



Superintendent's Circular

School Year 2022-2023

NUMBER:
SSS-18

DATE:
September 1, 2022

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

This policy circular only applies to School Year 2022-2023.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATEMENT AGAINST STUDENT BULLYING

Boston Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, harassment, cyberbullying, discrimination, retaliation, or hate crimes in all forms and types towards others in any school or at school-related activities. Boston Public Schools will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying and take prompt, effective action to end that behavior and prevent its recurrence. Action will include, where appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. Boston Public Schools will support this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, parent meetings/training, and extracurricular activities. Students who are concerned or want to report bullying may confidently talk to a trusted staff member or call the *Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Hotline* 617-592-2378. Additional resources and [support can be found here](#).

Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center leads this district-wide initiative. The Student Handbook, AUP (Acceptable Use Policy), and the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct are updated annually to assure alignment, to include language prohibiting bullying and cyberbullying, and to clearly define the consequences connected to it. The District and Principals/Heads of Schools at all levels in the Boston Public Schools 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 a positive school climate. Principals/Heads of Schools have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Principals/Head of School 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 Boston Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses and at school bus stops, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district, and or in school-related activities. Schools 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. The Boston Public Schools will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian/caregiver involvement.

A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying will be subject to disciplinary action as defined by the BPS Code of Conduct.

The Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has been approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is posted on the district's website (www.bostonpublicschools.org/antibullying). Copies of this plan shall be posted and readily accessible in all schools in an area visible to parents/guardians/caregivers and staff. The Plan will be reviewed and updated biennially, as mandated by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, this Plan has been developed in consultation with various constituencies. Since May 3, 2010, the Boston Public Schools has met biennially with parents/guardians/caregivers, teachers, school administrators, students, Central administrators, and community stakeholders to develop this Plan. Consultation will include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period prior to adoption.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Boston Public Schools believes that school communities serve as a network of support for its diverse students, families, and staff. We are committed to providing our students with equal educational opportunities and a safe and welcoming learning environment where all student community members treat each other with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. Under M.G.L. Ch. 71, § 37O, at the beginning of each school year, schools will provide the community, including administrators, external providers, staff, students, and parents/guardians/caregivers, 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/Head of School or designee and a copy of the Bullying Incident Reporting Form, information about the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school and district website, and made available to parents/guardians/caregivers. Each school shall provide and post the available resources (including the number to the Hotline, information about electronic reporting) in the school's main office, the school's website, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the Principal/Head of School or designee.

The Boston Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The Boston Public Schools will continuously work to identify specific steps it will take 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.

DEFINITIONS Under M.G.L. Ch. 71, § 37O ¹

AGGRESSOR is a student who engages in bullying or cyberbullying

BULLYING is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

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

CYBERBULLYING is 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, photoelectric or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages 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 (iv) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) the use of the internet and/or social media used for bullying outside of school that

¹ The following definitions contain terms and/or phrases that are different from the language of the statute. The language of the definitions in this circular is drafted to align with the definitions that are used in the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct. BPS relies on these definitions when reviewing student conduct under the Code:

- a. **Bullying:** BPS has replaced the word "victim" in the statute with the word "target"
- b. **Cyberbullying:** BPS has added (iv) to the definition contained in the statute.
- c. **Retaliation:** this definition is not provided for under the statute, but is operative in the Code of Conduct
- d. **School Community:** BPS has added "staff" to the definition contained in the statute
- e. **Perpetrator:** this definition is not provided for under the statute, but is operative in the Code of Conduct

disrupts the normal functioning of the school day

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of 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 COMMUNITY consists of students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and staff.

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, and paraprofessionals.

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

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the Boston Public Schools have 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/guardians/caregivers, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying are reported or occur (Attachment 1).

The Boston Public Schools, in accordance with MA Law M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, has designated the Principal/Head of School or designee as the person responsible for receiving reports, recording incidents, and investigating all incidents. The Principal/Head of School or designee is responsible for responding to and resolving all cases. [All investigations](#), including the target, aggressor, investigation, findings, and plan shall be submitted to Succeed Boston within five school days, and findings of bullying shall be documented in the BPS Student Information System (SIS).

