

Bullying in Schools Policy

Policy #JFCIB

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (revised July 2025)

Overview

Bullying is *“the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the 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 a paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target by the perpetrator 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 himself or herself or of damage to his or her 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.”*

For participants and observers, bullying and harassment interfere with learning and healthy growth – both emotionally and academically. A safe learning environment is one in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically in a caring and supportive atmosphere free of intimidation and abuse. A goal of the Somerville Public Schools is to enhance and sustain safe and healthy learning environments in part by reducing the reported incidence of bullying in every school through a multi-tiered strategy that includes prevention, effective and compassionate intervention, and community-wide social promotion.

Prohibition

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

Bullying, cyberbullying, and/or retaliation that create a hostile environment at school for the target(s), infringes on the rights of the target(s) while at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school – regardless of whether said bullying takes place on school grounds, nearby properties, at school functions or using school technology, are also prohibited.

It is the responsibility of the School Administration and Principals to make clear to students and staff that bullying, cyberbullying, retaliation, and/or harassment in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school sanctioned transportation, or at school sponsored functions will not be tolerated.

Reporting, Response and Investigation Procedures

School Principals or their designees have primary responsibility for implementation of bullying prevention and intervention procedures, including investigating and responding to all charges of bullying, cyberbullying, and/or retaliation.

Violations of School and/or District policy and procedures will be addressed in conformance with existing disciplinary policies. In addition, all reporting, investigations and response shall be consistent with local, state, and federal law regarding the anti-discrimination and the protection of civil and human rights, particularly for vulnerable populations including but not limited to LBGTQIA+ (lesbian, bisexual, gay,- transgender, questioning/queer, intersex, asexual+) youth and youth LBGTQIA+ families. It is important to recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying and harassment on actual perceived “differentiating characteristics” that may make certain students more vulnerable to bullying including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, immigration status, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, physical, development, or sensory disability. Consultation with District legal staff, and representatives of local, regional, and state law enforcement and justice agencies may be required to ensure the rights of targets and aggressors are maintained.

- A. Reporting bullying or retaliation: A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation that the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others. These reports may be oral or written and can be made face-to-face, via telephone, by email, or through the Internet when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously.

The Somerville Public Schools will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, an email address, and a secure web interface. Use of the District’s Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report.

The school or District will:

- Include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and in the *Parent/Guardian Guide*
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available as an interactive form and as a downloadable document on the School and District website.

The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or District will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the Principal or designee, will be incorporated into:

- Student handbooks,
- Parent/Guardian Guide
- Colleague Guide
- On the School and District website.

A1. Reporting by Staff:

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

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

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

A2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others

The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal or designee. This may be done by telephone, face-to-face, by email, in writing, or anonymously.

- a. Students, parents/guardians, and others are not required to complete the Incident Reporting Form to report an incident or alleged bullying or retaliation.

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- and developmentally-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee. Students who are non-verbal or not yet proficient in English will be assisted in making reports of alleged incidents of bullying and/or retaliation.

If a student, parent/guardian, or other member of the school community makes an oral report of a bullying incident the Principal/Designee will complete an Incident Reporting Form to document in writing the allegation.

An Incident Reporting Form may also be completed by the Principal/designee to complement written reports of bullying by a student, parent/guardian, or other school community member in those instances where additional data is secured to substantiate or complete the allegation. This form may be completed by school staff to complete the incident file.

- b. Anonymous reporting will be managed at the District level. Students, parents/guardians and others will be able to make anonymous bullying reports by telephone, by mail, and through an anonymous web interface. Anonymous reports will ideally include at least the following information:
 - Date, time, and location of the incident
 - Individuals involved and their roles (e.g., target, aggressor, bystander)
 - Any knowledge of prior incidents that were reported or not
 - The relationship of the reporter to the incident (e.g., witnessed firsthand, third party report)

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

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

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

B1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal and a team designated by her/him 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 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 or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

Following the investigation, the Principal and her/his team will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from further acts of bullying, retaliation any students who (a) report bullying or retaliation, (b) witness bullying or retaliation, (c) provide information during an investigation of allegations of bullying or retaliation, or (d) has reliable information about an alleged act of bullying or retaliation. Strategies that may be used to create a safer environment for the target(s) and/or aggressor(s) may include to:

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

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

B2. Obligations to Notify Others

The Principal or designee has primary responsibility to notify the following constituencies in writing – through a letter or email message - when bullying or retaliation has occurred. All written or electronic communication with these constituencies must be carbon copied to the Director of Student Services so they are (a) appropriately informed, and (b) can assist with response as needed.

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

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

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. Investigation: The Principal 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 the Principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the Principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

C1. Investigating Anonymous Reports

Upon receipt of an anonymous report a designated senior Central Administrative staff member will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit an Incident Reporting Form will be completed and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

D. Determinations: The Principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances.

The Principal/designee and/or a team designated by her/him will:

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

Remedial, responsive and disciplinary actions will balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behaviors in order to enhance the safety of the learning environment.

