

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

Franklin Public Schools



1. OVERVIEW

The Franklin Public Schools (FPS) is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, supportive learning community for all students aligned with the state legislation requiring the implementation of a comprehensive bullying prevention plan in every district. This formal prevention and intervention plan outlines definitions, procedures, roles, and responsibilities and aims to help families understand where they can get support and seek resolution. While this document focuses on reportable concerns that may rise to the level of bullying, we want families, students, and staff to know that even when there are questions about what does and what does not constitute bullying, families should reach out to counseling and administrative staff to get social, emotional, and behavioral support for any concerns they may have about their student.

To make reporting more accessible and more streamlined for staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members to access, the District updated the electronic Incident Reporting Form.

To complete the form, click on the link below:

[FPS Electronic Incident Reporting Form](#)

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1. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This Plan provides detailed procedures for reporting incidents of bullying by students and staff, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee once a report is made.

In March 2011, in accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 71, § 37O, the Franklin Anti-Bullying Task Force, represented by teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, and parents/guardians, established the first iteration of the Bullying Prevention Intervention Plan. While the legislation required the development of this Plan, the most important purpose of the Plan is the collective desire to keep all our students free from the negative social and emotional impacts and physical harm resulting from bullying by adopting strategies to prevent its occurrence and to intervene in effective ways when it does occur.

FPS recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying and 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, and/or sensory disability; or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one (1) or more of these characteristics.

The FPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is reviewed every two years. The Policy Subcommittee of the School Committee reviews [Policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention](#) routinely as part of their systematic policy review.

The principal or designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan at their schools except when a reported incident involves the principal or assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report and other steps necessary to implement the plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim. If the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report and other steps necessary to implement the plan including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

1.1 Prohibition Of Bullying and Retaliation

Consistent with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and School Committee Policy [JICFB](#), acts of bullying, including cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds
- at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether on or off school grounds
- at a school bus stop, on a school bus, or other vehicle owned, leased, or operated by a school district or school
- through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or operated by a school district or school
- 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 or school

Both bullying and cyber-bullying are also prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by FPS if the act or acts in question:

- Create(s) a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringe(s) on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupt(s) the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation is prohibited against anyone who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses bullying, or has reliable information about a bullying incident.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 b., nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school-related activities, functions, or programs. Information is included in the student code of conduct in the student handbook.

1.2 Definitions

Note: “Bullying” and “cyber-bullying” appear at the end of this section, rather than in alphabetical order, to first define some words that appear in those definitions.

Aggressor/ Perpetrator	Aggressor/Perpetrator is a student or by 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 who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.
Bystander	A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part in bullying behavior.
CMR	Code of Massachusetts Regulations
Differentiating Characteristics	As identified in <i>An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools</i> , Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014; there may be categories of differentiating characteristics that may make certain students more vulnerable to bullying, 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.
Harassment	Behavior that creates a hostile environment when the conduct is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school, when such harassment is based on race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, genetic information, disability, pregnancy, or a related condition, veteran status, age, or homelessness.
Hostile Environment	As defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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.

M.G.L.	Massachusetts General Law
Retaliation	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, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff or paraprofessionals.
Target	A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.
Upstander	A person who takes positive action when they witness bullying behavior to assist in the situation.
Bullying	<p>As defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students or by 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 of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; • places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to their 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 the orderly operation of a school.
Cyberbullying	<p>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, § 370 for the legal definition of cyber-bullying.</p> <p>Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, Chromebooks and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, facsimile communications, social media, and Internet communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying 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 more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.</p>

Note: Many definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

What it means to be an Upstander

There is a list of things an upstander can do:

- ☐ Question the bullying behavior. Simple things like changing the subject or questioning the behavior can shift the focus.
- ☐ Interrupt the conversation. Use humor to say something funny and redirect the conversation.
- ☐ There is strength in positive numbers too. Upstanders can intervene as a group to show there are several people who don't agree with the bullying.
- ☐ Walk with the person who is the target of bullying to help diffuse potential bullying interactions.
- ☐ Reach out privately to check in with the person who was bullied to let them know you do not agree with it and that you care. It makes a difference.