A. REPORTING BULLYING OR RETALIATION

Reports of bullying or retaliation can be made by staff, students, parents/guardians/caregivers or others, and can be submitted through the Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Hotline at 617-592-2378 or directly online through the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Incident Reporting Form](#), available in English, [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Portuguese](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Vietnamese](#) and in [Somalian](#). Allegations may also be submitted via email, text, or through the Bullying Incident Reporting Form (Attachment 3).

All employees are required to report immediately to the Principal/Head of School or designee, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents/guardians/caregivers, or other non-employees may be made anonymously (see Attachment 3 for the Boston Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form and Attachment 4 for the Boston Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Anonymous Reporting Form). Use of the Boston Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form is not required as a condition to making a report.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member shall report immediately to the Principal/Head of School or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Principal/Head of School or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with each school's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians/Caregivers, and Others

Boston Public Schools expects students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal/Head of School or designee. Reports may be made anonymously or not by calling the Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Hotline (617-592-2378) or filing a report online using the Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Reporting form. No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents/guardians/caregivers, 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/Head of School.

3. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal/Head of School or 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. The Principal/Head of School or designee shall contact the parents/guardians/caregivers prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining 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; altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The Principal/Head of School or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal/Head of School or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation any 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 to the extent possible, given the school's obligation to investigate the matter.

4. New Reporting Requirements to the Department

Boston Public Schools will annually report bullying incident data to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The data shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; (ii) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying or retaliation; (iii) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation; and (iv) any other information required by the department. Data collected on allegations is an aggregate count, by Boston Public schools. No student level or incident level data required for allegations.

Boston Public Schools will track allegations of bullying/retaliation so that an accurate count can be provided at the end of the school year. The counts will be entered into the annual School Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR) application at the end of the school year, and will be populated to certify the SSDR submission.

Additionally, as required by Chapter 86, of the Acts of 2014, which amended G.L. c. 71, §37O, the Boston Public Schools will administer a Department-developed student survey at least once every four years to assess "school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools." (G.L. c. 71, §37O(k)). Similar tools to the student survey can be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs.

A. Obligations to Notify Others

a. Notice to parents/guardians/caregivers:

Within 48 hours of receipt of the bullying complaint and before interviewing students, the Principal/Head of School or designee will notify the parents/guardians/caregivers of the target and the aggressor of the allegations. Upon completion of the investigation (not beyond five school days after the receipt of the complaint), the Principal/Head of School will notify the parents/guardians/caregivers of the target and the aggressor of the findings of the investigation and the procedures used in responding to the complaint.

In order to ensure the safety of students and compliance with all BPS mandates and State laws, repeated allegations from parents/guardians/caregivers and/or no response from the Head of School will be forwarded to the Operational Leader and/or School Superintendent for assistance for follow up.

b. Notice to Another School or District:

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Principal/Head of School or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal/Head of School 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 23.00.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement:

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal/Head of School or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal/Head of School shall consult with the Boston Police Department School Unit, and other individuals the Principal/Head of School or designee deems appropriate.

Note that pursuant to 603 CMR 49.06(2), notification to law enforcement is not required in those situations in which the school leader determines that the bullying and retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school. 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/Head of School or designee shall contact the Boston Police Department School Unit for notification to law enforcement if they have a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the Principal/Head of School will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the Boston Police Department School Unit and other individuals the Principal/Head of School or designee deems appropriate. The Superintendent's Office will be notified.

B. Investigation (see Attachment 1)

The Principal/Head of School or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation, with the consent from the parents/guardians/caregivers to proceed and/or in the presence of the parents/guardians/caregivers, the Principal/Head of School or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, and others as necessary. The Principal/Head of School or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, per section 7.6.3 of the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct.

Interviews will be conducted by the Principal/Head of School 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/Head of School or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal/Head of School or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation

and upon completion, shall file the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Investigation Form](#) or forward materials to saws@bostonpublicschools.org.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations and for possible disciplinary action. If necessary, the Principal/Head of School or designee will consult with Succeed Boston regarding consultation or appeals from families/caregivers and the Office of the Superintendent should legal counsel pertaining to the investigation of the alleged report be necessary. (See Attachment 1 for more specifics.)

