

Westford Public School District
Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan



Revised: 2021-22

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
I. LEADERSHIP	4
II. DEFINITIONS	5
III. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
IV. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES	8
V. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES	10
VI. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION	11
VII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES	17
VIII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION	18
IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS	19
APPENDICES:	
A THE WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CORE VALUES	20
B RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES	22
C WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION REPORTING FORM	28

INTRODUCTION

Westford Public Schools expects all staff and students to model behavior consistent with our Core Values. The District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from the divisive impact of bullying and cyber bullying. Westford Public Schools' goal is to eliminate bullying, cyber bullying and acts of aggression that are harmful to our students, our school system's culture, and impede the learning process.

Westford Public Schools' Core Values reflect the district's philosophy in creating and maintaining a positive school climate conducive to academic success. Those particular Core Values that directly relate to the importance of psychological and emotional health and well being are:

- working together to support all students;
- expecting respect, integrity, ethical behavior, and good decision-making;
- nurturing students' self-confidence, intellectual growth and social interactions;
- setting high expectations/standards for students, staff, and parents;
- being committed to physical safety and health;
- recognizing the importance of psychological and emotional health and well-being;
- ensuring safe and healthy facilities;
- creating an environment of trust, support, and respect;
- providing a secure and comfortable learning environment;
- respecting diversity and caring for each other; and
- seeing ourselves as global citizens, with the ability to contribute to change.

Westford Public Schools fosters and maintains a safe, supportive environment for all students in our school community and provides all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies to prevent and appropriately respond to bullying and harassment. Westford Public Schools is particularly sensitive to the safety needs of all of our students, including, but not limited to differences with race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability and homelessness.

Westford Public Schools does not tolerate any form of bullying, cyberbullying, hazing, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, in school sponsored activities, or in any activities that occur outside the school day that are not school related but have a detrimental impact on a student or students' educational rights. This includes, but is not limited to before/after school programs that occur on school property as well as co-curricular activities. Westford Public Schools supports this commitment via evidenced-based, age-

appropriate curriculum, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian workshops.

I. LEADERSHIP

Westford Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is an extension of our Core Values. Our Core Values are the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and commitments that staff and students must exhibit to fulfill our school system's vision. These values should be understood and embraced by every member of our school system – our values are "what we stand for." These Core Values guide our actions, focus our energies, and act as an anchor point for all practices.

Westford Public Schools expects that all members of the school community treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

Westford Public Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, hazing, cyber bullying or retaliation. 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 certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics. The 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.

Westford Public Schools' Bullying Prevention Policy includes the following statements:

- A. Westford Public Schools maintains a learning environment that is free from bullying of any kind.
- B. It shall be a violation of this policy for any student or staff member in the Westford Public Schools to bully any student through conduct or communication of a bullying nature.

- C. Each administrator shall be responsible within his or her school or office for promoting an understanding of and assuring compliance with state and federal laws, and school committee policy and procedures governing bullying.
- D. Students who engage in bullying will be subject to a range of actions. Students may be recommended for remedial actions including, but not limited to, training, education, or counseling. Students may also be subject to discipline including, but not limited to, reprimand, detention, suspension, expulsion or other sanctions as determined by the school administration.
- E. Staff Aggressors will also be subject to a range of disciplinary actions including, but not limited to, a reprimand, suspension, or dismissal.
- F. Retaliation in any form against any student, who has filed a complaint relating to bullying, will not be tolerated. No student will be subject to any form of coercion, intimidation, retaliation, or discrimination for filing a report of bullying. The consequences for retaliation and false accusations made in bad faith will be the same as for bullying.
- G. Disciplinary action may also include criminal charges as determined by local law enforcement.

Westford Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, 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 Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber bullying. Westford Public Schools 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, cyber bullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the 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 is responsible for investigating the report and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

II. DEFINITIONS

The definitions contained herein are consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, § 37O.

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

- 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 his or her 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 is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

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.

