

BULLYING INTERVENTION

I. LEADERSHIP

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan

As required by Massachusetts Common Law: c71, a committee was formed to develop this intervention plan. Members of the committee included the Director of Special Education, a principal, school adjustment counselors, a teacher, a parent and a community representative. During September, a series of Professional Development opportunities was held in Fall River to introduce the new law and Fall River's new bullying policy and procedures.

All Fall River School Department School Adjustment Counselors, Vice Principals and Psychologists were trained by the Bristol County Sheriff's Office. In addition, community members, a School Resource Office, and a School Security Officer attended these meetings and offered feedback. The plan was presented to the Fall River Special Education Parent Advisory Committee on Thursday, October 14, 2010. Anne Gilligan from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education spent an hour talking about the new law and answering questions from Fall River principals. In November, a public hearing was held to seek the input of parents and community members. Presentations about the plan have been made to the Fonseca and Doran PTOs and to the Durfee High School Student Council. In addition, this plan will be reviewed by the Superintendent's District-wide Parent Committee and the Superintendent's District-wide Teacher Committee.

B. Assessment of needs and resources

All schools were contacted to see what resources were present at each school. Kindergarten teachers have: I CAN Problem Solve and the Second Step Program. All elementary schools have partially implemented the Second Step Social Competency Program. The middle schools also have partially implemented the Second Step Program. It is clear that the Fall River Public School System needs to invest in training more staff to become trainers and needs to purchase more programs. It is also clear that implementation procedures need to be standardized throughout the District. The District needs materials to be able to standardize the implementation.

The grade 9 high school health teachers will implement the Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders: Thinking and Acting to Prevent Violence. All 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students will be trained through the Bristol County Sheriff's Office about the law, with a particular focus on cyber-bullying. All high school staff will be trained to support the implementation of the program and learn how to recognize bullying.

A phone survey was conducted to determine which schools needed additional materials. New materials, Steps to Respect and Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders will be delivered to the school as soon as they become available. On October 1st, print material, posters, and DVDs were delivered to buildings throughout the District. These resources from MARC, the US DOE, and Stop Bullying Now were targeted for each stakeholder group: administrators, staff, and parents.

Students will be surveyed in grades 2 through 12 to provide a baseline on the extent of the problem in the District. This will be a 10 question survey. We will use the grant to purchase scan sheets to be able to get this done.

C. Planning and oversight

The principal of each building or a designee will receive reports of bullying. Incident reports will be located in a separate binder. In order to collect and analyze accurate data on the extent of bullying within the district and to measure improved outcomes, all substantiated bullying reports must be entered into the current data collection system. It is important that accurate information is reported relative to targets and aggressors. At the beginning of each school year, the school principal will review the bullying prevention policy, reporting procedures (including anonymous reporting), and reporting forms with all staff members.

The principal will also amend student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct as needed to meet the letter and intent of the law. The principal will also give parents a written copy of the procedure for investigating bullying and reporting forms in their native language. Students will be given a developmentally appropriate copy of the bullying policy.

Internet safety resources are to be published on the Fall River School Department Technology website at: <http://www.fallriverschools.org/internetsafety.cfm>. In addition, each school will send out a developmentally appropriate Acceptable Use Agreement. These agreements are sent home at the beginning of each school year and signed by the student and parent. These agreements can be found at: <http://www.fallriverschools.org/technology.cfm>.

Each school was sent a packet of resources to use with parents and staff. Information in the packet included: Stop Bullying Now (K-5) and bullying and cyber-bullying information from the Massachusetts Aggression Research Center (MARC). Copies will be given to parents at registration and at each school's open house. A copy will be posted in the school office. Some of the titles include:

- Social Networking: A Guide for Parents
- No child left online
- Cyber-bullying: A Guide for Parents
- When Your Child Is Being Bullied: A Guide for Parents

These titles are free to the public and are posted at: <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/marc/parpub.html>

A District-wide Bullying Prevention Committee will be established. This committee will be responsible for reviewing the Bullying Policy, the Bully Procedures, Reporting Forms, and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. These policies and procedures will be reviewed on a yearly basis. This committee will also meet to hear parental appeals, as needed.

