

JICFB - BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

Priority Statement

The Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) are committed to creating a supportive learning environment that fosters intellectual, social, and emotional development. In support of the WPS core value of academic excellence, and in keeping with the WPS core values of cooperative and caring relationships, respect for human differences, and commitment to community, all members of WPS will treat each other with respect, civility, and consideration so that all students can reach their highest potential.

To this end, every student, parent/guardian, and staff member in the Wellesley Public Schools community has the potential and the responsibility to have a positive effect on the school culture and should act in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Treat others with courtesy, consideration, and respect.
- Tell individuals behaving in a disrespectful manner towards you that you want them to stop.
- Tell individuals behaving in a disrespectful manner towards someone else that you want them to stop.
- Notify a WPS staff member about disrespectful or bullying behavior.
- Help create, maintain, and restore a sense of safety and respect for all.

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

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves, or of damage to their 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" means 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, or 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 as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying 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 the definition of bullying.

The Wellesley Public Schools are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and encourage social/emotional development. We will support this work in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

The Wellesley Public Schools community understands that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

The WPS will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The [WPS Bullying Prevention and Incident Reporting Plan \(BPIP\)](#) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying. The Wellesley Public Schools are committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of bullying. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The Wellesley Public Schools **Principals** are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan at their respective buildings except when a reported bullying incident involves the Principal or the Assistant Principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the **Superintendent** or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the **School Committee**, or its designee, shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds; at a school sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school district; and
- At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the Wellesley

Public Schools, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the victim or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

- As stated in M.G.L. c. [71, § 37O](#), nothing in this Plan requires the Wellesley Public Schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

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

Reporting

In order to preserve the safe learning environment of the schools, all community members may report any suspected instances of bullying. 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/teaching assistant shall immediately report any instance of bullying they have witnessed or become aware of to the school Principal or their designee. Students who believe that they are a target of bullying, who observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are strongly encouraged to report incidents to a member of the school staff or by using an online or written form. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report. Each school shall have a means for students to anonymously report incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action against an alleged perpetrator shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents/guardians and members of the community are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible.

Investigation Procedures

The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a bullying report, shall promptly conduct an investigation. The principal or designee may contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who have been the alleged target and alleged perpetrator of bullying. Relevant school staff and parent(s)/guardian(s) will discuss actions being taken to ensure safety pending an investigation.

The Principal or a designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying/Cyber-bullying Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

Staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student where appropriate. The details of this safety plan will be communicated to the target and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

Confidentiality and/or other necessary means shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, is witness to, or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

If the Principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred, they shall consider appropriate consequences including disciplinary action. If it is believed that criminal charges against the perpetrator may be warranted, the Principal shall notify the School Resource Officer and the Superintendent to determine if local law enforcement should be notified about the incident.

Recognizing the importance of expeditious investigation, but also that such investigations can be complex and time-consuming, the Principal/designee shall endeavor to complete the investigation within fourteen school days when possible. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether a violation of this policy was found. The Principal/designee will communicate regularly with the parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding updates on the investigation and safety plan.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies, which are in compliance with federal and state law. Any disciplinary actions taken are subject to student privacy and confidentiality laws. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will only have access to information about disciplinary actions that pertain to their own student. Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

The Principal/designee shall maintain a report of each bullying investigation and shall send a report of the investigation to Central Office.

Student Assistance

In collaboration with families, the school district may provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying, as necessary.

Training and Assessment

Before the start of school each year, all school employees will participate in training on preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.

Data gleaned during the reporting process shall inform the adoption of new anti-bullying curricula.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan \(BPIP\)](#) shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in the Student Handbook using accessible and age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the BPIP shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Relevant sections of the BPIP relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The BPIP shall be posted on the school district website.

Each year, the Superintendent shall report to the School Committee an overview on bullying within the WPS community in the preceding year. To the extent possible without compromising confidentiality, these data shall be disaggregated by school and by targets' memberships in vulnerable groups as defined above. The purpose of these reports shall be to assess the efficacy of the anti-bullying training and curricula being used within the schools, and shall help determine the course of future teaching on the subject. This annual reporting does not preclude the reporting/discussion of bullying at other times in the year as deemed necessary by the administration or committee.

LEGAL REFS.: Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972

Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission, codified in 29 CFR § 1604.11

Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972

603 CMR [26.00](#) (Access to Equal Educational Opportunity)

603 CMR [49.00](#) (Notification of Bullying or Retaliation

Regulations)M.G.L. [71:37O](#); [265:43](#); [265:43A](#); [268:13B](#); [269:14A](#)

REFERENCES: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

[WPS Bullying Prevention and Incident Reporting Plan \(BPIP\)](#)

WPS Bullying Incident Report Form (Online)

WPS Bullying Incident Report Form (PDF)

Voted: May X, 2022