

# Braintree Public Schools

## Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Approved by Braintree School Committee  
December 13, 2010  
Revised November 18, 2013  
Revised June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Updated 8/24/2017



## **Braintree School Committee**

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**Frank Hackett, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

**James Lee**  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Dear Interested Party:

The enclosed Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in collaboration with teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, students, professional support personnel, volunteers, community representatives, and local law enforcement agencies as required by M.G.L. c71§37O. A public comment period was also made available. Components of this plan include leadership, training and professional development, access to resources and services, academic and non-academic activities, policies and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation, collaborative with families prohibition against bullying and retaliation, defamation and relationships to other agencies.

I would like to express sincere appreciation on behalf of the Braintree School Committee and Administration for the efforts of all involved in preparing this plan to insure the prevention of bullying along with the appropriate measures for responding to incidents of bullying for students and staff in the Braintree Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Frank Hackett, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Enclosure



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<sup>1</sup> This Plan is updated to reflect M.G.L. c. 71, 37O as amended by Sections 72 – 74 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013, which changed the definition of “perpetrator” to include “a member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional.” The amendment also made the plan applicable to school staff, including but not limited to, the individuals listed in the amended perpetrator definition.

<sup>1</sup> Newly amended G.L. c. 71, §37O(d)(3) reads in relevant part: *Each plan shall recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.*



## I. LEADERSHIP

*Leadership at all levels will play a critical role in developing and implementing Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans (“the Plan”) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership should be defined by the district or school, depending on existing roles and responsibilities and locally identified priorities for this initiative. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan.*

- A. **Public involvement in developing the Plan.** As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan must be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation must include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the school committee or equivalent authority. Schools and districts may choose to involve representatives from each of these constituencies in other aspects of the Plan development, including needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings. The Plan should identify the ways that each of the various constituencies will be involved.
- B. **Assessing needs and resources.** The Plan will be the school's or district's blueprint for enhancing the capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Committee met and established subgroups to complete various tasks such as assessing needs and identifying resources to inform the development of the plan. Focus groups of high school students were held to elicit student input.

On November 5, 2010, all subcommittees met to report on their activities and findings. From those findings, a draft plan was developed that was presented to the School Advisory Board on November 16, 2010 to get feedback from parents representing the PTO from each school in Braintree about school climate and school safety issues. The draft was then presented at the Braintree Alliance for Safe and Healthy Youth meeting on November 18, 2010. The Braintree Alliance for Safe and Healthy Youth is co-chaired by the Director of Physical Education and Health and the Nursing Coordinator; and is made up of the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, principals, a school committee member, nurses, school resource officers, a representative from the District Attorney's office, and a representative of the Braintree Board of Health. Following the presentation of the draft and feedback received at this Alliance meeting, a final draft will be compiled and posted on the Braintree Public Schools website for public comment. It will then be presented to the school committee on December 13, 2010.

On October 30, 2013, the bullying prevention and intervention committee met to review, revise and update the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to meet the recent changes to the Massachusetts anti-bullying law (M.G.L. chapter 71, section 37O). The revisions will be presented to the school committee on November 18, 2013. The updated plan will be posted on the Braintree Public Schools website after the approval by the School Committee.



On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 the bullying prevention and intervention committee met to review, revise and update the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to meet the recent changes to the Massachusetts anti-bullying law (M.G.L chapter 71, section 3700. The revisions will be presented to the school committee. The updated plan will be posted on the Braintree Public Schools website after the approval by the School Committee.

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

- C. **Planning and oversight.** Principals will receive reports of bullying and, using the forms to document the bullying report, will investigate to determine if it is a case of bullying, or merely a conflict between two people. Following the identified procedures, the principals will contact parents of both parties when it is determined that bullying has occurred.

Reports will be reviewed by the Bullying Prevention Committee which will meet on a quarterly basis. The Committee will review data to determine the effectiveness of curriculum and activities and professional development and training. The Committee will also serve as the clearinghouse of information, about professional development opportunities and resources for school staff, students and parents.

