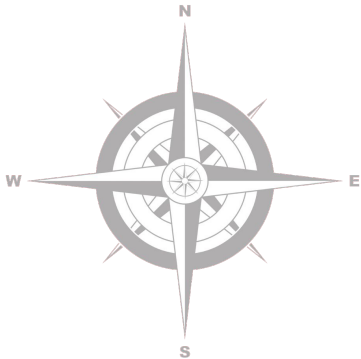

Bullying Policy, Plan and Implementation

November 2nd, 2021



WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Overview

- Introduction
- MGL on Bullying
- School Committee Policy
- MGL on Student Discipline
- Implementation
 - School Approach by Level
 - WHS
 - WMS
 - ES
 - Communications
- Next Steps

Definitions: Bullying and Cyberbullying, 603 CMR 49.03

Bullying: 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:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his 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: Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including:

- the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; or
- 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 the definition of bullying; or
- 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.

Other Definitions, 603 CMR 49.03

Hostile Environment

A situation where bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

Retaliation

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

WPS School Committee Policy - JICFB

- The policy is consistent with the definitions and standards of MGL c. 71, Sec. 37O.
 - Prohibits bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation on school grounds, property adjacent to school grounds, at school sponsored or school-related activities, at a school bus stop or school vehicle, and through the use of technology, consistent with the statute.
 - Reflects WPS' commitment to provide students with a safe learning environment free from bullying and cyber-bullying.
 - Specifies the responsibilities of the Principals, Superintendent, and School Committee.

Overview of a District's Obligations, MGL c. 71, Sec. 37O

- Develop a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) and review/update every other year.
- Train all staff annually regarding BPIP.
 - Any staff member who witnesses or becomes aware of bullying or retaliation must promptly report it to the principal or to the school official identified in the BPIP as responsible for receiving such reports or both.
- Develop internet safety plan (i.e., Acceptable Use Policy).
- Implement an appropriate anti-bullying curriculum throughout grades K-12 and notify parents of the curriculum content.
- Ensure student handbooks are consistent with MGL. c. 71, Sec. 37O including written notice in handbooks of relevant student-related sections.

Roles and Responsibilities: Principal, MGL c. 71, Sec. 37O(g)

- Upon notice of a report of bullying, Principal or a designee shall promptly commence an investigation, and make a preliminary determination the need for referral to law enforcement and need for immediate intervention to protect the target's safety.
- If the principal or designee determines, following investigation, that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal shall:
 - Notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal believes that criminal charges may be pursued against an aggressor;
 - Take appropriate disciplinary action;
 - Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor;
 - Notify the parents or guardians of the target, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Notice of Principal's Decision, 603 CMR 49.05, 49.07

- Upon completion of investigation, Principal (or designee) shall notify the parents of the target and aggressor of the determination.
- Notification must comply with confidentiality requirements of Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (603 CMR 23.00) and FERPA (34 CFR Part 99).
 - Principal may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent unless the information is about the parent's own child. 603 CMR 49.07(1).
- Where bullying is confirmed, Principal may notify target that the school and District have taken appropriate disciplinary action against the aggressor.
- Notify target of the services to be provided to restore a non-hostile environment for the target.

Disciplinary Action

- Disciplinary action must follow state disciplinary laws:
 - M.G.L. c. 71, §37H
 - Possession of drugs or weapons at school or school sponsored activity
 - Assault on school staff
 - Principal has discretion to suspend or expel
 - M.G.L. c. 71, §37H1/2
 - Felony charge - Principal has discretion to suspend
 - Felony conviction - Principal has discretion to expel
 - M.G.L. c. 71, §37H3/4
 - Violation of the code of conduct that does not fall under 37H or 37H1/2
 - Principal may not permanently exclude a student from school.
 - Principal has discretion to exclude student from school for up to 90 school days.
- Students may be suspended for violation of the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Retaliation is strictly prohibited.
- If aggressor is a student with an IEP or §504 Plan or is a student whom the District had reason to know, prior to the incident giving rise to the disciplinary action, might be eligible for special education, the District must provide the aggressor with the heightened procedural protections set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

School Implementation at Each level

WHS Bullying Prevention and Response

School Response to Bullying Report

- **Bullying concern/report received by school staff**
- **Principal works with staff to immediately ensure the student's safety**
- **Principal investigates: interviews, reviews documentation, consults with staff**
- **Principal makes determination based on facts and circumstances**
 - Determine remedial action required
 - Determine disciplinary action
- **Principal notifies parents, staff of determination and works collaboratively on next steps, as necessary**

How are we being proactive at WHS?