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

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

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

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

Bystander is a student present to, or witness to, an incident of bullying or retaliation without direct involvement. A bystander is someone who stands by while a crime or wrongful deed is being committed, and does nothing to stop it.

Upstander is a student who assists another student who is being bullied through words, actions or emotional support. The Westford Public Schools encourages students to do the right thing, to be “upstanders” and not bystanders.

In accordance with, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O “Bullying shall be prohibited: (i) in our school buildings, on school grounds, on 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 owned, leased or used by a school district or school and (ii) 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 victim, infringes on the rights of the victim 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.”

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

III. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Westford Public Schools’ ongoing professional development plan reflects the requirements under the M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and provides ongoing professional development for all staff including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, support staff, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals.

A. Annual staff training

The Plan includes annual training for all staff. This training will include, but is not limited to, an outline of the M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O legislation, identifying staff responsibilities under the plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or his/her 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 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 builds staff members' skills to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide and 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 bystander, 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; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.

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

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

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

C. Written notice to staff

Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of The Plan by in the school employee handbook which includes sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff.

IV. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Westford Public School District recognizes that in order to promote a positive school climate, the underlying emotional needs of all students must be addressed. These students include potential targets, aggressors or bystanders of bullying or cyber bullying. Schools will also address the emotional needs of these students' families. The Plan includes strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the schools' capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services must reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors and bystanders. The schools' guidance and administrative staff provide counseling or referrals to appropriate services for students who are targets, aggressors, and bystanders as well as family members of those students.

A. Identifying resources:

School counselors, together with building administrators, work to identify the school's capacity and provide counseling, case management and other services for these students and their families. Schools conduct annual review of staffing and programs that support and sustain positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. Westford Public Schools works in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidence-based curricula and to provide additional preventative services for students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff.

The resources and programs provided for students and their families include, but are not limited to:

- Guidance Counselors
- School Adjustment Counselors
- School Psychologists
- Nurses
- Behavioral Specialists
- Transitional meetings (elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school)
- Instructional Support Teams
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Responsive Classroom
- Evidence-Based Programs
- School Advisory Council
- Superintendent, School and District Forums
- Partnerships and collaboration with the Westford Police Department

B. Students with disabilities

Once the IEP or Section 504 Team determines that a student has a disability which affects the student's social skills development or that the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team must consider if and/or what should be included in the IEP to

develop skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

C. Counseling and other services

Each school maintains a list of outside agencies and services available for students and families. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the guidance counselor or adjustment counselor at their child's school to obtain assistance. Westford Public School District does not endorse any individual practice or agency.

V. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Westford Public Schools provides age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the schools' evidence-based curricula. Effective instruction includes classroom approaches, whole-school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention, and social skills development.

A. Specific bullying prevention & intervention approaches

Imbedded within the district guidance and wellness instruction are evidence-based curricula and solid instructional approaches that support and sustain a positive school culture conducive to academic success.

Health/Wellness is offered in grades K-12. The curriculum incorporates the use of scripts and role-plays to develop skills. The lessons:

- empower students to be an upstander by knowing what to do when they witness other students or school staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- help students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasize cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhance students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engage students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

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

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including but not limited to those of different race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability and homelessness;

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

Note: The Westford Public Schools Bullying Prevention Curriculum can be found on the district website @ <http://www.westfordk12.us/pages/index>. Click on the link "Bullying and Cyber Safety."

VI. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Westford Public Schools has policies and procedures in place for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that members of the school community; students, parents, and School staff, know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation:

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member must be recorded in writing. All employees are required to report immediately to the principal or his/her designee, or to the Superintendent when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other non-employees may be made anonymously. The district will make reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, an email address and the Westford Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, available on the Westford Public Schools' website @ <http://www.westfordk12.us/pages/index>. See *Appendix C for the Westford Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form*.

Use of an incident reporting form is not required as a condition of making a report. However, the school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other

locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's or district's website.

At the beginning of each school year, schools will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of the schools' 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 his/her designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, posted on the school or district website, and included in information about the Plan.