Principals will report end of the year bullying data to this Bullying Prevention Committee. This data should include but is not limited to: 1) the number of bullying complaints/investigations, 2) the number of substantiated bullying reports, and 3) a count of the action taken. This District-wide Committee will meet to review the data. The data will be used to determine what changes, if any, need to be made in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Appeal Process

Any person believing that the Fall River Public Schools or any part of the school organization has inadequately applied the bullying policy shall bring forth a complaint to the school principal and if necessary to the District-wide Bullying Prevention Committee. The complaint may be made verbally or in writing. The principal or Bullying Prevention Committee will investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant within ten (10) business days.

Within five (5) business days, any person who disagrees with the Committee's shall be entitled to appeal this decision to the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent shall gather all documentation from the Bullying Prevention Committee, investigate the complaint, and reply to the complainant within ten (10) business days from the date the appeal was received.

Any complainant wishing to appeal the Superintendent's decision may do so to the School Committee. The appeal must be in writing and presented to the Superintendent for transmittal to the School Committee within ten (10) days from the Superintendent's decision.

The School Committee representatives shall meet with the complainant and all other interested persons, and reply in writing to the complainant within thirty-days (30) business days of receiving the complaint.

D. Priority Statement

The Fall River Public School Department is committed to promoting a positive school climate and safe learning environment that is free from in person as well as cyber-bullying. It is expected that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner with respect for differences. Bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation for reporting incidents of bullying, are prohibited in all Fall River Public Schools, on school grounds, and at school related functions.

All reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation will be investigated promptly, and prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety will be taken. This commitment will be supported in all aspects of the school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Fall River Public School District understands that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or homeless may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The Fall River School District will take specific steps 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 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying. The District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, this Plan has been established for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Plan.

II. Training and Professional Development

A. Annual staff training

At the beginning of each school year, all staff members will be trained on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, Bullying Policy, and Bullying Procedures including: reporting requirements, investigation guidelines, ensuring the safety of the target and witnesses, and the required documentation.

B. Ongoing professional development

All staff training will start with the need for the creation of a positive school climate where adults and children act in a positive and respectful manner. Through after-school faculty/curriculum meetings and after-school and summer in-service workshops, the staff will be trained on a developmentally appropriate and evidence-based social competency program that promotes self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The law lists six topics that will be included in the Fall River Bully Prevention Professional Development Plan.

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
2. Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents
3. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying
4. 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
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying

The Fall River School Department plans to send approximately twenty staff members to the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center Train the Trainer Program. These trained staff members will be assigned to teach all other staff, parents, community members, and volunteers. Professional Development shall include training in evidenced-based social competency programs such as:

- Kindergarten – I Can Problem Solve and Second Step (provided by the Early Childhood Department)
- Grades 1 and 2 – Second Step
- Grades 3, 4, and 5 – Steps to Respect
- Grades 6, 7, and 8 – Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders

Grade 9 – Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders (Health teachers)

Grade 10 – Health teachers will provide instruction and discussion about the law and the dangers of cyber-bullying on an ongoing basis.

Grades 11 and 12 – Instruction and discussion about the law and cyber-bullying will be provided on an ongoing basis.

In addition, the Fall River School Department will continue its collaboration with the Bristol County Sheriff's Office. Staff members from this agency have been able to offer free workshops for staff and students.

C. Written notice to staff about law and responsibilities

The Fall River Public School Department has revised its Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures to ensure it complies with the law. The policy will be posted on the school system website. During each new school year, the policy will be reviewed on the first day of school with all staff members.

III. Access to Resources and Services

A. Identify resources – review programming and staffing. Please refer to page 3 – Section I. B.

B. Counseling and other services – linkages with community agencies

Every school has at least one full time School Adjustment Counselor. A nurse and an attendance officer are also available at all schools. Curriculum Accommodations Teams meet weekly to address the needs of children. Durfee has three School Adjustment Counselors.

Research indicates that having classroom teachers implement a social skills and bullying prevention program is a best practice. Using a three-tier model of intervention, the classroom teacher will implement Tier One: whole class general instruction on the subject. When necessary, the classroom teacher will speak to individual students or small groups of students as a Tier Two Intervention.