C. Determinations

The Principal/Head of School or designee will make a determination of bullying based upon the definition of bullying, the interviews with students, staff, and parents/guardians/caregivers. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal/Head of School or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.

Within 5 days of receipt of the allegation, the Principal/Head of School or designee will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required (e.g. Safety Plan, seating plan), if any, and
- 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary if any, and
- 3) notify the parents/guardians/caregivers 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, and
- 4) submit the investigation and findings using the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Investigation Form](#), and, if bullying was found, document in the BPS SIS.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal/Head of School or designee may choose to consult with the student's teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents/guardians/caregivers, 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.

All notices to parents/guardians/caregivers must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal/Head of School or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directives that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

For children with special needs the Principal/Head of School will review the child's IEP to determine whether or not the child's disability impacted or impacts their ability to comply with the Code of Conduct and/or this policy, and where appropriate, convene a TEAM

meeting to discuss and decide the appropriate determination which may include behavioral support services or other specialized services.

The principal/Head of School or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

A. Planning & Oversight

The following school or district leaders are responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

Task	Responsible Party
1.) receiving reports on bullying	Succeed Boston, School Administrators, School Staff
2.) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes	Operational Leaders, Succeed Boston, Superintendent's Office
3.) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors	Succeed Boston
4.) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law	Succeed Boston
5.) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors	Succeed Boston and School-Based Administrators and Staff
6.) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use	Succeed Boston, Office of Equity and School Committee
7.) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet Safety Plan, and designating key staff to be in charge of the implementation of them	Principals, Head of School, Succeed Boston, Office of Instructional Information and Technology, Office of the Legal Advisor, and School Committee
8.) amending district-wide and school-based student and staff handbooks and codes of conducts	Succeed Boston, Operational Leaders and Office of the Legal Advisor
9.) leading the parent/guardian/caregiver or family engagement efforts and drafting information materials	Succeed Boston, Office of Family and Community Advancement

10.) reviewing and updating the Plan biennially, or more frequently as needed	Superintendent's Office, Succeed Boston and Office of the Legal Advisor
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Each School Community Member is responsible for:

1. complying with this Plan, where applicable;
2. ensuring that (s)he does not harass, discriminate against, or commit a crime against another person on school grounds or in a school-related activity because of that person's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability;
3. ensuring that (s)he does not bully another person on school grounds or in a school-related activity;
4. ensuring that (s)he does not retaliate against any other person for reporting or filing a complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing or a report or complaint, or for cooperating in an investigation of harassment, bullying, discrimination, or a hate crime; and
5. cooperating in the investigation of reports or complaints of harassment, bullying discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime.

B. TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As required under M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Boston Public Schools requires annual bullying prevention and intervention training for all school staff, including lunch monitors, school police officers, secretaries, bus drivers, teachers, administrators, and all other itinerant staff. All training is posted on Teach Point. For more information contact Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center (617) 635-8123.

- Annual Staff Training on the Plan
 - Boston Public Schools will offer professional development to all administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and all ancillary staff members under the employment of the Boston Public Schools. This includes; Identifying Bullying Behavior, Types of Bullying, Roles of Aggressors/Targets/Bystanders, Rights and Responsibilities under the Law M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Information of our most at-risk populations (including LGBTQ and students with disabilities), Internet Safety, Reporting Responsibility, Adult Bias and Addressing Student Bias-Based Speech and Behavior.
- Advanced Training
 - In order to provide effective bullying prevention and intervention services and to build capacity, each school shall have at least 2 staff trained as Bullying Intervention Specialists. These Specialists will lead the annual bullying prevention and intervention training at their schools and will spearhead the creation and maintenance of Caring Communities and Bully-Free Schools.
 - Boston Public Schools will provide a 2-day Bullying Prevention and Intervention Specialist professional development quarterly throughout the year. The advanced Bullying Intervention Specialist training (see Attachment 2) will be posted on TeachPoint.

