



Westport Community Schools

17 Main Road
Westport, MA 02790

The Westport Community School District has created a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education under M. G. L. c. 71, § 370. This plan has been created in consultation with school personnel, advocacy organizations, parents, students and other interested parties.

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I. Priority Statement

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

The school or district is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The school or district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

Acts of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are prohibited: on school grounds, 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 used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device (ex: cell phone, laptop, iPad or similar device) owned, leased or used by a school district or school and 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 a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on their rights at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

II. Definitions

“Bullying”, the repeated use by one or more students or school staff members of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyberbullying.

“Cyberbullying”, bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or 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”, a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student’s education.

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

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

III. Leadership

- a. Public involvement in developing the Plan: As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan must be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians.
- b. Assessing needs and resources: The Plan is the Westport Community Schools blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, have assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed the available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This “mapping” process helped the schools and the Westport Community Schools to identify resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the schools and the district have revised and developed policies and procedures; established partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities for implementation.
- c. Strategies: The following strategies shall be done to allow for initial and periodic needs assessments: 1) surveying students, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues; 2) 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); and 3) moving student records involving bullying incidents from school to school as students transition from one grade to the next transition (e.g., 4th grade to 5th grade and 8th grade to 9th grade). This information will help 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.
- d. Planning and Oversight: The summer administrator’s retreat will be used to review the anti-bullying plan and to plan for staff training. School Adjustment and Guidance Counselors to be invited for ½ day professional development during retreat to gather input and review data.

IV. Training

- a. Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.
- b. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of schoolwide and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
 - Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
 - Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying;
 - Information regarding Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.
- c. Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.
- d. Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:
 - promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
 - fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
 - building relationships and communicating with families;
 - constructively managing classroom behaviors;
 - using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
 - applying constructive disciplinary practices;

- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
 - engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
 - maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.
- e. Written notice to staff. The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

V. Procedures for Reporting

- a. At each school, the principal/designee is responsible for receiving oral or written complaints alleging violations of this policy, as with all infractions from the Student Handbook.
- b. Students may report complaints of bullying to any school district employee, faculty or staff. All District employees, faculty and staff are required and must report, in writing, any allegations of bullying or violations of this Policy involving students to the principal/designee or appropriate area/district administrator. Any other members of the school community who have credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may file a report of bullying, whether as victim or witness.
- c. Any student (and/or the parent on that complainant's behalf if the complainant is a minor) who believes he/she is a victim of bullying (or any individual, including any student who has knowledge of any incident(s) involving bullying of students) is strongly encouraged to report the incident(s) in writing to a school official. Complaints should be filed as soon as possible after the alleged incident and noted on the specified data system, but must be filed within ninety (90) school days after the alleged incident (i.e., within 90 school days of the last act of alleged bullying). Failure on the part of the victim to initiate and/or follow up on the complaint within this period may result in the complaint being deemed abandoned.
- d. The principal of each school in the District shall establish, and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents, how a report of bullying may be filed and what actions may be taken.
- e. School district employee, school volunteer, contractor, student, parent/guardian or other persons who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school official, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in this District Policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments within the Westport Community Schools

- f. Administrators/principal/designee(s) shall document in writing and/or via the specified data system all complaints regarding bullying to ensure that problems are appropriately addressed in a timely manner, whether the report is made verbally or in writing.
- g. Anonymous reports may be made using the Westport Community Schools anonymous reporting form found on the district website. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students will be provided with practical, safe, private and age appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member or with a principal or designee.

VI. Investigation Procedures

- a. Students with any knowledge of student-to-student bullying are taught, reminded, and strongly encouraged to report such concerns immediately to a responsible adult in the building, i.e. teacher, guidance counselor, administrator, or to their parent/guardian. Staff members who receive such reports or information are **required** to refer such reports or information immediately to an administrator/designee or guidance counselor.
- b. After receiving a report of a concern around bullying, the school has an obligation to respond in a timely, immediate, and appropriate manner.
- c. Guidance counselor and/or administrative personnel may interview the alleged victim(s) around his/her concerns and may request a written account of the details surrounding the concern.
- d. The school's investigation may include gathering information from witnesses to the alleged bullying.
- e. The school's response may include having an administrator or designee speak to the alleged offender, explaining that the behavior is inappropriate and outlining consequences for past actions and consequences if the behavior does not stop. If appropriate and agreeable to the complainant and his/her parents/guardians, the complainant may discuss the situation with the offender, telling him/her to stop the offensive behavior/actions. This may be done in the presence of a third party.
- f. School administrators may contact the School Resource Officer, as warranted.
- g. Parents/Guardians of both the victim(s) and alleged offender(s) will be contacted to discuss the concerns, and to reassure parents that the situation is being addressed.
- h. When necessary, a disciplinary hearing will be scheduled with parents/guardians to review the incident and assign appropriate consequences and measures. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- i. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

- j. The school's response will ordinarily include a focus on educating and changing behavior rather than simply punishing the offender. Accordingly, one or more of the disciplinary consequences and/or remedial measures outlined in section VII may be considered, according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental ages of the students involved, and the offender's history of problem behaviors.
- k. When a given situation is judged serious enough to require the attention of the Superintendent/designee, he/she will be informed immediately and an incident report will be written, reviewed by the Principal/designee and distributed to appropriate administrators within 24 hours of the incident. A hard copy, with the Principal's/designee's signature, will be sent to the Superintendent. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