1. Reporting by Staff

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

2. Reporting by Students, Parents, or Guardians, and others

The school 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 his/her designee, or Superintendent when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or his/her designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation by Student

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or his/her designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents.

Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; predetermining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The principal or his/her

designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

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

The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of bullying will be maintained in a manner consistent with state and federal law, given the school's obligation to investigate the matter.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

Notice to parents or guardians

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred the principal or his/her designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor, and the procedures that will be followed in response. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation.

Notice to another school district

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 his/her 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.

Notice to law enforcement

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

In making this determination, the principal will be consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, and other individuals the principal or his/her designee deems appropriate.

C. Investigation

The principal or his/her designee investigates promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, considers all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation, the principal or his/her designee, among other things, interviews students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or his/her designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) reminds 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.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal, or his/her designee, or other staff members as determined by the principal, 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 his/her designee maintains confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or his/her designee maintains a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation are consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or his/her designee consults with legal counsel pertaining to the investigation of the alleged report.

D. Determinations:

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

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

Following a determination that bullying has occurred, the District will promptly convene an IEP or Section 504 meeting when a student with disabilities has been found to be a victim of bullying, regardless of the basis

of the bullying and if there is information to suggest that the student's educational needs may have changes (i.e. drop in attendance or grades, type/scope/severity of the bullying, evidence of significant emotional distress, etc.)

The principal or his/her designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation, and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or his/her designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations. The notice to the parents or guardians of the victim shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents of the victim should be provided the following contact information: Program Quality Assurance Services, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 800-439-2370.

E. Response to Bullying

Westford Public Schools incorporates a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's skills or to prevent further incidents of bullying and/or retaliation.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-Building

Upon the principal or his/her designee determination 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. c71 370 (d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or his/her designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school or district's anti-bullying curricula;
- 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 or guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula with social skill building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and/or
- making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or his/her designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or his/her 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 Plan and with the school's code of conduct/student handbook.

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

If the principal or his/her designee determines that a student knowingly made a false accusation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or his/her designee(s) 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.

Within a reasonable period of time following determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or his/her 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 his/her designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately. See *Appendix C for the complete Westford Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention reporting Form*

F. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff District:

1. Reporting:

Reports of bullying or retaliation involving a student by a staff member may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member must be recorded in writing. All employees are required to report immediately

to the principal or his/her designee, any instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student by a staff member, the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other non-employees may be made anonymously. Use of an incident reporting form is not required as a condition of making a report

2. Responding:

Before and during the investigation of the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee assesses the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents, as well as, for students who report, witness, or provide information about the report of bullying by a staff member.

3. Investigation:

The principal or his/her designee investigates promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, contacts the parents or guardians of the alleged target. The principal or designee promptly investigates by interviewing students, staff, witnesses, parent or guardians and others as necessary. The principal or designee reminds the alleged 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.

4. Determination:

The principal or designee determines if bullying or retaliation of a student by a staff member is substantiated. If substantiated the Superintendent will be informed promptly and the Superintendent along with the principal will determine what remedial action, responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target if bullying or retaliation is found and what action is being taken to prevent further acts. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the Westford Police Department.

If the victim falls under the protection of the Section 504 or Title II of IDEA, the school will promptly convene an IEP or Section 504 meeting. Regardless of the basis of the bullying, the Team will determine the impact of the bullying and whether the student's needs have changed such that the student is no longer receiving FAPE. If there is

information to suggest that the student's educational needs may have changed as a direct result of the documented bullying, the Team must revisit the IEP or 504 and amend as appropriate.

VII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of each of our schools, as well as the district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families, as well as open communication, are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The district plans to utilize established organizations such as Principal Coffee Groups, Parent Advisory Council and the Westford Parent Connection, to encourage ongoing dialog as a means of supporting and sustaining a positive school culture.

