

**LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BULLYING PREVENTION AND  
INTERVENTION  
PLAN**



**JUNE 2025**

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## **Introduction**

The Lowell Public Schools has a commitment to enhancing and sustaining a safe and healthy learning environment for all. As such, we are committed to providing all students with a respectful environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying, where all school community members treat one another with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. A safe learning environment is one in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically in a caring and supportive atmosphere free of intimidation and abuse.

The Lowell Public Schools' goal of a safe and healthy learning environment is an integral part of our district's comprehensive efforts to promote learning and enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential. Our approach is to eliminate all forms of bullying and harmful behavior that can impede the learning process through a multi-tiered strategy that includes prevention, effective and compassionate intervention, and community-wide collaboration.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan incorporates a comprehensive approach for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The Lowell Public Schools is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

## **Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation**

Bullying is the use of power by one or more students or by a member of the school staff, including, but not limited to an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or other school staff over another to intentionally cause harm. In addition, 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 (1) or more of these characteristics. There are many ways that bullying can manifest itself in wrongful conduct at school and includes but is not limited to physical, verbal, and psychological harm. For participants and observers, bullying and harassment interfere with learning and healthy growth – both emotionally and academically.

Bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation are prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs (whether on or off school grounds), at bus stops, on school busses or other vehicles owned or operated by the Lowell Public Schools or their contractors, or through the use of technology or electronic devices owned, leased or used by the school district.

Bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are prohibited at any location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or electronic devices not owned, leased, or used by the school district, when the act creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim or witness, infringes on the rights of the target/victim or witness at school, or materially and substantially disrupts 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.

## **Leadership**

District and school leadership at all levels in the Lowell Public Schools will play a critical role in the ongoing development and implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. School leaders have a primary role in teaching students and staff to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. School leaders have a responsibility for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

The Office of Student Support Services will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Specific planning and oversight responsibilities will include

- Receiving reports on bullying
- Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets/victims and aggressor/perpetrator
- Collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes
- Planning for the ongoing professional development relative to bullying prevention and intervention
- Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets/victims and aggressors/perpetrators
- Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Amending the Parent and Student Handbooks
- Leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials
- Reviewing and updating the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan biannually as required by law

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be reviewed and updated biennially by the Bullying Plan Subcommittee of the Office for Student Support Services to ensure its effectiveness and to establish strategies and indicators of continuous improvement in the effort to promote a safe and supportive learning environment. The evaluation will include assessing the adequacy of current programs, reviewing current policies and procedures, and assessing available resources, including curricular, professional development, and behavioral health services.

The biennial update of the plan shall include a review of available data on social and emotional learning, the environment for the delivery of social emotional instruction in schools, and data on school climate. This data

shall be used to identify areas of programmatic strength, resource gaps, and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, schools and the district will revise or develop policies and procedures, establish partnerships with community agencies, and set priorities as warranted.

At least once every four (4) years, LPS will administer a student survey such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the district will annually report bullying incident data to DESE. Current data sources are the Community That Cares Survey, the local HALs (Holistic Assessment for Lowell Schools) survey, and the VOCAL survey. Additionally, data from each school will be collected and analyzed on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and areas of concern in school buildings, at school-sponsored events, on school grounds, on social media, or on school buses). This information will help to identify patterns of behavior and areas of concern, and will inform future decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

## **Definitions**

**Aggressor/Perpetrator:** one or more students or a member of the school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation toward another member of the school community.

**Bullying:** The Lowell Public Schools Bullying Policy (File: JICFB) pursuant to Massachusetts General Law (MGL Chapter 92, of the Acts of 2010) specifically defines bullying as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the school staff including, but not limited to an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or other school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target/victim that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target/victim or damage to the target's/victim's property;
- ii. places the target/victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target/victim at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Bystander** is someone who has witnessed bullying behavior but is not directly involved either as the aggressor or the target.

**Cyberbullying:** 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, internet postings, internet communications, or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying 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 creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of 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, paraprofessionals, or other school staff.

Target/Victim: A student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying and Retaliation**

It is the responsibility of the school administration and principals to make clear to students and staff that bullying or harassment in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions will not be tolerated. School principals or their designees shall be responsible for the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention procedures, including investigating all charges of bullying, cyberbullying, and/or retaliation.

Violations of school and/or district policy and procedures will be addressed in conformance with existing disciplinary policies. In addition, all reporting, investigations, and responses shall be consistent with local, state, and federal law regarding anti-discrimination and the protection of civil and human rights. Consultation with district legal staff and representatives of local, regional, and state law enforcement and justice agencies may be required to ensure the rights of targets/victims and aggressors/perpetrators are maintained.