VII. Disciplinary Actions

- l. Each situation is handled on a case by case basis. There is no predetermined consequence for bullying behavior. It is up to the school principal/designee to determine the outcome for each incident.
- m. **Possible Disciplinary Consequences**
 - Admonishment
 - Temporary removal from the classroom
 - Loss of privileges (bus, etc.)
 - Classroom or administrative detention
 - In-school suspension during the school week
 - Out-of-school suspension
 - Referral to Westport Community Schools (RSO) School Resource Officer
- n. **Possible Remedial/Supportive Measures**
 - Framing the bullying behavior as a failed attempt to solve a real problem or reach a goal; school personnel assist the misbehaving student to find a better way to solve the problem or meet the goal.
 - Restitution or restoration
 - Peer support group
 - Social skills Group
 - Assignment designed to raise awareness of interpersonal skills
 - Corrective instruction or other relevant service experience
 - Supportive interventions including peer mediation, etc.
 - Behavioral assessment or evaluation
 - Closely monitored behavioral management plan
 - Referral to guidance.
 - Assist family (with written consent) for community based counseling referral.
 - Parent conference
 - Maintaining, as much as possible, the confidentiality of victims and offenders

- Use of RESPECT meeting
- Use of Student Concern Meetings
- o. **Use of Conflict Resolution Agreement**
- p. **Possible Environmental (Building) Measures**
 - Modification of schedules
 - Adjustments in hallway traffic
 - Modifications in student routes or patterns traveling to and from school
 - Use of staff monitors (hallway, cafeteria, bus, dismissal, etc.)
 - Involvement in community youth organizations
 - School climate and culture awareness activities and changes
 - Law enforcement involvement (i.e. school resource officer)

VIII. Prevention and Intervention

Macomber Primary School/Westport Elementary School Anti-Bullying Strategies

School Wide Practice:

Macomber Primary School and the Westport Elementary School will utilize components of the Responsive Classroom Approach in conjunction with grade level anti-bullying curricular material to foster and promote the following social skills:

- Cooperation
- Assertion
- Responsibility
- Empathy
- Self- Control

The acquisition of these skills will help to establish a strong sense of classroom/school-wide community to promote significance and belonging.

Supplemental Activities may include the following:

- Themed School Areas which promote the above mentioned social skills while providing visual cueing
- Assemblies/Special programming which address bullying and promote positive social skills
- Morning announcements with anti-bullying messages
- Promoting poster/writing contests with anti-bullying themes
- School Spirit Days which promote positive social skills
- Incorporate positive social skills into morning meeting/classroom time

- Students will be informed of how to use the “Counselor’s Question Box” where info can be “mailed” back to student if preferred
- “Student Share Time” where older students could have an opportunity to talk with younger students about bullying related issues

Disseminating Information to Families:

- Providing families with links to online resources as well as to the school’s/district’s website which can offer information on a variety of bullying topics
- Presentations to PTO/other parent generated groups on anti-bullying themes
- “Counselor’s Corner” in our monthly newsletter can hi-light anti-bullying info
- Parent Information Center to be set up in the lobby and/or other main area
- Brochures/Handouts which include anti-bullying information can be made available at parent nights
- Communications to parents regarding anti-bullying lessons in the classroom and home follow-up suggestions
- Utilizing the Westport Cable Station to promote positive social skills

Westport Middle School Anti-Bullying Strategies

School Wide Practice:

- Incorporating anti- bullying, cyber-bullying, and new Massachusetts Anti-Bullying law into the curriculum.
- Classrooms will utilize pro social skill building activities within the classroom through the Developmental Design Model.
- Special presentations on “bullying” and the school procedures to handle bullying will be incorporated into student orientation assemblies.
- Provide a safe and anonymous reporting procedure system for students.
- Anti-bullying school-wide themes will be communicated to parents / guardians.
- Anti-bullying resources will be provided to students and parents/guardians.
- Counselors will contribute to education involving anti-bullying, pro social skill behaviors that involve empathy, tolerance, respect, and compassion.
- Counselors will contribute to a monthly spotlight in the school newsletter and counselor corner.
- Individual counseling for bullies and targets.
- Provide information to parents/guardians surrounding new bullying legislation.

Westport High School Anti-Bullying Strategies

School Wide Practice:

- September- Assistant Principal addresses new law and expectations to the student body during orientation by grade level.
- September 2011, Anti-Bullying units are imbedded in the PE/Health curriculum developed by grade (9/10; 11/12).
- School will set aside a week during October (Bullying Prevention Month) to have a Bullying Prevention Week. Morning announcements, book club selections and building wide messages will focus on the topic of bullying.
- Guidance to collaborate with health teachers and visit classroom to address specific aspects of curriculum, activities, etc. Encourage student involvement in spreading the message and changing school climate.
- Guidance counselors to assist club advisors and student members (NHS, SADD, Project Action, Villager, Westport Young Readers Book Club and others) in club activities designed to promote awareness and support. Some examples include: bulletin board and window displays; newspaper articles and editorials; skits to be performed at WMS and during orientation, health fair table, poster contest.
- Promote the issue of bullying for Senior Topic Research Project to assist students, teachers, Admin, and guidance (i.e. District wide web site link to law and resources) in developing and anti-bullying culture within the school.
- Guidance to offer direct contact and information to parents during November and April Parent Conference Events. Parents will be invited to attend the Student Center (Room 302) to learn more about the new law and the efforts of the High School students and faculty. Parents will receive 1:1 consultation, as well as resources and materials to take home.

IX. Requirements for 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.

The Special Education Contact Person will be proactive in leading the discussion during the IEP Meeting. Specific and measurable goal language should be used for building skills and developing self advocacy.

The Team should address if the educational disability negatively impacts the student's comprehension of the Student handbook.

In the instance of a student with a disability supported by a 504 plan, Guidance staff will be proactive in leading the discussion in the 504 Meeting. The 504 Plan should include the supports and intervention needed to develop the skills necessary to avoid or respond to bullying.