When a case of bullying has been confirmed, the investigator will immediately refer both the aggressor and the target to the School Adjustment Counselor. The school adjustment counselor will be the Tier Three interventionist by addressing small groups in counseling sessions with targets and by meeting with aggressors individually. The School Adjustment Counselor will hold separate social skills groups for targets and bystanders. Aggressors will be interviewed and educated about appropriate behavior separately. In addition, the counselor should make connections and provide services to students likely to be the target of bullying. The purpose will be to teach likely targets strategies to stand up to aggressors.

In the Fall River elementary schools, there are strong connections with many community agencies. Several agencies such as Family Services, CFC, Boys or Girls Club, YMCA have before school and after school programs in elementary schools. In addition, 4th grade classes participate with the "Adopt a Cop Program". With this program, off-duty police officers adopt a school and provide monthly lessons on social skills and teach students how to stand up for themselves.

The Fall River Public School District also participates in the Katie Brown Educational Program. This program is a relationship violence prevention curriculum designed for students in fifth grade through high school. The fifth through eighth grade curricula provides five sessions, and the high school program provides four sessions.

The Fall River Public School System is a member of the Fall River Shannon Community Safety Initiative. The Shannon partnership is composed of community organizations, city agencies, FRPS, and local law enforcement dedicated to addressing gang and youth violence in the city of Fall River. Utilizing a collaborative and comprehensive approach, the group actively addresses prevention, intervention, and gang suppression strategies to attempt to address all components of gang involvement and youth violence. This collaborative works to develop and implement strategies, programs, and policies that address the reasons why youth join gangs and commit violence. It also promotes a more peaceful community. Current partners include Fall River Police Department, Boys & Girls Club, Youth Build, DYS, Workforce Investment Board, and Fall River Youth Services.

C. Students with disabilities Note: This section was taken from Draft Technical Assistance Advisory (SPED 2011-1: Bullying Prevention and Intervention.)

Sections 7 and 8 of the bullying prevention and intervention law have specific implications for the IEP process and for students with disabilities.

Section 7 states: Whenever the IEP Team evaluation indicates that a student's disability affects social skills development, or when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing, the IEP must address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.)

Section 8 states: For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.)

Since disabilities can affect multiple aspects of a student’s life, a student’s individual evaluation must be comprehensive in order to identify areas affected by the disability and to allow for appropriate supports to ensure student success. Generally speaking, this means that well planned evaluations will already contain the information needed to address the special education requirements of the bullying prevention and intervention law. The new bullying prevention and intervention law requires the IEP Team to discuss and address students’ social skill development and vulnerability to bullying, harassment, and teasing.

Characteristics of students who are vulnerable to and/or engage in bullying, harassment, or teasing

Because schools are social places and learning is a social process, appropriate social skills are necessary for successful interactions in the school environment. Students whose disabilities impede social skills development may become an aggressor, a target of, or vulnerable to bullying, harassment, and teasing. Some students may exhibit behaviors that are characteristic of both targets and aggressors.

A review of the available research identifies specific characteristics common to aggressors and characteristics common to targets. Research also suggests that each aggressor or target will have two or more of the characteristics in these lists. Students who are both aggressors and targets possess characteristics from each group described below. This combination of aggressor and target may indicate the most severe challenges in social competence.

Some characteristics common to aggressors and some characteristics common to targets are:

Aggressor	Target
Impulsive	Anxious
Belligerent	Nervous
Hot-tempered	Insecure
Easily frustrated	Depressed
Lacks empathy	Lonely
Motivated by power	Sad
Loud and assertive	Fearful
Fearless	Socially withdrawn
Higher level of discipline problems and dislike of school	Poor self-image
Views violence in a positive way	Unable to read social cues correctly
	Difficulty making friends – no best friend

Some of these characteristics are identifiable in students with disabilities because of the nature of their disability. For example, a defining characteristic of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a qualitative impairment of social communication and interactions. Impairments in social interaction may also be mistaken for behavior problems in students with ASD. A functional behavior assessment is a useful tool for identifying factors that reflect social skills deficiencies that are better served by providing skill development rather than strictly through a behavior modification or management plan.

