

# Easthampton Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

*Guide for Staff, Parents, and Students*

April 2019

On May 3, 2010, Governor Patrick signed into law comprehensive legislation to address bullying in public and non-public schools. *An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*, Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, requires school leaders to create and implement strategies to prevent bullying, and to address bullying promptly and effectively when it occurs. As a result of this legislation (M.G.L. c. 71, §370), the following is intended as the Easthampton Public Schools *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* for use in preventing and/or addressing bullying within the Easthampton Public School District.

The Easthampton Public School district values an emotionally supportive and physically safe school learning environment as well as a respect for and tolerance of individual differences. Our commitment is to provide a positive and safe learning environment for all students free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We recognize 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.

To this end, the Easthampton Public Schools has taken specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for all populations in the school community, and provides all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying and/or retaliation. We have and will continue to investigate promptly 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. This commitment is supported through curricula, instructional programs, staff development, and parent/guardian involvement.

The following outlined comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying summarizes the Easthampton Public Schools commitment to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

## PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying shall be prohibited: (i) on school grounds, 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 a school district or school and (ii) 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 a school district or school, if the bullying 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. Nothing contained herein shall require 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 shall be prohibited.

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 such 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.

Bullying is no longer dismissed as an ordinary part of growing up, and every effort will be made to structure the school environment and provide supports to students, staff, and parents/guardians so that bullying does not occur.

## LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

District and school leadership at all levels in the Easthampton Public Schools play a critical role in the ongoing development, implementation, and evaluation of the Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership also has the responsibility for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to communicate to the greater school and local community regarding the Plan and to solicit input from stakeholders.

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

Consider doing the following to allow for initial and periodic needs assessments: 1) surveying students, on school climate and school safety issues; and 2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses). Similar tools to the student survey can be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs. This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. The Plan should describe the methods the school will use to conduct needs assessments, including timelines and leadership role, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and para-educators. The Plan shall be developed and updated in consultation with a range of school employees, professional support personnel, volunteers, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students and parents/guardians. Such consultation shall include notice and a public comment period. Staff and student handbook/code of conduct will be amended to reflect any updates. Annual written notice of Plan will be provided to parents/guardians and students.

The bullying prevention and intervention Plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- Descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation.
- Clear procedures for students, staff, parents/guardians and others to report bullying or retaliation.

- A provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously: provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely based on an anonymous report.
- Clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation.
- The range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation: provided, however, that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
- Clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a target and assessing that target's needs for protection.
- Strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying.
- Procedures consistent with state and federal law for promptly notifying the parent/guardians of a target and an aggressor; provided that the parents/guardians of a target shall also be notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; and provided, further, that the procedures shall provide for immediate notification pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Principal or person who holds a comparable role to the local law enforcement agency when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
- A provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- A strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors and targets and for appropriate family members of said students. The Plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.
- A Plan for ongoing professional development that is required by the law.

The superintendent shall:

- Ensure the development of new or the revision of current policies and protocols required under this law.
- Ensure the review and update of the "Plan" biennially.
- Ensure the provision of annual notice of the "Plan" to all staff by publishing information about it, including the sections related to staff duties, in the district Personnel Policy Handbook.
- Ensure that the "Plan" and the Incident Report Form are available on the district website and in paper format at each school. The incident report form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of student's or guardians.
- Communicate, before the first day of each school year, with the chief of police about the implementation of 603 CMR 49.06. Such communication may include agreeing on a method for notification, a process for informal communication, updates of prior written agreements, or any other subject appropriate to the implementation of 603 CMR 49.06.

**Principals** - Principals in the Easthampton Public Schools are responsible for implementing this policy at their schools and will take the following actions to integrate bullying prevention into the culture of each school and respond to any incidents:

- Ensure a physically and emotionally safe, supportive environment is established and sustained by holding everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behavior.
- Ensure staff, parent/guardian, student knowledge of the bully prevention and intervention Plan.