Provisions for informing and enlisting parents or guardians as partners in the district's efforts to eradicate bullying include:

- Strategies for parents and guardians to reinforce the curricula at home that support the school or district plan;
- Education and information on the dynamics of bullying, online safety and cyber bullying. The District has created a website dedicated solely to education and outreach for parents and guardians, staff and students. This will be updated periodically to maintain current information and best practices regarding bullying. This website can be found on the district's website @ <http://www.westfordk12.us/pages/index>;
- Encouraging open communication between parents or guardians with administrators and teachers regarding their concerns;
- Encouraging community outreach by creating a district wide lending library with up to date resources on bullying prevention for parents or guardians, staff and students; and
- Notifying parents or guardians each year about the student-related sections of the Plan.

Westford Public Schools will annually inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber bullying and online safety. The schools will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the Westford Public Schools' Acceptable Use Policy regarding technology. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats and will be made available in the language most prevalent among parents or guardians. Each school will post The Plan and related information on the school's website.

VIII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Westford Public Schools does not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

Schools will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. Westford Public Schools supports this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

Acts of bullying, which include 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 used by the school district, or through the use of technology or an electric device owned, leased, or used by the school district.
- 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 the school district, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or bystanders, infringe on the rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the 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. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in the Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of each public school on account of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, homelessness, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in this 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.

Westford Public School District complies with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 794, and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 104, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II), 42 U.S.C. § 12132, and its implementing regulation at 28 C.F.R. Part 35.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L. c 76 § 5 other applicable laws,

or local, school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

Appendix A

Westford Public Schools Core Values

Our Core Values are the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs and commitments that we must exhibit to fulfill our school system's vision. These values should be understood and shared by every member of our school system - our values are "what we stand for." These Core Values will guide our action, focus our energies and act as an anchor point for all our plans.

1. Pursuing Excellence in a Learning Community

- continually improving
- reaching for excellence and meeting high standards
- working together to support all students
- promoting collaborative initiatives, relationships, and interactions between students, staff, parents, and community
- expecting respect, integrity, ethical behavior, and good decision-making
- connecting and integrating curriculum
- providing appropriate facilities and technology for teaching, learning, and working

2. Promoting Individual Growth and Development

- being guided by the wisdom of what is best for children
- employing differentiated instruction techniques in a developmentally appropriate manner
- nurturing students, self-confidence, intellectual growth and social interactions
- setting high expectations/standards for students, staff, and parents
- recognizing and rewarding student achievements in co-curricular activities
- producing well-rounded individuals
- recognizing that the schools support the growth and development of teachers, staff, and parents
- providing leadership opportunities

3. Ensuring Safety and Well-Being

- being committed to physical safety and health
- recognizing the importance of psychological and emotional health and well-being
- ensuring safe and healthy facilities
- creating an environment of trust, support, and respect
- providing a secure and comfortable learning environment

4. Supporting Creativity and Innovation

- encouraging teachers, staff, and students to innovate and take risks, without fear of judgment
- allowing more student choices
- motivating students to be engaged beyond scores and other traditional assessments
- encouraging self-motivation, life-long learning, and curiosity
- continually improving, growing, and changing

5. Fostering Connections with Local and Global Communities

- recognizing that the community is all-encompassing; from the local community of Westford to the global community of the entire world
- respecting diversity and caring for each other
- valuing community service (local to world) as a way of giving back and doing good
- seeing ourselves as global citizens, with the ability to contribute to change
- sharing resources within Westford and in the larger world

Appendix B

Resources and Support Services

Note: The Westford Public School District does not endorse any of the practices listed below. It is up to the individual parent/guardian to select an appropriate service provider. This is an incomplete list of local service providers and will be periodically updated.

Counseling Centers

Boundaries Therapy Center

978 263 4878

boundariestherapy.com

Westford Counseling Center

Russell Hart, LICSW.