- D. **Developing priority statements.** Priority statements can be used to communicate within the Plan the school's or district's vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies. The priority statement of Braintree's position on bullying is explicit in the policy and says:

The Braintree Public School District is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities where all school community members (students, employees, and visitors) treat each other with respect in a safe learning environment free from any form of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and hate crimes. This policy is an integral part of the District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning, eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior and enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential and become successful citizens in our increasingly diverse society.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic, status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school or district will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The district prohibits bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, hate crimes, or any other victimization of students in our schools or school-related activities based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics, including but not limited to: race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age,



political belief, physical attributes, physical appearance, economic situation, or other personal characteristics.

It is a violation of this policy for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student to engage in or condone bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination or hate crimes or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when they become aware of an incident of harassment.

It is the responsibility of every employee to recognize acts of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and hate crimes and take every action necessary to ensure that the applicable policies and procedures of this school district are implemented.

Any employee or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination or a hate crime has the right to file a complaint and to receive prompt and appropriate handling of the complaint. Further, all reasonable efforts shall be made to maintain the confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties, but proper enforcement of this policy may require disclosure of any or all information received.

The Building Principal/Designee shall be responsible for assisting employees and students seeking guidance or support in addressing matters relating to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes for assisting employees and students seeking guidance or support in addressing matters relating to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes. This policy is not designed or intended to limit the school's authority to take disciplinary action or take remedial action when such harassment occurs out of school but carries over into school, or, is disruptive or substantially interferes with an employee's work, personal life, a student's school work, or participation in school related opportunities or activities.

When a reported incident involves the principal or the assistant principal the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible and if the Superintendent is involved, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for assisting employees and students seeking guidance or support in addressing matters relating to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes

## **II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- A. **Annual staff training of the Plan.** Annual training will be provided 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 paraeducators.

The training will include staff duties, an overview of the steps that the principal or the designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula that is offered at all grades throughout the school or district.

Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be 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.



Training will be based on the Train-the-Trainer model provided by the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center. PowerPoint presentations will be used for targeted groups within the district. All staff within a group will receive the same training.

- 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, 370, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
1. Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
  2. Developmentally (or age-) 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 an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
  4. Research finding on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
  5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
  6. Internet safety issues and nature of cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional topics for professional development may include, but not be limited to:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc. and bullying behaviors

Additional professional development will be provided in response to the needs determined by staff surveys.

- C. Written notice to staff.** The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.



### III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. **Identifying Resources.** Personnel immediately available to assist targets, *student* aggressors and parents are as follows:

- Principal at each school
- School Psychologists and Guidance Counselors in each school
- Safety Officers
- Other personnel from the Braintree Police Department

Using data from bullying reports, the Anti-bullying committee will examine the resources used to address the issue, e.g., referral to school psychologist, and the committee will determine whether sufficient resources exist to meet the needs. Principals on the committee will also confer with their colleagues at K-12 principals' meetings to elicit feedback on the use of resources and the capacity to meet the needs at each school.

In addition, the Anti-bullying committee will locate or purchase and make available concrete materials that will assist staff and parents in identifying and responding to any incidents either as aggressor or target. Materials may include but are not limited to the following:

- Publications
- Books
- Video tapes and/or DVDs
- Suggest helpful and viable Websites
- Use resources from MARC program at Bridgewater State University.
- Interpreter services

In newsletters and on school websites, inform parents of the system-wide strategies that are implemented to assist all students:

- Student surveys might be helpful to assess the success of our policy and procedures
- Suggestion boxes in schools might help children with reporting

Students at each level will learn the signs of bullying and how to report bullying situations at each level. We want to make such a process accessible to and easily understood by the students. Anonymity will be provided for parents and students who wish to report an incident. Students may leave a message in the nurse's office and parents are welcome to submit a letter to the principal.

The Committee will ensure that many or most of these materials be available in the Braintree Public Schools and in the Thayer Public Library.

B. **Students with disabilities.** As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies in order to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

C. **Referral to outside services.** Schools and districts should establish a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant



laws and policies. Current local referral protocols should be evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

- A. **Specific bullying prevention approaches.** Braintree's bullying prevention curriculum that is currently in use is a scientific, evidence-based curriculum produced by the Office for Children. Formal programs occurring at the schools include:

**Elementary school: *Second Step*, K through 3; *Steps to Respect*, grades 4 and 5**

In addition, units in areas such as art and music focus on themes that appear in *Second Step*.