- Ensure that the Student Code of Conduct Handbook, containing a summary of this policy, is distributed annually to students and parents/guardians.
- Ensure that the Handbook includes a copy of the Bullying Incident Report Form.
- Ensure that copies of the Incident Report Form are available in the school's main office, the counseling office, and the nurse's office.
- Provide students, parents/guardians, employees, consultants, and volunteers with training each year, emphasizing bullying awareness, prevention and intervention procedures and reporting mechanisms, and the importance of making our schools free from bullying behaviors.
- Provide staff with an overview of the bullying prevention curricula specific to the respective grade levels in the school.
- Receive and investigate all reported incidents of bullying and respond to all situations on a case-by-case basis.
- Receive and investigate all reported incidents of retaliation against students who report bullying and provide immediate consequences for such retaliation.
- Upon substantiation of bullying or retaliation, take steps reasonably calculated to prevent reoccurrence and to ensure the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefitting from school activities.
- Determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.
- Record and track incident reports for accessing information related to targets and aggressors.
- Review building-based data on bullying to assess the present problem as well as measure improved outcomes/response to interventions. (i. e. Office Discipline Referrals/Bully Incident Reports)
- Notify police immediately, when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.
- Notify parents/guardians of student that is reported to be a target of bullying.

A principal's notification to a parent/guardian about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**Educators** - All teachers, professionals and para-educators in the Easthampton Public Schools will take the following actions to prevent bullying and to create a climate that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning:

- Develop meaningful relationships with all students (i.e. greet students daily by name, model respectful behavior, avoid sarcastic tone, use 4:1 ratio of positives to negatives, etc.)
- Instruct the selected curriculum according to implementation guidelines and recommendations.
- Supervise students throughout the school day according to building expectations.
- Encourage students to "not keep it (the bullying incident) secret" and seek help from a trusted adult.
- Respond quickly and sensitively to reports of bullying or retaliation. Complete Bullying Incident Report Form and give form to Principal.
- Intervene safely and effectively in all bullying situations – do not ignore.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety of target if appropriate.

- Communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents/guardians.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.
- When a student has a disability that affects social skill development and the student participates in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of her/his disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP and/or Section 504 plan to develop the student's skills and proficiencies **to lessen their vulnerability and enable them to respond effectively** to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

**All Staff Members** - All employees in the Easthampton Public Schools will take the following actions to prevent bullying and to help children feel safe at school:

- Develop meaningful relationships with all students (i.e. greet students daily by name, model respectful behavior, avoid sarcastic tone, use 4:1 ratio of positives to negatives, etc.)
- Intervene safely and effectively in all bullying situations – do not ignore.
- Immediately report any instances of bullying or retaliation that the staff member has observed or has become aware of to the Principal or his/her designee by completing a Bullying Prevention & Intervention Reporting Form. Every employee of the *Easthampton Public Schools* is a mandated reporter.
- Closely observe children during transitions, recess, lunch time, and dismissal.
- Take seriously any concerns about bullying or retaliation that are received from students or parents/guardians.
- Encourage students to **“not keep it (the bullying incident) a secret”** and seek help from **a trusted adult**.
- Engage in professional development activities to learn more about bullying.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**Coaches/Extra-Curricular Activities** - All coaches/Club Advisors employed by the Easthampton Public Schools will take the following actions to prevent bullying and to help children feel safe at school & during sporting events:

- Develop meaningful relationships with all students (i.e. greet students daily by name, model respectful behavior, avoid sarcastic tone, use 4:1 ratio of positives to negatives, etc.)
- Intervene safely and effectively in all bullying situations – do not ignore.
- Immediately report any instances of bullying or retaliation that the coaching staff member has observed or has become aware of to the Athletic Director or his/her designee by completing a Bullying Prevention & Intervention Reporting Form. Every employee of the *Easthampton Public Schools* is a mandated reporter.
- Closely observe children during transitions and events.
- Take seriously any concerns about bullying or retaliation that are received from students or parents/guardians.

- Encourage students to “not keep it (the bullying incident) a secret” and seek help from a trusted adult.
- Be familiar with the rules and bylaws of any appropriate state agency.
- Participate in leadership training.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**School Counselors** - The school counseling department will take the following actions to assist in the prevention of bullying and to support a climate that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning:

- Lead parent or family engagement activities/efforts including facilitating the parental components of the social competency and anti-bullying curricula used by the district and/or schools.
- Plan professional development for staff regarding the implementation of anti-violence & anti-bullying programs in collaboration with the professional development committee.
- Draft parent information materials.
- Develop and plan supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors.
- Encourage students to “not keep it (the bullying incident) a secret” and seek help from a trusted adult.
- Establish partnerships with community mental health agencies.
- Comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