Specializes in adolescents, ADHD, LD trauma, oppositional defiant disorder, parenting and substance abuse

978 692-4032

Nancy Sabel LICSW

978 692-9585

Melanie Shear LICSW. (eating disorders, anxiety, depression, adolescent girls, parenting)

978 692 0301

Carrie Leggat LICSW. (adolescents)

978 287 0042

Judith Hanselman

978-392-0200

Interactions Counseling, Littleton, 978 952-6060

Shari Bennett, LICSW. (adolescent and family therapy, specializing in sexual abuse, depression, gay and lesbian issues, self-injury)

Dan Vayda LICSW (latency, adolescent boys with behavioral problems, ADHD, depression and family)

Harriet Otis LMHC, LMFT (adolescence and families)

Sudbury Valley Counseling, Westford

Kay Lamer, LICSW. (anxiety, stress, ADD)

978 692-4565

Transitions Counseling Center, Littleton, 978 486-0009
Steve Chapin, PhD. (depression and anger management)
Jackie Donahue, LICSW. (depression, anxiety, self-injury)
Bonnie Atkin-Hellman, LICSW. (adoption, divorce, step families)
Leona Dean, MS, RNCS (medication)
Jerry Juliano, LICSW (substance abuse, anger management, trauma)
www.transitionscounselingcenter.googlepages.com

New England Center for Mental Health – Littleton – (978) 679-1200
Pediatric & adult mental health services. Madhavi Kamireddi, MD
www.NEMentalhealth.com

North Star Guidance Center, Chelmsford
978 256-0667
www.northstarguidanceinc.com

Stony Brook Counseling Center, Chelmsford
978 275-9444
Barbara Crème, M.A., M.S., LMHC (children and teens, mood disorders,
anger, depression, NVLD, Asperger's and ADHD)

Meetinghouse Psychological Associates, Chelmsford
(Adolescents and children)
978 256-1288

Chelmsford Family Counseling Center
978 251-7806
Leela Balch, LICSW. (children and adolescents)

Littleton Counseling Associates 978 952-0150
Michael Gaboury, LICSW, BCD (adolescents, family therapy, trauma)
John Lindbeck, LICSW. (anger management for older adolescents)
Linda Larratt (anxiety, biofeedback)
Julie Russell (children and adolescents)
Smita Chaddha (anger management, cutting, trauma)

Greater Lowell Psychiatric Associates, Chelmsford
978 256-1943
www.glpaonline.com

Counseling Collaborative, Acton
978 263-6847 - Jill DeFoe, LICSW (adolescents, parent-child relationships)

Arbour Counseling, Lowell
978 453-5736 Rick Gallagher (adolescent boys)

Peter Pan Center, Harvard
Donna Shea, Director (Social Skills)
978-772-1255

Linda Price & Associates, LLC, Chelmsford
lindaroseprice@comcast.net (Social Skills)
603-943-2124

Pathways Counseling Associates, Lowell
978 937-2696
Susan and Allan Anderson, LICSW. (adolescent and families)

Southbay Mental Health, Lowell
978 453-6800

Hallowell Center, Sudbury (mental health practice specializing in ADHD)
978 287-0810

Family Associates of Merrimack Valley, Chelmsford
www.familyassociates.org
978-256-1467

Life Management Assoc. Inc., Harvard
Steven Michaelson, PH.D.
978-772-4457

Private Therapists

Margo Ferrick
Phone 978- 361-5843

Lynne Rothstein
Phone: 978 257-2159

Lori Kidger, LICSW. (adolescent girls)
978 692-6881

Linda Collins, LMHC, Littleton (stress management)
866 926-9780

Carolyn Imperato, PhD. Littleton (adolescents, adults)
978 486 1062

Frank & Margot Vangelli, LICSW. Groton (adolescents, family, substance
abuse)
978 448 2872

Michael Miles, MSW. Chelmsford (alcohol and drug counselor, court-related issues)
978 459-4884

Marcia Melanson, LICSW – Groton (individual, child, adolescent and family counseling)
978 448-0009

Lore Kantrowitz, Ed.D - Concord – HMO Blue, BCBS – (individual, family counseling, neuropsychological evaluation)
978 369-6274

