>th</sup> or each year.

DESE resources for all participants:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/considerations-bully.html>

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/default.html>

M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H

M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d) and (e)(1) & (2)

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