

KING PHILIP REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

The King Philip Regional School District is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment, free from bullying and cyberbullying, where students can achieve the highest academic standards. This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) provides a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying in the King Philip Regional School District, and it has been developed with the middle school and high school school councils in April 2021 in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians.

The King Philip Regional School District recognizes 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, pregnancy, 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. The King Philip Regional School District will identify and take steps to create a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and will provide all students with skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment and teasing.

Each Principal shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan with their school. The Plan shall be reviewed and updated at least annually.

DEFINITIONS

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of an unwelcome 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 the target’s property; student or employee,
- (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of 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.

For the purposes of this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, bullying shall include cyberbullying.

“Cyberbullying” means 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, photoelectronic or photo optical system, including but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communication. Cyberbullying shall also include: (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity

of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creator or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or persons.

“Hostile environment” 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 the student’s education.

“Aggressor” is a student or 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, who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

“Target” is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

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

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying, which includes cyberbullying, is prohibited:

- (1) On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds; at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs, whether on or off school grounds; at school bus stops; on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the King Philip Regional School District; and
- (2) At a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the King Philip Regional School District if the act creates 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 reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Reporting Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Retaliation

Students who believe that they are a target of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, observe an act of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents/guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation as soon as possible.

Reporting may be oral or written. Reports made to a staff member will be recorded in writing. The KPRSD "Bullying Prevention & Intervention Anonymous Incident Reporting Form," has been developed for student, parent or staff to use to report incidents of suspected bullying. This form is available on the KPRSD website. A member of 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, shall immediately report any instance of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee.

Investigation Procedures

The school Principal or a designee shall promptly investigate a report that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, using a Bullying/Cyberbullying Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged aggressor, staff members, students and/or witnesses. The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a report that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, shall promptly contact the parents/guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged aggressor of bullying.

Both prior to and after the investigation, support staff and/or the Principal or their designee shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and steps to restore a sense of safety for that student, which may include the creation and implementation of a safety plan. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed with the parents of the alleged target, and as necessary with the parents of the alleged aggressor. In determining the steps necessary to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents, the principal or designee shall consider 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 one or more of these characteristics.

To the extent practicable given the district's obligation to investigate the matter and as required by law, confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying. The principal or their designee will consider implementation of appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student or staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student or staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic 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.

If it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal shall consult with the school's resource officer and the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the local law enforcement agency shall be notified. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency.

Upon receipt of a report or complaint that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, the principal or designee will conduct an investigation and make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances, and whenever practicable, will do so within twenty (20) school working days of the principal's receipt of the complaint of bullying or retaliation. The principal or their designee may extend the investigation period beyond twenty (20) school days because of extenuating circumstances, including but not limited to availability and cooperation of witnesses, complexity of the investigation, school vacation periods, and the involvement of law enforcement and other outside agency investigations. If the principal or their designee extends the investigation, they will notify the complainant and/or parents of the alleged target of the extension. The investigation shall make factual findings based on a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation occurred, the parents or guardians shall be informed of this determination, and of the school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. Notice to the parents of students will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00. The notice to the parents or guardians of the target shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents/guardians of the target should be provided the following contact information: Problem Resolution System Office, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370; Email: compliance@doe.mass.edu.

If the school Principal or a designee determines that bullying/retaliation has occurred, they shall take appropriate disciplinary action provided, however, that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies, and may include, as appropriate, short-term suspension from school, long-term suspension from school, or expulsion.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent. Data regarding incidents of bullying will be reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education annually in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71 §.37O(k).

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

Retaliation

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying, shall be prohibited.

Individual Assistance

The King Philip School District shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and aggressors, and appropriate family members of said student affected by bullying, as necessary.