Amy Doolin, LICSW – Chelmsford – (children & adolescents, grief, loss, depression)
978 835-6622

Efi Papadopoulos, LICSW – Acton – (psychotherapy with children & adolescents) www.bewellandbeyond.com

Rosemary Duffy, Psy, D. (adolescents and eating disorders)
978 251-3380

Dennis De Angelis, LICSW. (adolescent boys and their families)
978 963-4766

Dan Rosa, Steve Liljegren (adolescent boys and girls)
978 251-7887

Gary Rose, PhD., Chelmsford (substance abuse)
978 250-8400

Jim Graves, (adolescents, sports psychology)
978 251-7447

Charles Streff, Ph.D. Acton, (adolescents)
978 263-0439

David Favreau, Lowell (anger management)
978 957-5811

Roseanne Keefe, LICSW., (adolescents with adjustment and learning problems)
978 869-6980

Jeffrey Brown, Psy. D., ABPP, Arlington (anxiety disorders, OCD, depression)

781 641-1633

Michele Gaboury, LICSW, Littleton
978-952-0150

Dr. Debra Piper, Acton
978-263-6847

Deborah Curtiss, M.ED., Chelmsford
978-250-1188

Kathleen Trainor, LICSW, Natick, (anxiety disorders)
508 647-1644

Adam Glick, LIVCSW. Brookline (sexual identity)
617-482-2166

Linda Price, Med, CAGS – Chelmsford (603) 943-2124 –social skills
groups, www.lindaroseprice.com/misc/index.php

Family Therapy/Parenting Groups

Sally Sacks, M.Ed.,
Karendyth Holistic Center
978 692-6900
<http://www.sallysacks.com>

Molly Salans, LICSW
Karendyth Holistic Center
978 392-5998
www.mollysalans.com

Center for Family Development
978 459-2306

Lore Kantrowitz, Ed. D Concord
978 369-6274

The Bridge of Central MA, Worcester
508 755 0333

Other Resources

Project Interface

<http://www.projectinterface.org/>

Asperger's Association of New England – (617) 393-3824

www.AANE.org

Autism Support Center, Danvers

978 779-9135, ext. 2304

Boston University Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders

www.bu.edu/card

Donna Pincus, PhD

617-353-9610

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

781 891 5966

Lowell Youth Treatment Center

978 322-5160

Dana Group Associates – Needham – (781) 449-1143 – social skills
development

www.dana-group.com

Social Worker Finder – Use this site to find a local therapist with desired specialty
that can take your insurance. www.helppro.com/nasw/basicsearch.aspx

** Parents are also encouraged to access employee assistance at their workplace*

Appendix C

Westford Public Schools BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

I. REPORT

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: _____
(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.)

2. Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

3. Check whether you are a: Student Staff member (specify role) _____
 Parent Administrator Other (specify)

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

4. If student, state your school: _____ Grade: _____

5. If staff member, state your school or work site: _____

6. Information about the Incident:
Name of Target (of behavior): _____
Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): _____
Date(s) of Incident(s): _____
Time When Incident(s) Occurred: _____
Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): _____

7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):
Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____
Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____
Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed.

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____
Name of Building Administrator

Administrator Signature: _____ Date Received: _____

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

- Yes
- Bullying
- Retaliation
- No
- Incident documented as _____
- Discipline referral only _____

2. Contacts:

- Target's parent/guardian Date: _____ Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: _____
- District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: _____ Law Enforcement Date: _____

3. Action Taken: _____

4. Describe Safety Planning: _____

Within three weeks of the conclusion of the investigation the following will occur:

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for _____
Initial and date when completed: _____

Follow-up with Target's parent/guardian: scheduled for _____
Initial and date when completed: _____

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for _____
Initial and date when completed: _____

Follow-up with Aggressor's parent/guardian: scheduled for _____
Initial and date when completed: _____

Report forwarded to Superintendent on Date: _____

Signature & Title: _____ Date: _____