Skills and proficiencies students need to respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing

The bullying prevention and intervention law requires IEP Teams to address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing in IEPs of students with ASD, students whose disability affects positive social skills development, and students who are vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of a disability.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has reviewed current research and identified specific skills and proficiencies needed to avoid bullying, harassment, and teasing. The skills and proficiencies that an IEP Team may wish to identify in the IEP may include but are not limited to the following core categories identified by CASEL:

- **Self-Awareness:** accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths/abilities, and maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.
- **Self-Management:** regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting personal and academic goals and then monitoring one's progress toward achieving them; and expressing emotions constructively.
- **Social Awareness:** taking the perspective of and empathizing with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; identifying and following societal standards of conduct; and recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.
- **Relationship Skills:** establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; and seeking help when needed.
- **Responsible Decision-making:** making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate standards of conduct, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; and contributing to the well-being of one's school and community.

Implications for the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Because the IEP serves as a vehicle for improving the educational experience and achievements for a student with disabilities, the IEP Team uses a variety of information sources, including evaluations, assessment information, and their discussions of the student's present level of educational performance and social acumen, to focus the direction of the IEP goals and services. An IEP for an eligible student must address the unique needs of the student as determined by the evaluation process and IEP Team discussion. The IEP Team's discussion focuses comprehensively on the student's educational needs, as well as, the student's overall involvement in the school, including participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities. In this process, the IEP Team considers the student's social skills and identifies behaviors that affect the student's learning, the learning of others, and the student's ability to interact with others in positive ways.

A student's social skill development is currently an area of focus in federal and state special education law. The IEP Team must gather relevant data and information related to a student's social skill development during the evaluation process. Federal regulation 34 CFR 300.304 (c)(4) requires that "the child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities" [emphasis added]. Similarly, the Massachusetts regulations at 603 CMR 28.04(2)(a)(2)(ii) state that initial evaluations should include: "an assessment of the student's attention skills, participation behaviors, communication skills, memory, and social relations with group, peers, and adults" [emphasis added].

As part of an initial evaluation, IEP Teams may use the Educational Assessment document (28R/1) (available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/28mr/28r1.doc>) to aid in gathering relevant information related to a student's social skills and proficiencies. The IEP Team may use this information to identify characteristics indicative of aggressor or target, or a student's vulnerability for bullying, harassment, and teasing.

Because of the nature of ASD, progress in positive social skill development is a likely focus within the IEP of every student with ASD. For students whose evaluation indicates that a disability affects social skills development, or when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing, the IEP must include goals and objectives that address the identified skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Social skills instruction should be at the student's skill level and appropriate for his/her age. The goals must be attainable, measurable, and must specify the skills and proficiencies to be achieved within the IEP period. These goals are to aid the student in accessing social and emotional learning to more effectively handle challenges in his/her academic and social realms. IEP Teams should consider ways that the age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention that is incorporated into the school or district's curriculum may support specific goals for social and emotional learning for students with disabilities.

D. Referral protocol for referring students to outside agencies

1. Referral for Counseling Services

Any parent, teacher, or staff member may refer a child for counseling. Students themselves may seek counseling services.

Children involved in any confirmed case of bullying will be referred to the School Adjustment Counselor. The counselor will meet with the aggressor individually. The counselor will hold small groups sessions with children who are targets or likely targets of bullying.

The Fall River Public School System is fortunate to have several teachers, counselors, nurses, vice principals, and principals who are bilingual or tri-lingual. When necessary, it is a practice to shift services and providers to schools that needs counseling or other interventions by a multilingual staff member.

Bullying incidents will be investigated and leveled

1 = mild

2 = moderate

3 = severe

Based on the level, the Designee will consult with the principal to determine appropriate consequences. The school counselor will work with an aggressor individually. Moderate or severe bullying that is consistent over time may be referred to an outside agency for counseling. The targets and bystanders will also have access to the school counselor.

If safety issues continue and signs of stress and depression are indicated, referral to an outside agency should be considered. School counselors will keep a current list of outside service providers to give to parents as needed. Progressive discipline will be used as needed for moderate and severe cases.