### **A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation**

A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, 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, will be incorporated into the Parent and Student Handbooks and posted on the Lowell Public School website.

Though the Lowell Public Schools Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report, the school or district will:

- Include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the information packets that are distributed for students at the beginning of the school year and in the Parent and Student Handbooks
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available on the Lowell Public School website

Reports of bullying or retaliation made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be oral or written, via telephone/cell phone, text, or face-to-face, by email, in writing, or anonymously.

## **1. Reporting by Staff**

Any staff member who encounters an interaction that may be construed as bullying will first be asked to try to address the incident between the target(s)/victim(s) and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s). The staff member will then report the incident immediately to the principal or designee so the investigation process may begin. This initial report should ideally include:

- Date, time, and location of the incident
- Individuals involved and their roles (e.g. target/victim, aggressor/perpetrator, bystander)
- Information about if/how the incident is part of a pattern of
- Any actions taken by the staff person to defuse the situation

This initial report may be done orally, by email, or via a written note. The initial report must be documented in writing using the Incident Reporting Form within 72 hours of the initial report of the incident.

## **2. Reporting by Students, Parents/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. This may be done by telephone/cell phone, text, face-to-face, by email, in writing, or anonymously. Students, parents/guardians, and others are not required to complete the Incident Reporting Form. If an oral report of a bullying incident is made, the principal/designee will complete an Incident Reporting Form to document in writing the allegation. An Incident Reporting Form may also be completed by the principal/designee to complement written reports of bullying by a student, parent/guardian, or others in those instances where additional data is secured to substantiate or complete the allegation. This form may also be completed by school staff to complete the incident file.

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.

Anonymous reporting will be managed at the school or district level. Students, parents/guardians, and others will be able to make anonymous bullying reports by telephone/cell phone, text, by mail, and through the Lowell Public Schools website. Anonymous reports should include at least the following information:

- Date, time, and location of the incident
- Individuals involved and their roles (e.g. target/victim, aggressor/perpetrator, bystander)
- Any knowledge of prior incidents that were reported or not
- The relationship of the reporter to the incident (e.g. witnessed firsthand, third-party report)

Upon receipt of an anonymous report, the school or district will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit, an Incident Reporting Form will be completed by the investigating staff member and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor/perpetrator solely on the basis of an anonymous report.



## **B. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation**

### **1. Safety**

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal and/or a team designated by him/her will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target/victim and/or to protect the alleged target/victim from possible further incidents. This assessment may include interviews with the target, their guardian, conversations with teachers, and other relevant information the principal or his designee can gather. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a personal safety plan
- Pre-determining seating arrangements for the target/victim and/or the aggressor/perpetrator in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus
- Identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target/victim
- Altering the aggressor’s/perpetrator’s schedule and access to the target/victim

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 to protect any student who (a) reports bullying or retaliation, (b) witnesses bullying or retaliation, (c) provides information during an investigation of allegations of bullying or retaliation, or (d) has reliable information about an alleged act of bullying or retaliation from further acts of bullying or retaliation. Strategies that may be used to create a safer environment for the target(s)/victim(s) and/or aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) include:

- Increasing adult supervision at times and /or in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur
- Temporarily and/or permanently changing the target(s)/victim(s) and/or aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) class schedule and/or seating arrangements to reduce opportunities for retaliation
- Establishing a safe zone for the target/victim to go to when s/he feels vulnerable

This is not an exhaustive list. The creation of safe environments for targets/victims, aggressors/perpetrators, or others impacted by the incident will be considered for each individual person and incident.

### **2. Obligation to Notify Others**

The principal or designee has primary responsibility to notify the following constituencies in writing, through a letter or email message, when bullying or retaliation has occurred. A copy of all written or electronic communication with these constituencies must be sent to the Office of Student Support Services so they are (a) appropriately informed, and (b) can assist with response as needed.

a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target/victim and the aggressor/perpetrator (or the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) if he/she/they is or are school staff) 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, and all communications will be in the parents' or guardians' home language.

b. Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) or target(s)/victim(s) 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/cell-phone 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 aggressor/perpetrator, 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 aggressor/perpetrator.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the supervisor of school resource officers and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

### **C. Investigation**

The principal or designee will investigate promptly 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 aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) or target(s)/victim(s) 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 aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s), victim(s)/targets, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. If the alleged aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is a staff member, he/she will have the right to request union representation during the investigation phase.