From: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/bystanders-to-bullying>

Bullying vs. Peer Conflict

Bullying is sometimes confused with other behaviors that might be undesirable but do not fit the definition of bullying. Bullying is **not** a conflict, quarrel, or a problem to be resolved between two students who are perceived as having equal power, such as between two classmates who ordinarily get along and are in the midst of a disagreement.

1.3 District Bullying Prevention Philosophy

The school or district expects that all community members will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. We are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free from bullying and cyberbullying.

2. REPORTING BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Reporting protocols provide a safe and easy means of reporting by staff members, targets, bystanders, or parents/guardians and allow for anonymous reporting (which legislation requires must be verified before action can be taken). Principals or designees will ensure that all students, staff, and parents/guardians understand how to report bullying, and they also provide and publicize a safe and inconspicuous means of reporting anonymously.

Each principal or designee ensures that students understand that bystanders or anyone who becomes aware of bullying have an obligation to report it, are protected under the law from retaliation, and will have their confidentiality maintained to the extent possible.

2.1 Reporting Protocols

Students, Parents/ Guardians, and Others

- ☐ FPS 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 or to the 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.
- ☐ A bystander or someone who becomes aware of bullying may first provide a verbal report of bullying to the principal or designee or, in the case of students, to any adult in the school. In any case of verbal reporting, the reporter must provide a written report within a day. If a student notifies an adult in the school, that adult will immediately notify the principal or designee verbally and in writing.
- ☐ Students, parents/guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report.

Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation or to the superintendent or designee when the principal

- ☐ or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor when they witnessed or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation.
- ☐ or to the School Committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when they witnessed or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation.
- ☐ The requirement to report as provided 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

3. RESPONDING TO REPORTS

3.1 Safety and Protection from Retaliation and Further Bullying

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take immediate 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

- ☐ Providing supportive measures and creating a support plan
- ☐ Identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target
- ☐ Altering the alleged aggressor’s schedule and access to the target.
- ☐ Pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting alleged targets, reporters, witnesses, etc. from acts of bullying or retaliation. They will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of, and after the investigation, as necessary.

3.2 Timeline

The principal or designee will initiate an investigation within one to two school days unless there are mitigating circumstances (e.g., reports provided after school hours/weekend, early dismissal, staff/student absence, etc.).

The investigation should be completed within fourteen (14) school days from the date of the report, however, in certain cases, additional time may be necessary to conduct a full and thorough investigation. The principal or designee shall contact the parents/guardians as to the status of the investigation.

3.3 Confidentiality

To the extent practicable, and given their obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the district must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Franklin School Committee policy *Student Records* (JRA), Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (603 CMR 23.00), and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 99) as set forth in state regulations (603 CMR 49.07). 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 directives that the target must be aware of in order to report violations. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

3.4 Investigation

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations.

The principal or designee will:

- Promptly and thoroughly 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.
- Utilize investigation flowcharts and other resources to assist the process
- Preserve evidence (e.g. text messages, social media posts, etc.) pertinent to the allegations
- Interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary
- Remind the alleged student 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.
- Consult Central Office Administration and/or legal counsel about the investigation as needed.

Interviews may be conducted by other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor if this makes the victim more comfortable and therefore more likely to disclose details of the bullying behavior directed at them.

3.5 Interviewing the Victim

When feasible interviews shall be conducted by two FPS staff members including administrator(s) and/or staff member(s). At the discretion of the principal, a parent/guardian may be invited to attend the student interview although not required.

Interviewers of alleged victims, alleged aggressors/perpetrators, and witnesses should utilize open-ended questions and avoid leading questions. Open-ended questions encourage the interviewee to share what they know and feel, and cannot be answered with yes/no. Examples:

- Tell me what happened yesterday.
- What did you do when that happened?
- How did the incident you told me about make you feel?