- Bullying prevention is a topic covered in our health curriculum
- In 9th grade guidance seminar students are brought to their house offices and told this is where they can report dangerous behaviors or bullying
- The bullying policy, prevention and intervention plan from our handbook is reviewed in the first Advisory meeting of each school year.
- Surveys - VOCAL, Metrowest, Challenge Success
- Help kids feel connected at WHS: Counselors, advisors, the house model, Challenge Success, creating a huge variety of courses for students to explore, coaches, ERP's, clubs, etc.

Key Considerations

- Wellesley's Core Value of Cooperative and Caring relationships
- Keeping the school community safe
- Keeping the victim safe in an ongoing way
- Supporting the learning and recovery of all students
- Reflection on each case for the future



Middle School Bullying Prevention and Response

School Response to Bullying Report - WMS

- **Bullying concern/report received by school staff**
- **Principal or designee works with staff to immediately ensure the student's safety**
- **Principal or designee investigates: interviews, reviews documentation, consults with staff**
- **Principal or designee makes determination based on facts and circumstances**
 - Determine remedial action required
 - Determine disciplinary action
- **Principal or designee notifies parents, staff of determination and works collaboratively on next steps, as necessary**



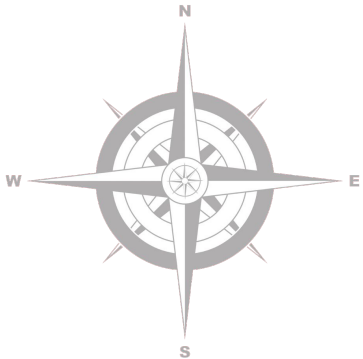
Inclusion and Belonging at WMS

- **“Everyone belongs at WMS”**
- **Middle School Teaming and Advisory model**
- **Guidance counselors (relationships)**
- **WMS programs and curriculum**
 - SEED lessons about upstanders, bystanders, incidents of bias
 - Surveys: MetroWest, Challenge Success, VOCAL
 - Assemblies and guest speakers
 - Health curriculum: wellness, internet safety, mental health, relationships



Elementary

Prevention and Response



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School Response to Bullying Report

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- **Principal investigates: interviews, reviews documentation, consults with staff**
- **Principal makes determination based on facts and circumstances**
 - Determine remedial action required
 - Determine disciplinary action
- **Principal notifies parents, staff of determination and works collaboratively on next steps, as necessary**

Building a Culture of Belonging in Elementary School

- Schoolwide expectations to ensure everyone feels belonging
- Morning Meeting or routine check-in
- Open Circle curriculum for explicit social skill development
- “Guided practice” of skills during recess, structured learning
- Teachable moments, learning conversations
- Small group instruction
- Clear consequences with emphasis on learning from mistakes

Communications/Public Engagement

Key Considerations

- Confidentiality/privacy obligations
- Concerns about safety/retaliation
- Key Dilemmas:
 - How to balance confidentiality obligations with community interest in school matters?
 - How to be responsive to the unique impact of certain topics (i.e., instances of racism/hate speech)?
 - How to respond given the age and developmental level of students involved?

Next Steps

- Complete full review of SC policy and school procedures to continue to ensure alignment with state regulations
- Supplement mandatory training of staff with additional training for administrators
- Continue to refine our Social & Emotional curricula, particularly in light of pandemic recovery
- Develop guidelines with the School Committee on communicating matters of broad community interest

Questions?