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.

Upon receipt of an anonymous report, the school or district will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit, an Incident Reporting Form will be completed by the investigating staff member, and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

#### **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/victim is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will:

- Determine what remedial action is required, if any
- Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the target(s)/victim(s) or perpetrator(s)/aggressor(s) teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's/victim's or aggressor's/perpetrator'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(s)/victim(s) and the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) (or the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) if he/she/they is/are school staff) 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/victim's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target/victim must be aware of in order to report violations.

Regardless of the outcome of the bullying or retaliation determination, the principal or designee will inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system. Any parent or guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the DESE Program Resolution System. That information can be found at

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/default.html>

Problem Resolution System Office

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149

Main Telephone: 781-338-3700

Fax: 781-338-3710

Email: [DESECompliance@mass.gov](mailto:DESECompliance@mass.gov)

#### **E. Responses to Bullying**

The creation of school environments where every student feels a sense of belonging is integral to student success. To this end, the Lowell Public Schools will modify or institute procedures by grade level as necessary to provide a safe environment at all times of the school day including non-classroom times such as lunch, bus rides, recess, and after-school and other out-of-school time, particularly for students who have

been targets/victims of substantiated allegations of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, as well as aggressors/perpetrators of said actions as needed to restore a safe and supportive learning environment for all students .

**1. Academic and Non-Academic Activities** 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:

#### **A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches**

Bullying prevention curricula are informed by current research which 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 engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation;
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying;
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communication;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and
- Providing parents and guardians with information regarding the schools' bullying prevention curricula.

#### **B. General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts**

The following strategies are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment:

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including students with disabilities; students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender; and students who are homeless;
- Communicating with parents and guardians regarding the schools' goals and expectations for students and students' safety;
- Using positive behavioral supports (PBIS) and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including conflict resolution, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports (PBIS) that aid in social and emotional development;
- Promoting the ethical and responsible use of technology; and
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

If a student who is found to be the target/victim or aggressor/perpetrator in a substantiated bullying incident has an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) and the cause of the incident is related to his/her disability, then the provision of skill-building training shall be integrated into that student's IEP.

## **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 target(s)/victim(s) and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Parent and Student Handbooks. If the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is school staff, disciplinary action, if any, may include, but is

not limited to, disciplinary action that is permissible by Lowell Public Schools Policy, State and Federal Laws and Regulations, Case Law, including but not limited to Administrative Hearings and/or Union Contracts/Agreements.

Discipline procedures for aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a false allegation of bullying or retaliation has been knowingly made, appropriate actions will be taken. This may include disciplinary actions for those incidents where the accuser is a student or school staff.

Discipline, the need to identify constructive limits and controls in order to develop positive behaviors in all children, is an essential ingredient in every student's total learning experience. The goal of discipline is to help students and school staff develop wise decision-making skills so that they may learn to make responsible choices in their interactions with others. Progressive discipline strategies are used by the teachers and administrators of the Lowell Public Schools and may include any one of the following strategies and/or a combination of the following discipline strategies:

- Counseling that starts at the classroom level between teacher and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s), and if not productive, proceeds to the social worker, guidance counselor, or principal, and/or the assistant principal
- Detention: office, after-school, and/or weekend
- Referral to a behavior specialist who may be able to discern behavioral responses or support to the aggressor or the school in re-establishing a safe school environment
- Suspension from school that may be imposed by the principal or assistant principal for up to 5 days for serious misbehavior and that may be extended to 10 days with the approval of the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
- Assignment to an alternative program that may be recommended by the principal
- Expulsion from school that may be imposed by the principal or by the school committee
- If the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is/are school staff, disciplinary action, if any, may include, but is not limited to disciplinary action that is permissible by Lowell Public School Policy, State and Federal Laws and Regulations, Case Law, including but not limited to Administrative Hearings and/or Union Contracts/Agreements.

### **3. Promoting Safety for the Target/Victim and Others**

Upon the completion of the investigation, the principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's/victim's sense of safety and the sense of safety for others as well.

Within a reasonable period following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the 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.

#### **4. Confidentiality**

The Lowell Public Schools recognizes that both the alleged target/victim and alleged aggressor/perpetrator have a strong interest in maintaining the confidentiality of an allegation and related information. The privacy of the alleged target/victim, alleged aggressor/perpetrator, and all witnesses will be respected and maintained consistent with legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to comply with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

#### **5. Reporting to DESE**

Annual Reporting to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): In accordance with the M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(k), LPS will annually provide the following data to DESE: 1) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; 2) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation; 3) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation; and 4) other information required by DESE.