**Middle school: *Second Step*, grades 6, 7, 8**

The Committee has proposed that in grades 6, 7, 8, *Second Step* curriculum for those levels will be piloted in the 2011-2012 school year.

At the high school level, students from the freshman class will learn about bullying and cyber-bullying through discussions and guided activities as part of the health education curriculum. Students in grades 10, 11, and 12 may also take Current Health Issues, an elective course that will explore the topics of bullying and cyber-bullying.

The following are included in the curricula:

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

- B. **General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.** In addition to the curriculum that is used, several non-academic activities are in place to prevent bullying.

Elementary – In addition to the identified *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* lessons taught in grades PreK-5, teachers refer to and reinforce concepts learned in *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* during the day. School psychologists hold “lunch bunches” to assist students in practicing appropriate social skills.

Middle School – Students participated in Rachel's Challenge in May, 2010 and the Committee recommends that the program be presented every three years.

As follow-up to Rachel's Challenge, which promotes empathy and compassion for others, clubs have been formed at each middle school to foster those ideals. Students perform



activities such as identifying specified greeters who will accompany new students in their first days at the middle school, “Sit with Others at Lunch” encourages students to meet and get to know other classmates beyond their immediate circle of friends, and various service projects promote caring and concern for others.

High School programs: Speaker at assembly for Grade 9—Michael Fowlin presents *You Don't Know Me Till You Know Me*.

Peer Leaders conduct an assembly for the freshman class.

To address the problem with bullying/harassment at BHS we do the following:

- Identify high risk students (victims and targets) before they enter grade 9
- Have Michael Fowlin speak to students at the start of the year on respect, tolerance, kindness and celebrating differences. He performs *You Don't Know Me Until You Know Me* for our freshman class and *I Am Not The Enemy* for our senior class
- Our Peer Mediators do a presentation for all incoming freshmen on their first day of school to review the Sexual Harassment Policy and discuss issues such as changing friendships, respect and kindness
- A separate group of Peer Leaders/Peer Educators do a Suicide Prevention presentation for freshmen mid-year that focuses on many of the precipitants of adolescent suicide, such as bullying, gender identity and relationship aggression (i.e. mean girls)
- Peer Mediation is available to all students as an effective means of conflict resolution but it is not an option when one student is clearly being bullied by another
- Our PRIDE acronym is a constant reminder that we choose to celebrate diversity
- We have a new “Stomp Out Bullying” educational bulletin board in the Special Services Office, located near all of our programs
- We have clubs such as GSA and Cultural Club that promote diversity

At all levels, the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) includes a discussion and consideration of ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities.

- A. **Specific bullying prevention approaches.** Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research. Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan at the beginning of the school year.
- B. **General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.** The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:
- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
  - creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
  - using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
  - using positive behavioral supports;



- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

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

**A. Reporting bullying or retaliation.** Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously.

The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

### **1. Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.



## 2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

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

### B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student, Student to Staff; Staff to Student and/or Staff to Staff

#### 1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student/staff who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student/staff who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student/staff who provides information during an investigation, or a student/staff who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

#### 2. Obligations to Notify Others

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

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



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

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

During the investigation, the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged student/staff aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

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

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

- D. **Determinations.** The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have



contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student 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 parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

**E. Responses to Bullying.** In addition to providing the evidence-based curriculum offered to address bullying, the following interventions will be provided:

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

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

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

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

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

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which will be followed in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.



If the principal or designee determines that a student/staff knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation that student/staff may be subject to disciplinary action.

### 3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

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

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

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

*The following are in place to ensure collaboration with families:*

- A. Parent education and resources.** The district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. Programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.
- B. Notification requirements.** Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The following statement is included in the Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, hate crimes and hazing policy, the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook:

The Braintree Public School District is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities where all school community members (students, employees, and visitors) treat each other with respect in a safe learning environment free from any form of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and hate crimes. This policy is an integral part of the District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning, eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior and enable students to achieve their personal and academic



potential and become successful citizens in our increasingly diverse society.

The district prohibits bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, hate crimes, or any other victimization of students in our schools or school-related activities based on any of the following *actual or perceived traits or characteristics*, including but not limited to: race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, political belief, physical attributes, physical appearance, economic situation, or other personal characteristics.

It is a violation of this policy for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student to engage in or condone bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination or hate crimes or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when they become aware of an incident of harassment.