2. Mobile Crisis Intervention

The Fall River Public School Department works with the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership to assist students who are covered by Massachusetts Health. This partnership provides a short-term service that is mobile, on-site, face-to-face therapeutic response to a youth experiencing a behavioral crisis for the purpose of identifying, assessing, treating, and stabilizing the situation and reducing immediate risk of danger to the youth or others. This service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Admission Criteria: All of the following are necessary for admission to this level of care:

- The youth must be in a behavioral health crisis that was unable to be resolved to the caller's satisfaction by phone triage.
- Immediate intervention is needed to attempt to stabilize the youth's condition safely in situations that do not require a public safety response.
- The youth demonstrates impairment in mood, thought, and/or behavior that substantially interferes with functioning at school, home, and/or in the community.

In addition to the above, at least one of the following must be present:

- The youth demonstrates suicidal/assaultive/destructive ideas, threats, plans, or actions that represent a risk to self or others.
- The demands of the situation exceed the parents/guardian's/caregiver's strengths and capacity to maintain the youth in his/her present living environment and external supports are required.

IV. Academic and Non Academic Activities

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches: Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research that, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- building school capacity to teach and reinforce social emotional learning and violence prevention strategies through the use of interactive teaching techniques that might use cooperative learning, scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- addressing school climate so that students are engaged in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference;
- providing developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction;
- empowering students (teaching assertiveness skills) 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;
- utilizing peer mentoring where older students informally teach lessons and share learning experiences with younger students to promote healthy interactions with peers, and on-line;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Each principal will hold an assembly to discuss this plan. It is suggested that a school-wide motivational system be set up to reward children who use appropriate social skills.

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 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 students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- developing a common vocabulary around social skills and bully prevention;
- encouraging adults to develop positive connections with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- teaching an appreciation of differences;
- teaching perspective;

- 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;
- incorporating continuing evaluation and improvement;
- teaching 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

- **A reporter** is defined as a person reporting an incident under this policy and not the recipient of the alleged behavior that violates the policy. A reporter may make an anonymous report.
- **A Community Member** is defined as any student, district or school employee, school committee member, independent contractor, school volunteer, parent or legal guardian of a student, or a visitor on school premises or at a school-related or school sponsored function or activity.
- **Reporting Bullying or Retaliation:**
All members of the school community are responsible for reporting any observation of bullying or harassment, or credible information that such an act has taken place. A Fall River Public School Bullying Reporting form is available in every office. That form states: "(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.)"
- **Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation:**
Each school building administrator will appoint one person (Designee) who will be responsible for receiving the bullying report, investigating, and applying appropriate sanctions for all complaints of bullying. Upon receiving the report, the Designee must contact the parent/guardian of the target of the incident and the parent/guardian of the person accused of bullying. The Designee will notify both sets of parents or guardians that a complaint has been received and that an investigation is going to be conducted.
Neither the name of the target nor the name of the student alleged of bullying should be disclosed to the other student's parent. The parent/guardian will also be advised that it is necessary to prevent any further acts of bullying and/or retaliation.

The Designee must provide for the safety of the target and any witnesses to the incident while conducting the investigation. The investigation shall include prompt interviews of students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Designee will also remind aggressor, target and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

The Designee will determine if the complaint is substantiated and if any remedial action is necessary. The Designee will consider the following remedial actions:

1. Teaching appropriate behavior through skills-building
2. Taking Disciplinary Action as outlined on the Bullying Investigation Form
3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The parent/guardian of the target and the parent/guardian for the one alleged of bullying will be notified of the findings of the investigation. The Designee will keep all Bullying Report Forms and Investigation Forms in a Separate binder. All substantiated incidents of bullying must be reported in the Fall River School Department's Data Management System (X2).

VI. Collaboration with Families

A. Parent Education and Resources

It is essential that all appropriate family members are instructed about the dangers of bullying and cyber-bullying. Appropriate family members will be taught what bullying is and what bullying is not. To aid in this effort, all principals were sent a packet of print material on October 1, 2010. Principals were encouraged to make this material available at open houses and to have it readily available for appropriate family members having an issue with bullying. At future Kindergarten Orientations and the Open Houses of each elementary school, the parent video from the Second Step Program will be used to demonstrate appropriate social skill development. During a specially called meeting for parents of students in grade 3 to 5, the appropriate family member's component of the Steps to Respect Program will be presented.