### **Resources and Support Services**

#### **A. In District resources and support services**

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets/victims, aggressors/perpetrators, families, and others are addressed. The principal or designee shall be responsible for helping to create and monitor a safe and supportive learning plan for targets/victims and/or aggressors/perpetrators of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation. This shall include (a) referrals to counseling as needed to address underlying issues of trauma and other difficulties that may contribute to the problem, (b) behavioral intervention plans, (c) social skills groups, (d) individually focused curricula.

Lowell Public School resources include:

- Social Workers
- Guidance Counselors
- School Nurses
- School Psychologists
- Behavior Specialists
- School Resource Officers
- District Support Specialists
- Parent Liaisons
- After School Activities
- SCORE - Peer Mediation

#### **B. Community Resources**

The Lowell Public Schools may collaborate with community resources to assist schools in (1) developing safety plans for students who have been targets/victims of bullying or retaliation, (2) providing social skills programs to prevent bullying and (3) offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

Community Resources Include:

- Community Mental Health Agencies
- Department of Children and Families
- Lowell Juvenile Court
- Lowell Police Department
- Middlesex District Attorney
- Lowell Community Health Clinic
- City Manager's Gang Task Force
- United Teen Equality Center

- Middlesex Essex Teen Exploitation Collaborative

- Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center
- Project Alliance

### **C. 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 to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

## **Instructional Services**

The ultimate goal of the Lowell Public Schools is to prevent bullying from happening. Instructional activities will focus on helping students develop healthy social relationships with their peers and adults, and creating a positive school culture.

### **A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches**

A program of evidence-based social/emotional learning instruction is offered to all students in all schools. The curricula used in the district includes *Second Step*, *Open Circle*, *Responsive Classroom*, *Trails to Wellness*, *Boston vs. Bullies* and *Restorative Practices*, which are approved by the federal Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools for their effectiveness in addressing individual risk and protective factors associated with bullying. Other programs that foster a positive school culture and reduce the risk of violence are incorporated into the curriculum. These programs:

*Counteract the following risk factors*

- Delinquent beliefs / General delinquency involvement / Drug dealing
- Early onset of aggression and/or violence
- Victimization and exposure to violence
- Poor refusal skills
- Lack of guilt and empathy

*Enhance the following protective factors:*

- High expectations for students with clear standards and rules
- Opportunities for prosocial school involvement
- Individual social competencies and problem-solving skills

The District will continue to implement these programs with fidelity in order to ensure all students have opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will (a) prevent bullying and other forms of violence, and (b) promote positive social relationships and community culture. These might include:

- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference

- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance

### **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 prevention and intervention initiatives:

- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students
- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities
- Modeling the safe use of the internet and monitoring students' Internet use at school to reward positive behavior and redirect unsafe activities
- Supporting non-violent conflict resolution, including supervised, peer mediation

### **C. Cyber Safety Instruction**

Students are provided with instruction and guidance in cyber safety and media literacy skills. The students also engage in project-based learning activities which focus on the areas of internet safety, cyberbullying, and bullying. Students are oriented to the district Internet Acceptable Use Policy as outlined in the Parent and Student Handbooks, which (a) provides guidelines for the safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies, and (b) specifically prohibits use of the district technology for cyberbullying and other forms of hostile and anti-social purposes.

## **Professional Development and Staff Training**

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

- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
- (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents
- (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor/perpetrator, target/victim, and witnesses to the bullying
- (iv) 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
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying

### **A. Annual Staff Training on the Plan**

The district will annually offer professional development and training to staff and will include the following topics:



- Orientation to the district plan, including 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 curriculum to be offered at the schools
- Definition of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation
- Identifying the signs and symptoms that a student may be a target/victim of bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation
- Cyber safety, which shall include information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying, and strategies for promoting cyber-safety
- Ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Educational Program (IEP). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development

Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Lowell Public Schools BPIP by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities, in employee handbooks.

Staff members hired after the start of the school year shall 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.

#### **B. Ongoing Professional Development**

The district will, as resources allow, offer additional professional development and staff training on topics intended to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. Additional areas identified 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
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

### **Communication and Collaboration with Families**

Clear communication and consistent collaboration with staff, students, families, and community partners is essential to achieving bullying prevention within the Lowell Public Schools. Communication with these and other constituents shall include information about the (a) dynamics of bullying including signs and symptoms of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, (b) strategies for preventing cyberbullying and promoting online safety, (c) strategies for preventing bullying and/or retaliation in the classroom, across the school community, at home and in the community, (d) information about how to report bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation, (e) district procedures for responding to and investigating bullying, and (f) strategies for creating a safe learning environment for target/victim and reinforcing positive behavior standards among perpetrators.

