Lexington Public Schools
Lexington, Massachusetts

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE……... 3

LEADERSHIP…….. 3

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT……. 6

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES……. 8

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES……10

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION……. 12

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES……... 17

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION……. 18

DEFINITIONS……. 19

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS……. 20

FLOW CHART…….. 21

APPENDIX A:

- Lexington Public Schools Incident Reporting Form
- Lexington Public Schools Investigation Reporting Form
- Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Policy

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed to meet the requirements of M.

This process assisted our schools and district in identifying resource gaps and areas of need. Based on these findings, the School Committee adopted an Anti-Bullying Policy for the district on December 14, 2010 and will review other policies to determine they meet current legal requirements. Community agencies, including law enforcement were involved in the development of the plan.

During the 2010-2011 school year, and every two years going forward, our schools will utilize surveys for input from students, staff, parents and guardians on school climate and school safety issues. Data will be collected and analyzed on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying. This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform future decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age appropriate curricula, and in school support services.

C. Planning and oversight

The Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has identified the building principal (or designee) as the individual who is responsible for receiving all reports on bullying. The building principal (or designee) is responsible for collecting and analyzing building data to assess the presenting problems and to measure outcomes. They are also responsible for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors. The Lexington Public Schools, under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent, as well as building principals are responsible for planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law. The building principal or his/her designee is responsible for planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors. Each building principal (or designee) is responsible for implementing the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and for amending student handbooks and codes of conduct in their buildings. The district is responsible for developing parent/family engagement efforts and parent information materials and reviewing/updating these materials each year. The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible for developing new or revised policies and protocols under the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and for designating key staff to be in charge of reviewing and updating them on an annual basis. The School Committee is responsible for the approval of any new policy.

D. The Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Priority Statement

The Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber bullying, and each school in the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In

consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation. The building principa l (or designee) is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

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

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Lexington Public Schools ongoing professional development plans reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and provides ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan

Annual training for all school staff on the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include: current research on bullying and effective intervention; staff responsibilities under the law; an overview of the steps that the principal (or designee) will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation; and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school building. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

B. Ongoing professional development

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

- Developmentally/age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally/age appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities. This will include a focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Creating a positive school climate requires that the underlying emotional needs of

Among the services offered at various schools:

- One-on-one and small group counseling
- Case management services
- Crisis intervention
- Facilitating classroom meetings to resolve problems
- School counseling curriculum on issues of respect, sexual harassment and student success skills
- Peer Mediation
- Rachel's Challenge
- Lunch/friendship groups
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Transition planning
- Behavioral plan development
- Classroom observations
- Teacher consultation

The Lexington Public Schools consult with the Middlesex District Attorney's Office and Partnership for Youth, in addition to the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University. We have completed the Train the Trainer model under the leadership of Dr. Englander. We employ a consulting psychiatrist, with expertise in bullying behavior and treatment, to meet weekly with our staff.

C. Students with disabilities

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Lexington Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each school.

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches

Bullying prevention curricula is based on current research that, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and
- providing parents and guardians with information regarding the schools' bullying prevention curricula

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan through the Student Handbook, school assemblies and/or small group meetings.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

The following are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment and underscore the importance of bullying intervention and prevention activities:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- communicating with parents and guardians regarding the schools' goals and expectations for students and students' safety
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;

- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;

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

The Lexington Public Schools has established policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that all members of the school community, including students, parents, and staff know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by, or to, a staff member must be recorded in writing. All employees are required to immediately report to the principal (or designee) any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of, or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other non-employees may be made anonymously. The district will make reporting forms available to the community in each school office, counseling and nursing offices and on the district website.

At the beginning of each school year, the district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents/guardians, with notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal (or designee), will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the district website, and in information about the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan that is made available to parents/guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

Staff members will immediately report to the principal (or designee) when they witnesses or become aware of conduct thatmay be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal (or designee) does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with the school's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others

The district expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal (or designee). Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents/or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff memberto complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and

discuss an incident of bullying with a

designee) will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent

issue/s that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development or counseling.

The principal (or designee) will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal (or designee) cannot report specific information to the target's parents/guardians about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to enforce violations.