Closed questions, which ordinarily seek answers of one or a few words, can be asked to clarify or confirm details about which the interviewer is uncertain.

- You told me that this happened yesterday. Was that in the morning or afternoon?
- How many times did that happen?

A leading question prompts the interviewee to respond in a particular way or implies information that may or may not be true, and should be avoided. Examples:

- Did that make you feel bad?
- Tell me how you have been bullied.
- Do you get along with other students?

3.6 Notifications of Reported Bullying

Parents /Guardians

When alleged bullying is reported, the principal or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of the parties involved during the investigation. This notice may be provided verbally.

Another School or District

If the investigation determines that one or more alleged aggressors/perpetrators or alleged targets attend another Franklin school, or another district, the principal or designee will notify the principal of the other school(s) so that both may take appropriate action.

Law Enforcement

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and the FPS Memorandum of Understanding with the Franklin Police Department. 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 they have a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

3.7 Due Process

If a principal or designee decides after an investigation to apply suspension as a consequence of bullying, students and parents/guardians may consult the Student Handbook for due process rights, including written notice, and the right to appeal the long-term suspension by the principal to the superintendent. No disciplinary action may be taken before a thorough investigation has occurred.

3.8 Record-Keeping

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported and a file shall be maintained by the principal or designee. A completed investigation report shall be forwarded to the Superintendent's office at the conclusion of an investigation. An incident findings letter will be furnished to the parent/guardians of targets and aggressors. Incidents shall be logged in the student management system so that required reports can be furnished to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as appropriate. All reports must be stored in a safe and confidential manner.

4. 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 from participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.

The principal or designee will:

1. determine what remedial action is required if any
2. determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary.

4.1 Notifying Parents/Guardians of a Bullying Determination

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the student aggressor in writing about

- the result of the investigation
- if bullying or retaliation is found
- procedures to respond to the bullying or retaliation
- what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Written and verbal notification to a parent about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Franklin School Committee policy *Student Records* (JRA), Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (603 CMR 23.00), and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 99) as set forth in state regulations (603 CMR 49.07), which follows:

1. A principal or designee may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor/perpetrator to a parent/guardian unless the information is about the parent/guardian's own child.
2. A principal or designee may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or their parent. The principal or designee shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors/perpetrators to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
3. A principal or designee may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor/perpetrator to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals as provided in 603 CMR 23.07(4)(e) and 34 CFR 99.31(a)(10) and 99.36. This provision is limited to instances in which the

principal or designee has determined there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individuals. It is limited to the period of emergency and does not allow for blanket disclosure of student record information. The principal or designee must document the disclosures and the reasons that the principal or designee determined that a health or safety emergency exists.

4.2 Consultation with School Staff

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the student(s) teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents/guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) which may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

4.3 Civil Rights Considerations

The principal must determine through the investigation if the bullying behavior constitutes a violation of civil rights law. If the bullying is directed at a student because of race, religion, ethnic/national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or gender and creates a hostile environment for the target, the school must respond according to the district non-discrimination and harassment policy and federal civil rights statutes.

Bullying behavior may also constitute a violation of other laws, including those in the [chart](#) below.

4.4 Reporting to Law Enforcement When Appropriate

MGL requires that law enforcement be notified if “the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor/perpetrator.”

The Franklin Police Department should *not* be notified in situations where the bullying has not risen to the level of a criminal offense such as those in the chart below. The decision to contact the police may be made in consultation with the School Resource Officer (SRO) or other individuals such as the school district’s attorney. Notification will occur through the School Resource Officer. The principal or designee must document the reasons for their decision to notify the police.

4.5 Franklin Police Memorandum of Understanding

The Franklin Public Schools and Franklin Police Department maintain an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that “reflects the recent changes in the laws that pertain to harassment, bullying, and cyber-bullying.”

The MOU purpose is an agreement to “support and foster the safe and healthy development of all students in the Franklin Public School through the strategic and appropriate use of law enforcement resources and with the mutual understanding that school participation and completion are indispensable to achieving positive outcomes for youth and public safety.”