The policy also clearly states the prohibition of retaliation and false accusation:

Retaliation or false accusations against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited. If it occurs, it could be considered grounds for dismissal of staff personnel and/or removal from the educational setting for a student. A referral to law enforcement may be made.

## **VIII. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM**

Any parent/guardian of the target wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

## **IX. DEFINITIONS**

**Aggressor** is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards a student/staff

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

1. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
2. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
3. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
4. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
5. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the 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.

**School Staff** includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, substitute employees or paraeducators.

**Target** is an individual whom bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **X. 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 school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the 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, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.





Action Taken:

Referred to Nurse

Referred to Building Administrator

Steps taken to address situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parental Contact:  Yes     No                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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



**APPENDIX B**

<b>Investigative/Action Plan Form</b>
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Date of Investigation	
Administrative Investigator	
Additional Follow-up Dates	
List of Persons Interviewed	
Interview Narrative	
Action Plan	
Contact made: Target's Parent(s) Alleged Student's Aggressor's Parent(s)	Verbal_____ Written_____ (attach copy) Date_____ Verbal_____ Written_____ (attach copy) Date_____ Summary:
Dates of follow-up conferences (if needed)	
Results of follow-up conference	
Was the incident reported to the Office of the Superintendent? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Details:
Was the incident reported to the SRO/Police Department? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Details:
Signature of Investigator:  _____  Date: _____	



## APPENDIX C

### Bullying Reporting Process Braintree Public Schools

This process applies to only situations where bullying is alleged. Disciplinary incidents will be reported using the school disciplinary action process.

#### Step One: Complete Incident Report Form

If an adult witnesses or reports an incident:

- Staff member completes Faculty/Staff Bullying/Harassment Report Form and gives it to designated administrative staff member

If a student reports incident to staff member:

- Acknowledge student's feelings
- Determine if there are safety issues that must be addressed immediately
- Staff member completes Faculty/Staff Bullying/Harassment Report Form and gives it to designated administrative staff member

#### Step Two: Conduct Investigation (Headmaster, Principal or designee)

##### Interview the target of bullying:

- Target will complete a narrative of the alleged event
- Interview the target before the alleged student/staff aggressor(s)
- Target and alleged student/staff aggressor(s) should be separated and never interviewed together
- Document the target's account
- Do not ask to see the target in the alleged student/staff aggressor's presence
- Mediation **should not** be used with bullying situations
- Encourage target to report any additional incidents or retaliation with the alleged student/staff aggressor (s)

##### Interview witnesses/bystanders:

- Witness(s)/bystander(s) will complete a narrative of the witnessed event
- Interview witness(s)/bystander(s)
- Document the witness/bystander account
- Encourage witness/bystander to report any additional incidents or retaliation

##### Interview the alleged student/staff aggressor(s) of bullying:

- Identify the problem
- Accused student/staff aggressor(s) will complete a narrative of the alleged event
- Interview the alleged student/staff aggressor(s)
- Document the alleged student/staff aggressor's account
- Focus on the alleged student/staff aggressor's behavior, protecting the targets confidentiality
- Make the alleged student/staff aggressor aware of the Massachusetts State Law ... that prohibits bullying and the consequences of retaliation against the target, reporter, and witness(s) or bystander(s)
- Contact the parent(s) of the target, alleged student/staff aggressor(s) and witness(s) or bystander(s):
- Document day and time of phone contact



**Step Three: Assign Consequences if appropriate**

- Assign appropriate consequences as outlined in the Parent /Student Handbook
- If the alleged student/staff aggressor denies the incident and there is insufficient evidence, inform the alleged student/staff aggressor(s) that the situation will continue to be monitored for the safety of all involved

**Step Four: Target Safety**

- Assure the target their safety is a priority
- Remind the target to report any additional incidents or retaliation from the alleged student/staff aggressor
- Identify school counseling services available to the target
- Conduct daily/weekly check-ins with the target
- Document check-ins

**Step Five: Document Incident and Consequences**

- Document outcome of investigation on the Investigative/Action Plan Form
- Notify the target of the action taken or not taken
- Provide updates to appropriate staff member(s)
- Notify teachers who have contact with the target and student/staff aggressor(s)

Adopted by the Braintree School Committee 8/18/2014

Revised by the Braintree School Committee 8/24/2017