- The training include (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent and intervene in bullying incidents; (ii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying; (iii) research findings on bullying, and resources for the development of programs in schools (iv) suicide risk and assessment (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying and internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying, (vi), Bias-based bullying and sexual harassment, (vii) issues specific to LGBTQ students, (viii) adult bias and impact on bullying intervention and prevention.
- Staff shall continue to receive literature covering the latest information in Bullying Prevention & Intervention. This literature will include strategies for creating a culture and environment that will prevent bullying.
- Professional Development opportunities to identify strategies for students with disabilities who are either accused of or are targets of bullying (per BPS Code of Conduct).
- Annual updated electronic links to the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Protocols.

C. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors, or bystanders of bullying or cyberbullying. The Boston Public Schools will also address the emotional needs of these students' families. [Please see Anti-Bullying Resources for further information.](#)

- Identifying resources in schools. School counselors, together with building administrators, will work to identify the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management, and other services for these students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families. Curricula and resources can be accessed through the Boston Public School's Succeed Boston's website succeedboston.org
- Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.
- The Boston Public Schools will continue to work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidence-based curricula and to provide additional preventive services to students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and faculty and staff.
- Counseling and other services.
 - Succeed Boston [Student Support and Prevention Workshops](#) are an alternative to a suspension that provides students with education about the impact of bullying and skill development to stop and prevent bullying.
 - School counselors, nurses, school psychologists, and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include ongoing emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community-based counseling referrals when appropriate.

- School counselors shall meet with parents/guardians/caregivers and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible.
- School counselors work with administrators to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to identified families.
- School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community-based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSA's) within the local vicinity, providing services to Medicaid-eligible students.
- School counselors, school psychologists, and intensive special needs educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and social thinking groups for students with social skills weaknesses.
- School counselors, school psychologists, and special education professionals work together to educate and support parents/guardians/caregivers, conduct parent workshops, and apprise parents/guardians/caregivers of outside resources to enhance skills and provide for the needs of children.
- Problem Resolution System (PRS). Parents or guardians can file complaints with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Special Education's problem resolution system. The process for seeking assistance in filing a claim through the problem resolution system can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700.

D. 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 that 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.

E. Referral to Outside Services

- The Boston Public Schools school counselors and other specialists will help students and families access appropriate and timely services necessary to address student needs as a result of bullying. Referrals shall comply with relevant laws and policies.

F. ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Boston Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's or district's curricula. One curriculum developed specifically for BPS can be found [here](#). Succeed Boston provides online [Student Support and Prevention Workshops](#) to students in grades 1-12 to learn about the impact of bullying and develop skills to stop and prevent bullying.

Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole-school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific bullying prevention 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, including seeking adult assistance;
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

- To create a strong anti-bullying plan that will be enforced first and foremost by adults
- To build in learning about bullying in the curriculum (e.g., ELA, social studies, health classes)
- To empower bystanders who witness bullying activities so they will be more likely to intervene appropriately
- To promote acceptance, tolerance, and respect in order to improve the school climate to include all students in meaningful ways
- To help students and staff understand the definition of bullying – what it is and what it isn't (e.g., conflict, fighting, teasing)
- To recognize the dynamics and complexities involved in aggressor-target relationships
- To develop intervention programs that will reduce the prevalence of bullying behaviors and create a safe school climate that fosters positive learning experiences for all students
- To be creative in developing strategies to promote social competence for children who are aggressors, targets of bullying, and bystanders
- To develop ways to help students who are aggressors to find more socially acceptable ways of experiencing positive rewards
- To build an effective support system for protecting targets of bullying

The Boston Public Schools have incorporated 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. Combining and incorporating a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) focused on prevention services school-wide, creates a level change across the classroom, school, and district. These changes not only improve behavioral outcomes but address and improve the academic and non-academic needs of all students, including students with disabilities.

G. Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skills-Building

Upon the Principal/Head of School 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. Skill-building approaches that the Principal/Head of School or designee may consider include:

- referring students to Succeed Boston online [Student Support and Prevention Workshops](#) for students in grades 1-12 to learn about the impact of bullying and develop skills to stop and prevent bullying.
- 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 prosocial ways to achieve their goals; meeting with parents/guardians/caregivers to support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; making a referral for evaluation.

H. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal/Head of School or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Principal/Head of School or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, a child's IEP where appropriate, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct, and with the school-based code of conduct/student handbook. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the Principal/Head of School or designee determines that a student knowingly made a **false allegation of bullying or retaliation**, that student may be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the BPS Code of Conduct.

I. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Principal/Head of School or designee(s) will consider what adjustments (including a safety plan) 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 the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal/Head of School or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Principal/Head of School or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

J. COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CAREGIVERS

The Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' parents/guardians/caregivers in order to increase the capacity of each of our schools as well as the district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for parents/guardians/caregivers and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the schools and made available to parents/guardians/caregivers shall include information about: (i) how parents/guardians/caregivers can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or

district plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyberbullying. Parents/guardians/caregivers will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Schools will collaborate with School Site Councils and parent organizations to create parent/guardians/caregivers resources and information networks. Schools will join with these parent/guardian/caregiver groups to offer education programs for them that are focused on the parent/guardian/caregiver components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the school(s).

Schools will annually inform parents/guardians/caregivers 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. The schools will send parents/guardians/caregivers written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the Boston Public Schools Internet Acceptable Use Policy. All notices and information made available to parents/guardians/caregivers will be in hard copy and electronic formats and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent in BPS. Each school will post the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

K. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER 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, privilege, and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Boston Public Schools 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.

In addition, nothing in this 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 this Plan covers the behavior.

Attachments:

1. How to Conduct a Bullying Investigation
2. Professional Development - Bullying Intervention Specialist Training
2. Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form
4. Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Anonymous Reporting Form

Attachment 1

How to Complete a Bullying Investigation:

Step 1: After contacting parent/guardian/caregiver, set up a meeting with the alleged targeted student (target)

- Are there safety concerns?
 - If yes, develop a safety plan with the input of the target and the parent/guardian/caregiver
 1. Consider class seating, bus, lunch, recess, and “specials”.
 2. With the help of the targeted student, identify a trusted adult the student can go to for assistance
 3. Consider an inconspicuous way the target could signal in real-time that something was happening and/or the target needed to leave the room to go to a prior agreed-upon class, office, person
 - Notify the trusted adult of the plan
 - Notify the teacher(s) of the allegation and the trusted adult
 - Take a statement from the target and get the names of witnesses if any.

Step 2: After contacting parent/guardian/caregiver, set up a meeting with the alleged aggressor

- Are there any safety concerns?
 - If yes, develop a safety plan with the input of the target and the parent/guardian/caregiver.
 1. Consider class seating, bus, lunch, recess, and “specials”
 2. With the help of the aggressor identify a trusted adult the student can go to for assistance
 3. Consider an inconspicuous way the target could signal in real-time that something was happening and/or the target needed to leave the room to go to a prior agreed-upon class, office, person
 4. Notify the trusted adult of the plan
 5. Notify the teacher(s) of the allegation and the trusted adult
 - If there are no safety concerns for the aggressor, develop an action plan that keeps the target and aggressor separate.
 1. Consider class seating arrangements, lunch bus, “specials” and recess
 2. Notify teacher(s) of the allegation and any action plans developed
 3. Take a statement from the alleged aggressor

Step 3: Document statements from all witnesses

Step 4: Assess whether the situation meets the standard for bullying:

1. Power imbalance
2. Repeated
3. Intentional

Step 5: Does this allegation involve a protected class (race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, pregnancy, homelessness, criminal record, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, genetics, or active military status?)

- All reports regarding targeting based on membership in protected classes shall also be forwarded to the Office of Equity for tracking and, if necessary, further investigation, (Sections 1, 21.1, and 21.2 of the Code of Conduct). If yes, contact the Office of Equity, equity@bostonpublischools.org.

If no, proceed to step 6.

Step 6: All allegations of bullying that have been investigated must be filed with Succeed Boston by completing the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Investigation Reporting Form](#) and documented in the BPS SIS.

- Document dates of meetings and calls with parents/guardians/caregivers
- Document all interviews
- Determine if the allegation is bullying, retaliation, simple conflict, or Code of Conduct violation
- Document action taken
- Schedule a date to follow up with all parties
- Document incident in SIS under the Conduct Module Section 7.2.6 of the Code of Conduct

Please note:

- Upon receipt of the bullying complaint, the Principal/Head of School, or designee, must confirm receipt of the complaint to the parents/guardians/caregivers **within 48 hours**.
- The investigation must be completed **within 5 school days** and the Principal/Head of School or designee will notify the parents/guardians/caregivers of the target and of the aggressor of the findings, and of the procedures for responding to it.
- In order to ensure the safety of students and compliance with all BPS mandates and State laws, repeated allegations from parents/guardians/caregivers and/or no response from the Principal/Head of School will be forwarded to the Operational Leader and/or School Superintendent for assistance for follow up.