The Principal or designee will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what (a) disciplinary and (b) future prevention action is being taken. All notice to parents/guardians must comply with applicable local, state and federal education and privacy laws and regulations. All notices to parents/guardians will be linguistically appropriate.

Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent/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 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE, requires that the Principal or his designee notify the parents or guardians of the victim about the DESE problem resolution system and the process for filing a claim.

E. Responses to Bullying and Allegations of Bullying: The creation of school environments where every student feels a sense of belonging is integral to student success.

After an investigation of bullying, cyberbullying, retaliation and/or harassment, regardless of whether the claim is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that any student involved in the incident is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.

To this end, the Somerville Public Schools will modify or institute procedures by grade level as necessary to provide a safe environment at all times of the school day including

non-classroom times such as lunch, bus rides, recess, and after-school and other out-of-school time, particularly for students who have been targets of substantiated allegations of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, as well as aggressors of said actions as needed to restore a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

E1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Principal/designee and/or a team designated by the Principal may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curriculum
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance 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 to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home
- Adopting behavioral plans or contract to include a focus on developing specific social skills
- Making a referral for any further evaluations as appropriate.
 - If a student who is found to be the target or aggressor in a substantiated bullying incident has an individualized education plan (IEP) and the cause of the incident is related to her/his disability, then the provision of skill building training and any other appropriate accommodations or services as agreed upon by the Team shall be integrated into that student's IEP.

E2. Taking Disciplinary Action

- a. If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct.
- b. 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.
- c. If the Principal or designee determines that a false allegation of bullying or retaliation has been made appropriate actions will be taken. This may include disciplinary actions for those incidents where the accuser is a student.

E3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

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

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

- a. Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal and a team of people he/she designates may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or 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, professional mediation, or other supportive services.
- b. Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal may choose to invite the Special Education Department to conduct a safety evaluation of the target(s) and/or aggressor(s) in order to inform strategies for promoting safety of students and the school environment.
- c. If deemed appropriate and agreed upon by both the target and the aggressor, the matter may be referred to a professional mediator. If the professional mediator determines if the situation is appropriate for mediation a time will be scheduled and mediation will proceed using best practices in professional mediation with youth and teens.

Support Services

Each school shall have a team of professionals organized by the Principal who shall be responsible for helping to create and monitor the safe and supportive learning plan for targets and/or aggressors of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation and other acts of aggression among and between students. This team may be an existing group with expanded function (e.g., Student/Teacher Assistance Team) or a new team convened exclusively for this purpose. Activities of the team may include the following:

- Making and monitoring referrals to counseling and related youth and family support services
- Providing social skills programs to prevent bullying
- Offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors
- Organizing and monitoring classroom or school-wide programming to address the deleterious effects of bullying, retaliation or allegations of bullying and/or retaliation on the school environment
- Preventive activities intended to promote positive behavior
- Other activities as needed to promote safe and supportive school environments. Schools may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

- A. Students with disabilities: As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability, including but not limited to autism spectrum disorder, 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 the instructional services, accommodations or other service the individual student may need in her/his IEP to support the development of the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.
- B. Services for other vulnerable populations: If an incident of bullying and/or retaliation is found to be related to a student's identification with a protected class, the Principal/designee or other District officials may consult with local experts on the provision of specialized support services for the individual(s) involved and the school community. Examples include consulting the Somerville Human Rights Commission if an incident is found to be related to race or ethnic identity, working with the District's Title IX officer if the incident is related to a student's gender, or leveraging resources available through the Somerville LGBT Liaison if an incident is related to a student's sexual orientation or gender identity, or that of her/his parent(s) or siblings.

Instructional Services

In the long term, preventing bullying from happening is the goal of the District. Instructional activities will focus on helping students develop healthy social relationships with their adults and peers, and creating a positive school culture. Activities will include:

- A. Bullying instruction: Developmentally appropriate instruction in bullying prevention skills, strategies and attitudes shall be provided to students in grades K-12.
- B. Orientation to student responsibilities in bullying prevention: Annually at the start of the school year teachers will review the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan with students in their classes. Students new to the school community after the start of the school year will be offered this overview by the Principal/designee. In addition, this information will be documented in student handbooks updated regularly by some schools. Links to the District's online Bullying information and resource page will be clearly labeled on each school website.

Anti-bullying messaging and information about student rights and responsibilities will be integrated into elementary evidence-based social competency instruction provided by teachers and Counselor Educators. As appropriate, information about the bullying plan and student rights and responsibilities will be integrated into peer mediation sessions facilitated by the Somerville Mediation Program.