F. Responses to Bullying

The Lexington Public Schools have a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's social skills or to prevent further incidences of bullying and/or retaliation.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill Building

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

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents/guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills-building activities at home;
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Discipline will be consistent with the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the school's code of conduct as outlined in the student handbook and applicable state and federal law. The federal Individuals

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of our schools and district to prevent and respond to bullying. Communication with families is necessary for effective collaboration. Provisions for informing parents/or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the schools include:

- how parents/guardians can re-enforce the curricula at home and support the district plan;
- the dynamics of bullying; and
- online safety and cyber bullying.

Parents/guardians will also be notified each year about the student related sections of the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

The district will collaborate with School Councils and parent organizations such as the PTAs, and SEPAC to offer resources, information and programs to parents/guardians on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and social skills curricula used by the district along with online safety and cyber bullying. Information will be made available to parents/ guardians in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language/s most prevalent among parents/guardians. Each school will post the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Lexington Public Schools will not tolerate unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, in school buildings and grounds, on school buses or in school activities. The district will investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. The Lexington Public Schools supports this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement. Acts of bullying, which include cyber bullying, are prohibited:

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

Retaliation against a person who witnesses and reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M. G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O:

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

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or 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 physical harm or damage to personal property
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- infringes on the rights of the target at school, or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

Cyber bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyber bullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

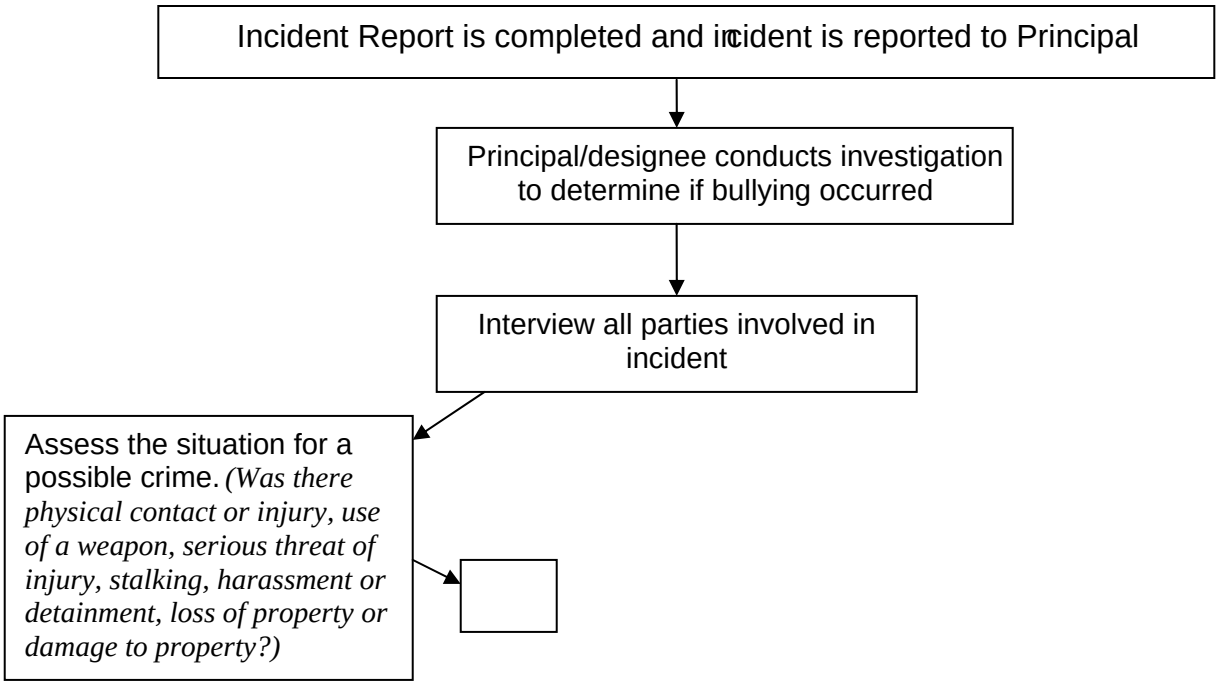
Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

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

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

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Lexington Public Schools, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 district policies. In addition, nothing in the Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this Plan covers the behavior.


Incident Report is completed and incident is reported to Principal
Principal/designee conducts investigation to determine if bullying occurred
Interview all parties involved in incident
Assess the situation for a possible crime. (Was there physical contact or injury, use of a weapon, serious threat of injury, stalking, harassment or detainment, loss of property or damage to property?)

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Lexington, Massachusetts

Appendix A

- Lexington Public Schools Incident Reporting Form
- Lexington Public Schools Investigation Reporting Form
- Lexington Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Policy