Each principal at the high school and middle school levels will discuss the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan with appropriate family members through a presentation at open house and parent conferences. Bullying, cyber-bullying, retaliation, hazing and harassment terminology and its contextual meaning will be reviewed at these mandated MIAA parent meetings.

B. Notification Requirement to parents/guardians

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the appropriate family members of the target and the aggressor involved in the bullying incident about all Fall River Public Schools Administrative procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts appropriate family members prior to any investigation. The principal or designee will notify both sets of appropriate family members that a complaint has been received and that an investigation is going to be conducted. Neither the name of the target nor the name of the student alleged of bullying should be disclosed to the other student's parent. The appropriate family members will also be notified regarding, specific actions taken by the Fall River Public Schools to prevent any further acts of bullying and/or retaliation based on each individual bullying/retaliation circumstance. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

VII. Administrative Actions to prevent further acts of bullying

A. Support and Assist the Target:

- Develop an Individualized Safety Plan and enact it. Each Individual Safety Plan will be promptly and consistently put into place to prevent further bullying.
- A Guidance Counselor or School Adjustment Counselor will be assigned to the targeted student. The assigned Counselor will meet regularly with the target to support the target and assure that retaliation does not occur. If retaliation does occur it will be reported and dealt with immediately on a case by case basis.
- Follow up meetings between the counselor and targeted student will take place twice a week for a period of a month. The counselor will provide a biweekly progress report to the principal or administrative designee, and appropriate family members. The progress report will address the individualized safety of the student (target). An Individualized Safety Plan will continue until the following people collectively agree it is no longer needed: targeted student, appropriate family members, and the principal or administrative designee.
- School guidance counseling services that the target needs will be provided to the target as well as appropriate family members. The targeted student will be provided with strategies to deal with future incidents, empowering the student to use self-advocacy to report any further acts.
- Follow up school counseling will be provided by the guidance counselor and or School Adjustment Counselor as determined necessary for the target.

- If school counseling personnel determine more in depth support will be needed then information regarding outside counseling services will be provided to the student's appropriate family members. The School Adjustment Counselor will assist the student and family to secure further outside of school counseling.

B. Support and Assist the Aggressor:

- An Individualized Monitor Plan will be developed and put into place to ensure no further acts of bullying will be committed by the aggressor. Consistent, direct, and prompt action will be put into place to prevent further bullying by the aggressor towards the specifically targeted student.
- A Guidance Counselor or School Adjustment Counselor will be assigned to the aggressor. The aggressor will be counseled and educated on acceptable alternative behaviors by the assigned guidance counselor or school adjustment counselor. The aggressor and appropriate family members will be made aware of the schools anti- bullying plan and the potential for severe consequences for his/her aggressive actions by the assigned Guidance Counselor or School Adjustment Counselor. The assigned Counselor will meet regularly with the individual aggressor to assure that retaliation has not occurred. But if retaliation does occur it will be reported and dealt with immediately.
- Follow up counseling will be provided by a Guidance Counselor or School Adjustment Counselor as determined necessary for the aggressor and appropriate family members.
- Counseling services that the aggressor needs will be available to the appropriate family members. School staff and, for middle and secondary levels, the school resource officer will provide appropriate support and counseling for the aggressor as needed within the school setting.
- If needed, information regarding outside counseling services will be provided to the aggressor's appropriate family members. The School Adjustment Counselor will assist the student's family to secure additional outside counseling services.
- The Individualized Monitoring Plan will include meetings twice a week and the duration will depend upon the aggressor's future actions. All meetings will be documented and the ending of the monitoring plan will be determined by the Principal or administrative designee. The aggressor and the appropriate family members will be advised that this documentation will become part of the student's record.
- The District may make appropriate law enforcement referrals/reports (assist target in reporting to law enforcement). Criminal charges may be filed at the discretion of the School Resource Officer.

Notice to another School 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) about 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.

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. In addition, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate. A Memorandum of Agreement between the Fall River Public School Department and the Fall River Police Department is being discussed.