Communication will be via this district plan, the Lowell Public Schools Bullying and Harassment Policy, Parent and Student Handbook Disciplinary Policies, and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

**A. Parent and Community Notification**

Each year the school will inform parents and guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. Parents will receive written notice each year relative to the student-related sections of the plan and the school and district's internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats through the Lowell Public Schools website.

**B. Parent Education and Resources**

The school and/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 school PTOs, school councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations, and community partners.

**Relationship to Other Local, State, and National Policies, Regulations, and Laws**

**A. Relationship to Non-Discrimination 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, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

**B. Relationship to Existing Disciplinary Regulations**

In addition, nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the plan covers the behavior.

**C. Relationship to Other District Policies**

This Plan is related to the following District policies:

ACAB - SEXUAL HARASSMENT

IHAMA - DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO EDUCATION

JIC-E-1 – STUDENT CONDUCT

JICCC-R - STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES

JK-R - STUDENT DISCIPLINE

JKD/JKE-R STUDENT SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

## Appendix A



### LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS I. BULLYING-DISCRIMINATION-HARASSMENT-RACISM PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION REPORTING FORM

Report ID:	
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Incident Type		Based upon:	
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Name of reporter/person filing the report:		Date:	
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(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report)

You are the:			
You are a(n):			
Your contact information/telephone number:			
School or work site:		Grade:	

#### Information about the incident:

Name of target(s) of behavior:			
Name of alleged aggressor(s): <i>person(s) who engaged in the behavior</i>			
Date of incident:		Time when incident occurred:	
Location of incident (be as specific as possible)			

#### Bystanders (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name:		Position:	
Name:		Position:	
Name:		Position:	

Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used).

<<Description of incident>>

## Appendix B

### Lowell Public Schools Anti-bullying and Violence Prevention Curriculum

PROGRAM	GRADE	DESCRIPTION
Second Step	K-8	Second Step is a classroom-based social skills program aimed at reducing impulsive behavior while increasing social competence. The program is designed to improve behavior and reduce classroom disruptions. In addition to the classroom lessons, the program offers online support at <a href="http://www.cfchildren.org/support">http://www.cfchildren.org/support</a>
Open Circle	Pk-4	Open Circle is a social-emotional learning curriculum that focuses on communication, self-control, and social problem solving, which strengthens students' social competency skills.
Responsive Classroom	K-6	The Responsive Classroom is an approach to elementary teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. The goal is to enable optimal student learning. The approach consists of classroom and school-wide practices for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies.
Trails to Wellness	K-12	The TRAILS SEL curriculum nurtures important social and emotional skills like empathy, self-awareness, and respect. Through brief classroom lessons, educators help their students learn to manage strong emotions, make responsible decisions, and build healthy relationships
Wayfinder	K-12	Wayfinder's research-backed Core Skills incorporate meaning-making, critical thinking, and future-ready skills in order to connect classroom learning to the real world. Wayfinder's curriculum focuses upon teaching skills in 6 core areas: Self-Awareness, Adaptability, Empathy, Collaboration, Agency and Purpose.
Boston V. Bullies/All In	3-6	Boston vs. Bullies is an evidence-based anti-bullying initiative presented by The Sports Museum and the Boston sports community to stand strong against bullying.

Restorative Practices	5-8	Restorative justice in schools focuses on repairing harm and promoting positive relationships, offering alternatives to traditional punitive disciplinary measures by emphasizing community building, accountability, and reconciliation.
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A variety of school-wide social skills and violence prevention programs are used to ensure a safe and respectful school environment. All programs focus on a “whole-school approach” to strengthen students’ social competency skills and reinforce a common language within the school environment. Violence prevention and conflict resolution programs incorporate a social skills curriculum that teaches students to change attitudes and behaviors that contribute to bullying and violence. Lessons on empathy, impulse control, problem solving, bullying prevention, and anger management are included.

In addition to these programs, district-wide presentations are held for parents, students, and the community at large on ways to protect children from bullying and the dangers of cyberbullying. The presentations are in collaboration with the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) at Bridgewater State University, the Office of the Middlesex District Attorney, and Project Alliance.