- C. Cyber safety instruction: All students are provided with instruction and guidance in cyber safety and media literacy skills through their Library/Media Studies instructional block. The Library/Media Instructors use the Netsmartz.org cyber safety website created and maintained by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children as one of their resources when teaching the students about cyber safety. The students are also engaged in project-based learning activities which focus on the areas of internet safety,

cyberbullying, and bullying. Students are oriented to the District's Student Internet Use Policy which (a) provides guidelines for the safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies, and (b) specifically prohibits use of the District's computers for cyberbullying and other forms of hostile and anti-social purposes.

- D. Evidence-based prevention instruction: A program of evidence-based social/emotional learning instruction is offered to all students in all schools from grades PK-8. The curricula used in all District elementary classrooms - Al's Pals, Second Step, and/or Open Circle - are approved by the federal Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools for their effectiveness in addressing individual risk and protective factors¹ associated with bullying. These include:

Counteract the following risk factors

- Inadequate school climate / Poorly organized and functioning schools / Negative labeling by teachers
- Antisocial behavior and alienation / Delinquent beliefs / General delinquency involvement / Drug dealing
- Early onset of aggression and/or violence
- Victimization and exposure to violence
- Poor refusal skills
- Lack of guilt and empathy
- Cognitive and neurological deficits/ Hyperactivity
- Mental health concerns / Conduct disorders

Enhance the following protective factors:

- Good relationships with peers
- Presence and involvement of caring, supportive adults in school
- High expectations of students
- High quality schools / Clear standards and rules
- Opportunities for prosocial school involvement
- Effective parenting

Risk and protective factor list from www.findyouthinfo.gov, a clearinghouse of federal government resources pertaining to youth healthy development.

- Good relationship with parents / Bonding or attachment to family
- Individual social competencies and problem solving skills
- Positive / Resilient temperament
- Healthy / Conventional beliefs and clear standards
- Self-efficacy
- High individual expectations
 - Perception of social support from adults and peers

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

- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;

- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference;
- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance.

E. 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 and reinforcing clear expectations for positive, pro-social behaviors and attitudes in the learning environment
- Setting and communicating District and school standards for identifying, naming, and rewarding good behavior including introducing positive behavior awards as part of quarterly Superintendent's Award program
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, LGBT students, and homeless students
- Setting and communicating District and school standards for adult supervision during lunch, recess, bathroom and other unstructured time
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength by striving to increase the amount of organized, sports alternatives offered to youth during morning, lunch, and other recess time
- Modeling the safe use of the Internet and monitoring students' Internet use at school to reward positive behavior and redirect unsafe activities
- Supporting non-violent conflict resolution, including supervised, peer mediation
- Other prevention activities will be considered annually by the Bullying Plan Subcommittee of the District's Health/Wellness Advisory Committee.

Professional Development And Staff Training

The goal of professional development and staff training programs 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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on: (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;

- (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan: The District will annually offer professional development and training to **all** staff, relevant community partners who work with students (including but not limited to crossing guards, bus drivers, Somerville Afterschool Training Network), and

parents/guardians that includes the following topics:

- Orientation to the District's Plan, including staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an Bullying Intervention – which shall include: (a) definition of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation; (b) orientation to the District procedures for reporting, responding, and intervening in incidents of bullying; and (c) signs and symptoms a student may be a target of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation
- Cyber safety – which shall include: (a) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying, and (b) strategies for promoting cyber-safety
- Overview of the role of the District's elementary social emotional learning curricula and peer mediation program and their role in preventing/addressing bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

Annual, mandatory professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities that may impact social skills development and/or may increase their participation in or vulnerability to bullying, harassment, teasing.

A1. Mid-year hires: Staff members hired after the start of the school year shall be required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

A2. Substitute teachers and volunteers: Training for substitute teachers and volunteers shall be expanded to include orientation to the District's bullying prohibition, reporting and intervention procedures, and behavioral and other expectations of staff and students.

B. Ongoing professional development: The District will, as resources allow, offer additional professional development and staff training on topics intended to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. This will include skills training in bystander empowerment – which shall include: (a) complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target and witnesses, (b) research findings on bullying including categories about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment, and (c) developmentally appropriate strategies for intervening in stop bullying incidents.

Other, complementary professional development topics will be identified and developed annually as part of the Annual Title IIA/Staff Professional Development Survey and the annual evaluation of the implementation of the District's evidence-based social emotional learning programs.

C. Written notice to staff: The District will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan through the print and electronic versions of the Colleague Guide and the Human Resources Database.

Communication and Collaboration with Families and Partners

Clear communication and consistent collaboration with staff, families, students, and community partners is essential to achieving bullying prevention and other health and safety goals within the Somerville Public Schools. Communication with these and other constituents shall include information about the (a) dynamics of bullying including signs and symptoms of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, (b) strategies for preventing cyberbullying and promoting online safety, (c) strategies for preventing bullying and/or retaliation in the classroom, across the school community, at home, and in the community, (d) information about how to report bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, and (e) District procedures for responding to and investigating bullying, including strategies for creating a safe learning environment for targets and reinforcing positive behavior standards among aggressors. This shall include communication of the District's Bullying Policy, Disciplinary Policies, and Internet Safety/Acceptable Use Policy.