In making the decision whether or not to report to behaviors that may indicate that a legal offense has been committed, the principal or designee can consult the chart below

Behavior	Offenses
Threats and Violence	

Threat to commit a crime or hurt someone	Threats (275, § 2) Assault (265, § 13A) Assault Dangerous Weapon (ADW) (265, § 15B)
Threat designed to get money or to make someone do something	Extortion (265, § 13A) <i>(Threat to harm someone physically or damage their property in order to get something of value or to compel them to commit an act against their will)</i>
Hit someone	Assault and Battery (A&B) (265, § 13A) Aggravated A&B Child under 14 (265, § 13J) A&DB with Dangerous Weapon (ABDW) (265, § 15A)
Threaten, hit, or damage property based on prejudice (i.e., civil rights violation)	Assault, A&B or Property Damage with Intent to Intimidate (265, § 39) <i>(Purpose to intimidate must be based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability; felony if substantial injury occurs.)</i>
Sexual Misconduct	
In-person, written, and/or technological displays or improper touching	Dissemination of Obscene Matter (272, § 28) Child Pornography (272, § 29C) Indecent Assault and Battery (265, § 13B)
Property Damage & Theft	
Damage or deface another person's property	Malicious or Wanton Damage or Defacement (266, § 126) <i>(Always a felony regardless of the value or the amount of damage)</i>
Take another person's property	Larceny (266, § 30) Unarmed Robbery (265, § 19) <i>(any theft by force or fear, regardless of the value of the property stolen)</i> Armed Robbery (265, § 17)
Repeatedly speaking or acting in a way that causes emotional distress, fear, or intimidation	Criminal Harassment (265, § 43 A) Stalking (265, § 43) Annoying Phone Calls (269, § 14A) <i>(need a minimum of three calls designed to harass or involve obscene language)</i> Identity Fraud (266, § 37E)
Harassment	
Endanger a person during an initiation into any student organization	Hazing (269, § 17) Failure to Report Hazing (269, § 18)
Causing emotional injury to someone who reported bullying to the police	Witness Intimidation & Obstruction of Justice (268, § 13B) <i>(Even if intimidation involves a potential witness to a crime, this felony applies)</i>

In making this determination, the principal or designee 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.

5. RESPONSES TO BULLYING

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the building administration will utilize a wide range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior

5.1 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 and state and federal law.
- No disciplinary action may be taken before a thorough investigation has occurred.
- Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which will be rendered in compliance with state laws regarding student discipline.
- If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.
- No disciplinary action may be taken on the basis of an anonymous report.
- If a school staff member is responsible as an aggressor in a bullying finding, discipline shall be consistent with Massachusetts General Law, school committee policies, and Collective Bargaining Agreements.

5.2 Providing Education for Students

Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- 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 nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents/guardians to engage their support and to reinforce bullying prevention and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral support plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills

Aggressor

1. Direct teaching about appropriate pro-social behavior
2. School counseling to help them stop their bullying behavior and prevent additional students from becoming victims.

The ability to empathize is a key variable in the development of positive social behavior. School counselors or outside counselors to whom the parent/guardians are referred (at their request) must help aggressors/perpetrators understand how others experience bullying behavior, though empathy development takes a great deal of time.

The District identifies strategies for building students' skills, and other individualized interventions that the school or district may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation.

Target	In all cases of verified bullying, the district will offer the support of a school counselor to assist students in developing coping strategies to address the emotional impact of a bullying incident.
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 their disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.
Reporter	When it is appropriate to do so, the principal or designee shall follow up with reporters and thank them for bringing the information forward.
Emotional Support	Emotional support will not include mediation or any attempt to bring the target and aggressor/perpetrator together to discuss the matter. Since bullying occurs in situations where the perception of power is unequal, these approaches are not advised and may do further harm to the target. <i>Both the target and the aggressor/perpetrator may require social and emotional support following verified bullying but their needs differ.</i>

5.3 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. If it has been determined that bullying has taken place on the school grounds, the principal or designee will take measures 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.