B. Investigation Procedure:

Appointing School Designee: Each school building administrator will appoint one person (Designee) who will be responsible for receiving, investigating, and applying appropriate sanctions for all complaints of bullying. The school administrator must provide notification of the name and contact information of the Bullying Designee to all school administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, office staff, bus staff, parents, and any other individual who comes in contact with a child who attends school in the Fall River Public School District. A copy of this procedure, along with the name and contact information for the Designee, will be posted in the Main Office of every school.

Receiving Complaints of Bullying: A person, other than the Designee, who receives a report of bullying must: (1) Direct the reporter to the Designee; (2) Report all information received from the reporter directly to the Designee.

Designee Responsibilities: The Designee must complete the following steps once a report of bullying has been received: (the word target means victim)

1. Complete the Bullying Report Form. This form may be completed by the target of the bullying, a parent, guardian, the Designee, or any other individual who reports an incident of bullying.
2. The Designee must contact the parent/guardian. The Designee will gather the parent/guardian contact information for the target of the bullying, and the person accused of bullying. The Designee will call the respective parents/guardians and advise them a complaint has been received, and an investigation is going to be conducted by the Designee. Neither the name of the target, nor the name of the one alleged of bullying, should be disclosed to the other student's parent/s. If after the investigation, the Designee believes that the incident was so egregious so as to warrant a parent meeting, the parent/s may be contacted again to meet with the Designee and the Discipline Administrator for the building.
3. The Designee will investigate the alleged incidence of bullying by talking with the target of the bullying and the person alleged to have bullied. This is to be done separately, never bringing the target and the person alleged to have bullied together in the same room. The Designee will speak to the person/s who reported the incident, witnesses, and any other individuals having information about the incident. The Designee will check the – alleged conduct record to determine if the student has been disciplined for other incidences of bullying. The investigation and the Bullying Investigation Form should both be completed, within three (3) school days from the time the incident was reported.
4. The Designee will determine if the alleged incident of bullying occurred, and the appropriate sanction/s to be given.

The Designee should choose the sanction from those enumerated on the Bullying Investigation Form. If the Designee believes that the sanction should be greater than one of the enumerated sanctions, or that further steps need to be taken to assure the target's safety, the designee will speak with the Discipline Administrator for the Designee's school, and appropriate measures will be taken.

5. The parent/guardian of the target and the parent/guardian for the one alleged of bullying will be notified of the findings of the investigation.
6. The Designee will keep all Bullying Report Forms and Bullying Investigation Forms in a separate binder.

VIII. Prohibition against Bullying, Cyber-bullying, Retaliation

Acts of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation are prohibited:

- on school grounds, 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 bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school district or school
- 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 a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on their rights at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

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.

IX. Definitions

Massachusetts' Legal Bullying, Cyber-bullying and Retaliation Definitions

- A. Bullying:** the repeated use by one or more student of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:
- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
 - ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or damage to his property;
 - iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- B. Cyber-bullying:** 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.
- C. 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.
- D. Hostile environment:** a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.
- E. Perpetrator:** a student who engages in bullying or retaliation. It is preferable to use the word **Aggressor**.
- F. School district:** the school department of a city or town, a regional school district or a county agricultural school.
- G. School grounds:** property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school, or collaborative school for a school sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.
- H. Victim:** a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated. It is preferable to use the word **Target**.

Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the Fall River School District or individual school 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 any school within the Fall River Public School District to take disciplinary action or other 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.

Conclusion:

One of the goals of the Fall River Public School System is to develop: "socially and emotionally competent children and youth who get along well with others. [The children will learn] how to communicate effectively. They [will be] cooperative. They [will be able to] negotiate with others to solve problems. They [will] have good refusal skills ... and know when and how to seek help. They [will] make a positive contribution to their families, school, and community ..." (Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs, CASEL, 2003, page 5)

"Improving the social emotional climate of schools, and the social and emotional competence of students, advances the academic mission of schools. It actually increases student's capacity for learning. Social and emotional learning has been shown to increase mastery of subject material, motivation to learn, commitment to school, and time devoted to school work. It also improves attendance, graduation rates, and prospects for constructive employment while at the same time reducing suspensions, expulsions, and grade retention. (Safe and Sound: An Education Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs CASEL, 2003, page 7)