All communication will be developmentally and linguistically appropriate.

A. Parent and community notification: To ensure all constituents understand both intervention and prevention activities the District will minimally:

- Publish bullying reporting, response, and investigation procedures in (a) student handbooks, and (b) the annual parent/guardian guide;
- Public bullying reporting, response, and investigation procedures in the annual colleague guide
- Create a bullying page on its website (http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/no_bullying as a resource for (a) anonymous reporting, (b) clarifying procedures for reporting, responding, and investigating allegations of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, (c) communicating District and school positive behavior standards, and (d) expanding access to prevention education resources for families, teachers, students and community partners;
- Participate annually in No Name Calling Week as declared by the Governor every January. Other communication and social promotion campaign activities will be considered annually by the Bullying Plan Subcommittee of the District's Health/Wellness Advisory Committee.

B. Parent/guardian education and resources: The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PT(S)A, School Councils, Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

Leadership and Continuous Improvement

A. Planning and oversight: Members of the Superintendent's Cabinet will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Specific planning and oversight responsibilities will include:

- Receiving reports on bullying

- Collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes
- Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressor
- Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law
- Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors
- Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use
- Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them
- Amending District-level parent/guardian and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; offering assistance to Principals on the amendment of school or program-based student handbooks and codes of conduct
- Leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials
- Reviewing and updating the Plan biannually as required by law.

B. Biannual update of the Plan and community involvement: This Bullying Plan will be reviewed and updated biennially by the Bullying Plan Subcommittee of the District's Health and Wellness Advisory Committee to (a) ensure its effectiveness, and (b) establish strategies and indicators of continuous improvement in the effort to promote safe and supportive learning environment. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O the Bullying Plan Subcommittee shall include representatives from the following groups:

- Teachers
- School staff (e.g., cafeteria workers, afterschool staff)
- Professional support personnel
- School volunteers
- School administrators
- Community representatives
- Local law enforcement
- Students
- Parents/guardians.

A period of public comment will be open for at least three weeks soliciting feedback on improvements to the Bullying Plan from members of the community who may not be able to or comfortable with participating in a public meeting.

C. Outcomes and assessment: The biannual update of the plan shall include a review of available data on social and emotional learning, the environment for the delivery of social emotional instruction in schools, and data on school climate. This data includes:

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey data collected and analyzed in partnership with the Somerville Health Department
- Peer mediation and/or other data on student conflicts
- My Voice surveys and/or other school climate data.

This data shall be used to identify areas of programmatic strength, resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, schools and districts will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

This data shall also be used to set and monitor progress towards biannual improvement goals.

By the next biannual review we hope to accomplish the following goals:

1. The district will choose and implement during SY 2023/24, an updated SEL curriculum that includes bullying lessons.
2. The district will train and implement a districtwide Restorative Justice practice.
 - a. SY 2022/23 Tier one training for 80 teachers, administrators, and support staff
 - b. SY 2023/24 Tier one training for 80 additional teachers, administrators, and support staff
 - c. SY 2023/24 Tier two training for 80 teachers, administrators, and support staff
 - d. SY 2023/24 Tier three training for 40 teachers, administrators, and support staff
3. SY 2022/23 Middle school YBRS survey will be administered and data analyzed
4. SY 2024/25 High and middle school YBRS survey will be administered and data will be analyzed.
5. SY 2025/26 Yearly RJ Circle Keeper training for all new employees.

The outcomes, which shall be updated biannually, will be considered in alignment with the District's Safe and Drug Free Schools Plan and Wellness Policy Implementation Plan.

These goals and progress data shall be reported to the School Committee and other elected officials, and to the community on a regular basis:

Definitions

Aggressor: A student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying: The Somerville Public Schools Bullying Policy (**File: JICFB**), pursuant to Massachusetts General Law (MGL: Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010) specifically defines bullying as:

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

- vi. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;*
- vii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;*
- viii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;*
- ix. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or*

x. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.”

Cyberbullying: Bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, Internet postings, electronic mail, Internet communications, and/or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Hostile environment: Defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student’s education.

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

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

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

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

A. Relationship to non-discrimination laws: Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person’s membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

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

C. Relationship to other District policies: This Plan is related to the following District policies:

ACAB - SEXUAL HARASSMENT

EEAEC - STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES

IGBF - STUDENT TEACHER ASSISTANCE TEAMS (STAT)

IHAMA - DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO EDUCATION

IJNDB - SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR
STAFF

IJNDB-A - SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT INTERNET SAFETY USE
POLICY