5.4 Annual Notification Requirements

Reminders about Reporting Procedures	At the beginning of each school year, the school or district provides the school community, including but not limited to administrators, educators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents/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, will be incorporated in student handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan made available to parents/guardians.
Reminders	Each year the school or district will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about bullying

about Bullying Prevention Curricula prevention curricula used by the district or school. This notification will be provided at the start of each year. All notices and information made available to parents/guardians will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents/guardians. This Plan will be posted on the [FPS website](#).

6. BULLYING PREVENTION - ACADEMIC and NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES (Tier I)

6.1 School-wide Approaches

Each school will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole-school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development emphasizing the following approaches:

- 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 differences
- 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;

Other resources, including social-emotional learning guidelines, are currently available on the District's website

6.2 General Teaching Approaches

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students
- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- 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 nonacademic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength
- Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

6.3 Resources

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The district has identified strategies to enhance the school's or district's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying.

District

- ☐ Health education program provides instruction in social competency skills and includes bullying education as an integral component of the curriculum. The K-12 Health and Physical Education Department regularly review and update its curriculum documents to reflect the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements and current best practices in the field.
- ☐ Any student who is at risk of being bullied, or for bullying will be referred to their appropriate counselor. The counselor will assess the issue(s) and if appropriate will provide the student with ongoing emotional support and coping strategies. The counselor, in conjunction with the building administration, may refer the student and/or family to outside agencies for more intensive services. When necessary, the counselor will connect the student with a principal or assistant principal who will assume responsibility for dealing with any administrative needs associated with the issue.
- ☐ Emergency Response Plan updated annually
- ☐ School Resource Officers (SROs) and an emotional support dog (specially trained Franklin Police Officers) annually review school safety procedures and conduct drills with school staff and students. Our SROs work closely with school administration throughout the school year to address specific issues that arise involving individual students or groups of students. They are also available to participate in school-wide presentations or initiatives which focus on school safety, making healthy choices, and other relevant topics.

Elementary Level

- ☐ Students participate in Zones of Regulation and Responsive Classroom, programs that assist students in acquiring the skills needed to identify and self-regulate their emotions.
- ☐ Utilize a bullying prevention curriculum derived from a combination of K-8 research-based and locally developed wellness curricula, primarily based on the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (K-5)

Elementary/Middle-Level

- ☐ Staff trained in the use of Responsive Classroom, an evidence-based approach to education that focuses on the strong relationship between academic success and social-emotional learning (SEL).

Middle Level

- ☐ Participate in multiple programs such as Best Buddies, a national program that pairs typical peers with students with special needs
- ☐ Advisor-Advisee program, staff work with small groups of advisees utilizing Second Step, a research-based advisory curriculum.
- ☐ A World of Difference™ Program sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League which focuses on promoting a culture of tolerance.

High School Level

- ☐ Multiple clubs and activities that contribute to a positive environment listed on our website: [List of Clubs - Franklin High School](#)
- ☐ Includes the topics of bullying, dating violence, tolerance education, stress management, and mental health.
- ☐ A World of Difference™ Program sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League which focuses on promoting a culture of tolerance.
- ☐ Advisor-Advisee program, staff work with small groups of advisees utilizing a research-based

- advisory curriculum.
- ☐ Class meetings

6.4 Individuals and Groups Roles and Responsibilities

The district believes that everyone associated with the school has particular responsibilities to carry out in order to prevent bullying and intervene if it should occur. Accordingly, the following structures have been put into place:

School/Level Based Bullying Prevention	Level-based Leadership Teams will focus on the development of Tier I universal themes focused on respect so that it permeates each school's climate.
Special Education Teams	M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, addresses particular requirements of children with disabilities. This section of the legislation includes language that requires teams to develop an Individual Education Plan to consider the needs of children with disabilities that may make them likely to bully or become targets. The legislation reads: <i>"Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, and teasing."</i>
SEPAC	The Franklin Special Education Parent Advisory Committee assists the district in developing district-wide disability awareness as one means of prevention, by helping students with and without disabilities to understand, accept and respect students with disabilities.
Franklin School Wellness Advisory Committee	This committee includes the nurse leader, wellness coordinator, and assistant superintendent, as well as wellness professionals and parents/guardians from the community. The committee, among other roles and responsibilities, addresses health and wellness issues that arise in our schools and supports school administrators as appropriate.
All Staff	All staff members are responsible for demonstrating and encouraging respectful behavior, learning the signs of bullying and cyber-bullying, intervening to stop any observed bullying behavior, and reporting any bullying behavior that is discovered (either observed directly or behavior that has been reported).
Parents/Guardians	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>All parents/guardians</u> are responsible for reading the information that the district provides on bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and reporting any of this activity that they may witness or learn about. 2. <u>Parents/guardians of targets</u> are also responsible for reporting any bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliatory behavior directed at their children so that the school can address this behavior.

3. **Parents/guardians of aggressors/perpetrators** are responsible for partnering with the school to help their child understand the consequences of their bullying and to change their behavior.

**Student
Leadership
Councils, etc.**

The student leaders and team captains of all district clubs, activities, groups, and athletic teams participate in a Leadership Council, which aims to develop student leadership. This group will receive specific training on spotting bullying behavior, helping team members to avoid being passive bystanders and reporting bullying behavior.

Students

All students are expected to demonstrate respectful behavior and report bullying rather than remain passive bystanders. Students are responsible for reporting bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliatory behavior to a staff member in the school.

7. PARTNERSHIPS TO PREVENT BULLYING

7.1 Schools and Parents/Guardians Partners

Parents/guardians and the schools are mutually dependent upon one another to prevent bullying and address it effectively if it does occur. The district has the primary role of providing information to parents/guardians so that they understand the district's bullying prevention efforts, and informing parents/guardians if it occurs. This may include:

1. The curriculum at their child's grade level
2. How to reinforce the curriculum at home
3. Online safety and cyberbullying prevention

7.2 Bullying Plan and Policy Dissemination

Each school provides information about the Plan to parents/guardians and students in the Student Handbook's Code of Conduct, which includes but is not limited to the following:

1. That all students are afforded the same legal protections regardless of their status under the law and are protected against retaliation,
2. How to report bullying and cyberbullying,
3. Disciplinary consequences of bullying behavior,
4. The right to due process, and
5. That a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation is also subject to disciplinary action.

To ensure that parents/guardians have had advance notice of the provisions for bullying in each school's handbook, parents/guardians must provide their electronic signature acknowledging they have read the handbook at the start of the school year. These signatures are kept on file for the year. Each school's handbook includes developmentally appropriate consequences/disciplinary action for bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. [Student Handbooks are easily accessible on the District website](#) This Plan is available on the [Franklin Public School website](#).

8. STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Annual Staff Training

Principals or designees will provide annual training to all school staff on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This training will include staff responsibilities 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 that is being offered at all grades throughout the school. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be provided with school-based training during the school year in which they are hired. Professional development may also be provided to address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for all students.

9. ONGOING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, will periodically:

- Assess the adequacy of current programs;
- Review current policies and procedures;
- Review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents;
- Assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services.

9.1 Periodic Assessment

Periodic needs assessments will be conducted and include:

- Surveying students, staff, and parents/guardians on school climate and school safety issues; and
- Collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and "hot spots" in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses).

This information will be used to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern; and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

The assessment process will assist the schools and district in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the schools and district will:

- Revise or develop policies and procedures
- Establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement
- Set priorities
- Modify this plan, at least every other year update on the district website

Areas of responsibility have been identified for school and district leaders to ensure the successful implementation and ongoing improvements to the plan. The delineation of responsibilities is as follows:

**Principals will
be responsible
for:**

- ☐ Receiving reports on bullying;
- ☐ Implementing the curricula that the school will use;
- ☐ Providing annual training to the faculty and staff;
- ☐ Collecting, submitting, and analyzing school data on bullying;
- ☐ Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors;

**Assistant
Superintendent
will be
responsible for:**

- ☐ Amending student handbooks and codes of conduct and character;
 - ☐ Reviewing the Plan annually and making suggestions on potential revisions;
 - ☐ Leading the parent/guardian and family engagement efforts
-
- ☐ Planning for the ongoing training, as necessary to implement the Plan;
 - ☐ Approving the curricula that the district will use;
 - ☐ Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
 - ☐ Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an internet safety policy and designating key staff to be in charge of the implementation of them
 - ☐ Reviewing and updating the Plan at least every other year, or as necessary.

10. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

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, §§ 41 or 42, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies or collective bargaining agreement in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

10.1 Massachusetts General Laws

(1) Chapter 92 Act Relative to Bullying in Schools ¹ signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick, May, 2010

(2) Chapter 76, § 5 (Signed into law by Governor William Weld, December, 1993)

“No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public schools on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.”²

(3) Chapter 269, § 17, 18, 19 (Signed into law by Governor Michael Dukakis, November 1985.)

Hazing is a form of bullying that is specific to instances of initiation into a student organization. The law reads:

“The term “hazing” as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.”³

10.2 Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE) Regulations

(1) 603 CMR 49:00⁴ - Regulations pertaining to bullying. The full text can be found by clicking on the footnote link.

(2) 603 CMR 33 - Regulations pertaining to hazing. The full text can be found by clicking on the footnote link.

¹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter92>

² <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter76/Section5>

³ s-p.mit.edu/government/house_docs/docs/MA_Hazing_Law.pdf

⁴ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr49.html>

10.3 Federal Laws

(See the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights “Dear Colleague Letter,” which discusses the overlap of federal anti-discrimination and harassment laws with bullying.)

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

A list of district compliance officers can be found on the [FPS website](#).

The school district maintains data regarding incidents of alleged bullying filed and findings of bullying investigations conducted in each of its schools over the course of each school year. This data is reviewed by administrators and staff and is used to inform the plan and Pre-K to 12 interventions.

10.4 Monitoring and Evaluating Bullying Data

Data Collection	The district collects data on bullying in order to evaluate if efforts to reduce bullying behavior are successful over time. The district Data Manager manages a database or online means to collect and monitor instances of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation that will allow administrators to disaggregate data to identify patterns, if any (e.g., higher rates at particular grade levels or gender, bullying directed at particular populations, etc.).
DESE Survey Data	In addition to the annual collection of data from schools, and in accordance with <i>An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools</i> , Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 at Sections 4(1) & 5, the Hopkinton Public Schools administers an anonymous DESE student survey to assess the climate of schools and the prevalence of bullying. Survey data is compared with data collected annually from schools and will be provided to the superintendent by June 30 th of each year.
MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Report	FPS administers bi-annually the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, and the data are used to assess the prevalence of many behaviors, including the incidence of bullying. The data are provided to high school and middle school administration and compared with data collected in previous implementations of the survey.
Finding Root Causes and Identifying Solutions	The district and school administration work with staff to evaluate bullying prevention efforts, using the bullying data collected each year. The principals (and Director of Students Services if children with special needs are involved) will organize the staff to search for root causes if bullying behavior is not decreasing and to determine appropriate solutions to address the root causes. This information will be part of the annual bullying report.
Data Storage and Records Retention	Massachusetts Records Retention regulations require that all student discipline records (considered the “temporary record”), which include documentation of “the discipline of students for infraction of school policy,” be retained up to seven (7) years after the student has left the district. If a student moves to another school, his/her records are sent to the receiving school. All such student records, except the transcript, shall be destroyed according to the district’s record retention policy.

	<p>The principal is the custodian of the bullying report forms and investigation notes and forms in their school. Records of counseling provided to targets and aggressors/perpetrators are not part of the educational or discipline record and should be retained by counselors.</p> <p>The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA - 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) gives parents/guardians the right to see their child's educational record. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "parents/guardians or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents/guardians or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies."</p>
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