

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

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Professional Development

- Tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, respect for differences.
- Staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying.
- Address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities.
- Particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.
- Review survey data received from parents, students, and staff, at least once every 4 years.

A review of the law....

- On July 25, 2014, a new law “An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools” (MGL C.86,s.86 of the Acts of 2014) expanded the protections of the 2010 Anti-bullying law.
- Includes 4 main components:
 - School anti-bullying plans to include categories of gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ)
 - Requires school districts to annually report bullying incident data to MA DESE
 - Requires school districts to administer surveys at least once every 4 years on the climate of the school and prevalence of bullying; and
 - Grants MA DESE the power to investigate certain alleged incidents of bullying.

The Bullying Problem.....

- Every school district has witnessed a dramatic rise in student use and abuse of electronic communications. (Long and DiPietro)
- These actions can be in the form of a Facebook harassment, email, telephone texting or sexting.
- There is no doubt that students are sending and receiving these communications. Some students use these forms of communication to harass or bully other students, called cyberbullying.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan at Old Colony.....

- The School's Plan must include the requirements of the new law that prohibit bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, intimidation and retaliation.
- The Plan also must include information about the policies and procedures that the school district will follow to prevent bullying and retaliation, as well as how to respond to it when it occurs.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Bullying** is the **repeated** use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:
 - causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
 - places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
 - creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in by a:

- wire
- radio
- electromagnetic
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying

- Shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person.
- Cyber-bullying also include distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic that may be accessed by one or more persons.
- May occur in/out of school, during/after school hours, at home and locations outside to the home.

Bullying/Cyber-bullying

- Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is and that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, or leased by the school, but still can:
 - Create a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - Infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or
 - Materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation/Target

- **Retaliation** is a 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.
- **Target** is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Reporting Methods

- Bullying reports can be made by:
- Completing an Incident Reporting Form with Mr. Harrison
- Emailing to reportbullying@oldcolony.us
- Calling the principal at (508)763-8011, x-118, or the dean of students at x-125
- Leaving a voicemail at x-211
- Mailing a note to the Superintendent-Director, principal or dean of students.
- Old Colony provides the school community with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation yearly.

REPORTING BULLYING OR RETALIATION by STAFF

- Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded on a District Discipline Form or an Incident Reporting Form.
- Requirement to report to the principal or dean of students does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with the Old Colony policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

- Reports may be made anonymously, no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- Students, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, obligated to report incidents to a staff member.
- Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Responding to a Bullying or Retaliation Report

- Safety

- Investigating the allegations may include:
- 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.

Safety cont.

- School counselor will assess the student and determine the need to refer the student to a mental health professional.
- School counselor will immediately notify the student's parent or guardian, if services are required.
- Identify a faculty member who will act as the student's safe contact, issue the student a safety pass, monitor the student's status through periodic meetings.
- Implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation, a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, witnessed bullying or retaliation provides information during an investigation who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

Investigation Procedures

- Investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation within 14 days from the date of the report, using the Incident Reporting Form
- Consider all available information known, nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.
- Interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, others as necessary.
- Remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation and confidentiality.
- Obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
- Report shall be maintained by the principal or dean of students and provided to the Superintendent.

Determinations

- Principal or dean of students will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances.
- If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, will take reasonably calculated steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities.
- Determine what remedial action is required and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.
- May choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselors, target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians.
- Identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

Obligations to Notify Others

Notice to Parents or Guardians

- Notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor and of the procedures for responding to it.
- Cannot report specific information to the target's parent 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.

Notice to Another School or District

- If involves student(s) from more than one school district.
- The principal or dean of students 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.

Notice to Law Enforcement

- A reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor - Contact the Rochester Police Department.
- Incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school - Contact the Rochester Police Department
- Incident involves a student who resides in one of the other towns in the District - Contact the Police Chief or his/her designee from that town.

Responses to Bullying

Teaching Appropriate Behavior

- The law requires District use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
 - Offering individualized skill-building sessions.
 - Relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students with school counselors.
 - Range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals.
 - Meeting with parents and guardians support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills.
 - Adopting behavioral plans to focus on developing specific social skills.
 - Making a referral for an evaluation.

Disciplinary Action

- Determined on the basis of facts
- Nature of the conduct
- Age
- Need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior.
- Consistent with the Plan and with the District's Code of Conduct.
- Consequences may include counseling; peer mediation; a parent conference; detention; referral to Rochester Police Department, loss of Internet privileges; mandatory participation a behavioral skills-building program; suspension; and/or expulsion.
- Student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

- Increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.
- Contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed.
- Work with appropriate school staff to implement additional supports; adjustment counseling, academic intervention, protection to students, both targets and aggressors.

Student Training and Notification

- Annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the Acceptable Use Policy and the Internet Safety Policy.
- Evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention into the curriculum for all grade 9-12 students.
- Student surveys implemented and analysis of the data at least every 4 years.

Parent Education and Resources

- Offer education programs for parents that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the District.
 - Parents and Notification
 - Each year Old Colony will inform parents or guardians about the anti-bullying curricula that includes information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety.
 - Each year the District will notify parents about the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, Acceptable Use Policy, and the Internet Safety Policy.
 - Will be available in hard copy and electronic formats and in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians.
 - Offer parent surveys at least every 4 years

Staff Notification and Training

- Annual training for all school staff on the Plan.
- Include sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff
- An overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation.
- An overview of the bullying prevention curricula for grades 9-12.
- Annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the Acceptable Use Policy, and Internet Safety Policy shall be provided to all school staff.
- The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be posted on the District website.
- Offer surveys at least every 4 years

Surveys.....

- Under the Acts of 2014, a school district must conduct a survey study about bullying and cyber bullying every 4 years.
- The results of this survey will provide the development for an age-appropriate instruction to be designed on bullying prevention that will be incorporated into the curriculum of the school district. (Englander, MARC 2014).
- The curriculum will be evidence-based and incorporated into the grade 9 & 10 health classes.

Who Participated in the Survey.....

- School staff:
 - Administration, teachers, guidance counselors, nurse, clerical, custodial, cafeteria, maintenance, and support personnel online surveys emailed to Old Colony staff.
- Students:
 - Grades 9 – 12, conducted online during the school day, during health and PE classes.
- Parent/Guardians
 - Survey information was emailed home to parents, who provided email addresses, and posted on the OC website with a follow-up phone call about the link and participation in the survey.