Training and Assistance

Annual training shall be provided for all school staff members in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians. Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the school district website.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seek assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). Information about PRS is available at: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/> and PRS may be contacted at: Problem Resolution System Office, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370; Email: compliance@doe.mass.edu.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The King Philip Regional School District is committed to promoting a strong home-school partnership regarding bullying prevention. Communication between home and school is made via school notices, school and district websites, and parent conferences/presentations on a regular basis.

Parent education and resources: The school or 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.

The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

The KPRSD has established Healthy KP and collaborates with the Wellness Advisory Council, elementary districts, and Boosters.

Notification requirements: Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula that is being used. Information about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula that is provided to families will include: (1) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the district and the Plan; (2) the dynamics of bullying; and (3) online safety and cyberbullying. 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.

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The King Philip Regional School District will provide age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade, based on the school-wide curricula. Students will also be taught about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

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

- 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 cyberbullying, 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.

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.

Specific programing used within the district includes:

The middle school course that addressed bullying intervention and prevention has been within Foundations and Health. Lessons were developed from the Massachusetts Aggression and Reduction Center's resources. High school health class includes a segment of the curriculum within Break Free from Depression that addresses bullying. During this unit the class focus is on how the mistreatment of others, wrongful labeling, harassing physical/verbal, cyberbullying, etc.. is wrong and is oftentimes a cause/contributing factor to depression in teens.

School Climate Survey: A student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in schools shall be administered within the district every four years, and the survey results will be used to assess the effectiveness of the district's bullying prevention curricula and instruction.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students, including targets, aggressors, and witnesses of bullying or cyberbullying are addressed. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the schools' capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors and witnesses. The schools provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for students who are aggressors, targets, witnesses, and family members of those students.

Identifying Resources: School counselors, together with building administrators, will work to identify the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management and other services for these students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families. Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. The King Philip Regional School District will work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced-based curricula and to provide additional preventative services to students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff.

Counseling and Other Services: School counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include on-going emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community based counseling referrals when appropriate. School counselors meet with parents and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, emotional and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible. School counselors work with administrators to provide linguistically appropriate resources to identified families. School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSAs) within the local vicinity, providing services to Medicaid eligible students. School counselors,

school psychologists and intensive special needs educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and social thinking groups for students with social skill weaknesses. In addition, school counselors, school psychologists and special education professionals work together to educate and support parents, conduct parent workshops and apprise parents of outside resources to enhance parenting skills and provide for the needs of children.

Students with Disabilities: As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, when the IEP Team determines that a student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or be 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 to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Whenever an evaluation indicates that a child has a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team shall consider and shall specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

Referral to Outside Services: The King Philip Regional School District has established protocols for referring students and families to outside services including; William James College INTERFACE Referral Service who matches students with licensed mental health providers from an extensive database, typically within two weeks. KPRSD has partnered with Arbour Counseling to expand student access to counseling services beyond school counseling staff in a school environment. This partnership allows for an outside mental health provider to work with their client in the school. School counselors and other specialists will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. All referrals will comply with relevant laws and policies.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The King Philip Regional School District provides annual staff training and ongoing professional development to all staff regarding bullying prevention and intervention.

Annual staff training on the Plan: Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, 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 or district. 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.

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 schoolwide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally (or 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 cyberbullying;
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying;
- The recognition 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, pregnancy, 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; and
- How to recognize various forms of bullying, including physical, verbal and postural.

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 areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:

- 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

Examples of professional development trainings used within the District include:

Professional development training has included training specific to bullying prevention and intervention as well as in mental health areas. Bullying Prevention and Intervention training is provided annually so that staff are aware of the law, definitions of bullying/cyberbullying, vulnerable populations, and responsibilities for reporting, investigation, and follow up. The district continues to foster awareness and education in social and emotional areas that can be linked indirectly to the prevention and intervention plan. Topics include: QBS Safety Care Behavioral Training, Break Free from Depression; Minding Your Mind (Kyles Cares Foundation), Mindfulness, and Trauma- Informed Teaching.

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.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the King Philip Regional School 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, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. 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, 37H½, 37H3/4, other applicable laws, district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.