Attachment 2

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

12 Hour Professional Development "Bullying Intervention Specialist Training"

In order to build capacity across the District and effectively deal with allegations of bullying, each school must have at least 2 staff complete the 12-hour training leading to certification as a "Bullying Intervention Specialist". Once certified, these Specialists will lead the annual bullying prevention and intervention training at their schools and will spearhead the creation and maintenance of Caring Communities and Bully Free Schools. Succeed Boston will offer quarterly training sessions throughout the school year. Please register on Teach Point.

In this training, staff will:

- Learn about state and district regulations and procedures
- Understand reporting and investigation protocols
- Develop safety plans for targets and action plans for aggressors
- Learn about the different types of bullying
- Differentiate between bullying and conflict
- Understand the role school staff play in preventing bullying
- Learn about culturally and linguistically sustaining practices
- Understand how adult bias and micro-aggression impact staff ability to effectively develop relationships with students involved in bullying incidents
- Learn about suicide and suicide prevention
- Understand the way bullying impacts LGBTQIA+ students
- Learn about empowering bystanders
- Learn to differentiate between bullying and bias-based speech and behavior
- Learn best practices to address bullying
- Develop plans for parent workshops
- Become familiar with resources to develop and implement school-based programs

Attachment 3

Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. Name/Role of Person Filing the Report: _____

• Student • Staff member (specify role): _____

• Parent/Guardian/caregiver • Administrator • Other (specify) _____

2. Contact information/telephone number of reporter: _____

(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.)

3. Circle whether the caller is the: Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

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

5. If staff member, state 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 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 space on the back if necessary.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____

(Please note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to: _____

Position: _____ Date: _____

Recipient signature: _____ Date: _____

II. INVESTIGATION

1. Investigator(s): _____

Position(s): _____

2. Interviews:

• Interviewed aggressor Name: _____ Date: _____

• Interviewed target Name: _____ Date: _____

• Interviewed witnesses Name: _____ Date: _____

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor? • Yes • No

If yes, have incidents involved the target or target group previously? • Yes • No

Any previous incidents of the aggressor involved in bullying or retaliation? • Yes • No

Summary of Investigation:

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

• Bullying	• YES	• NO
• Retaliation	• YES	• NO

If no, incident documented as:

Progressive discipline used? • YES • NO

If yes, what? _____

Is this a Code of Conduct violation? • YES • NO

If yes, which? _____

2. Contacts:

• Target's parent/guardian/caregiver: _____ Date: _____

• Aggressor's parent/guardian/caregiver: _____ Date: _____

3. Action Taken:

Loss of Privileges Detention Suspension

Community Service Education Other: _____

4. Describe Safety Planning: _____

5. Follow-up with Target:

Scheduled for _____ Initial and date when completed: _____

6. Follow-up with Aggressor:

Scheduled for _____ Initial and date when completed: _____

Signature and Title: (If was not the investigator) _____

Date report forwarded to Principal/Head of School : _____

Initial and date when report sent to Succeed Boston (saws@bostonpublicschools.org) or use this [link](#) to file. Initial: _____ Date Filed: _____

Attachment 4

SAFE SCHOOLS AND BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION HOTLINE

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Anonymous Reporting Form (617) 592-2378

1. Has the school been notified?

YES _____ NO _____

2. If yes, what action was taken?

3. Who was the school contact?

If the reporter answers "no" to question 1 -

4. Is there a reason the school was not contacted? _____

5. Inform the reporter that the school will be contacted and that the reporter will be contacted for follow up.

6. Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____

For more information about this circular, contact:

Name:	Jodie Elgee, Senior Director
Department:	Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center
Mailing Address:	515 Hyde Park Ave, Roslindale, MA 02131
Phone:	617-635-8123
E-mail:	jelgee@bostonpublicschools.org

Mary Skipper, Superintendent