**Students** - All students in the Easthampton Public Schools will be taught, through an evidence-based, age appropriate curriculum, strategies to identify, to refuse to tolerate, and to report bullying behavior. In all schools, interventions for students who engage in bullying behaviors will be clearly outlined, and behaviors will be assessed on a continuum that is appropriate to the developmental level of the student(s). The skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and to respond to bullying, harassment and teasing will be addressed for students with disabilities in their Individualized Education Programs and/or Section 50 Plans. All students will be instructed and will be expected to adhere to the following procedures and strategies to prevent bullying:

- Value the rich human diversity found within our school and community.
- Recognize your responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice.
- Include everyone, especially those who are often left out. (moved to top)
- Become familiar with policies within the student handbook.
- Treat each other respectfully.
- Refuse to bully others.
- Refuse to stand by and let others be bullied.
- Refuse to watch, laugh, or join in when someone is being bullied.
- “Don’t keep the incident (of bullying) a secret”
- Tell someone who can help.

- Be mindful about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

**Parents/Guardians** - Parents/guardians, as partners of the Easthampton Public Schools, are strongly encouraged to take the following actions:

- Become familiar with the policies within the student Code of Conduct Handbook.
- Become familiar with the “Easthampton Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan”.
- Attend school-sponsored and district-sponsored parent events on matters of bullying.
- Listen to your child if he or she reports being bullied.
- Encourage your child not to exclude others or to spread rumors and gossip.
- Help your child understand how hurtful it feels to be excluded, bullied or harassed.
- Encourage your child to “not keep it (the bullying incident) a secret” and seek help from a trusted adult.
- Report signs of bullying to your child’s teacher, school counselor, or principal.
- Partner with the school if your child is identified as having engaged in bullying behavior.
- Monitor your child’s use of technology, including but not limited to instant messaging, text messaging and social networking sites.
- Communicate regularly with the school.
- Become familiar with the confidentiality requirements of the school.
- Ask your child about their day at school.

The parents/guardians of a student who is a target of bullying or retaliation will be notified and, to the extent consistent with state and federal law, will be told of the action(s) taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation. The parents/guardians of a student who is alleged to have engaged in bullying will be invited to attend a meeting at the activity, words or images subject to the complaint will be reviewed.

**DEFINITIONS** - The Easthampton Public Schools defines bullying in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section § 37O.

**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 para-educator who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

**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 herself or of damage to his or 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.
- Bullying shall include cyberbullying.

### **Cyber-bullying:**

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, 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 (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. 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

### **Harassment:**

Any activity or behavior that creates or contributes to the creation of a hostile environment at school for a student because of their race, color, national origin, ancestry, immigration status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability. A hostile environment exists when an incident or combination of incidents interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or programs. Harassment does not have to be motivated by an intent to harm, be directed as a specific target, occur at school or school-related events, or involve repeated incidents. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, the use of derogatory language concerning protected characteristics (e.g. racial slurs); bias-related teasing, jokes or mocking behavior; intimidation or threats; and unwanted physical contact or physical violence.

### **Electronic Communication:**

Any handwritten, or printed material, visual representation, live performance or sound recording, including but not limited to books, magazines, motion picture films, pamphlets, phonographic records, pictures, photographs, figures, statues, plays, dances or any electronic communication including but not limited to electronic mail, instant messages, text messages and any other communication created by means of use of the Internet or wireless network, whether by computer, telephone, or any other device or by 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, photo electronic, or photo-optical system.

**Hostile Environment:**

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 the student's education.

**School Grounds:**

Property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, commonwealth charter school, or nonpublic school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training. The law allows the school to enforce its policies for students going to and from school.

**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, as well as bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or para-educators.

**Target:**

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

At the beginning of each school year, written notice of this policy and the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be distributed to all employees, and a summary will be provided to consultants, contractors and volunteers. A summary of this policy in age-appropriate terms shall be incorporated in the Code of Conduct Handbook, and it states explicitly that a violation of the policy is subject to disciplinary action under the student code of conduct. To the extent practicable, the summary is translated into the non-English languages spoken at home by a significant number of students and parents/guardians.

This policy will be posted on the Easthampton Public Schools' website, on each individual school building web site, in each school building office, and within the Easthampton Public Library and City Hall Clerk's office.

**TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ongoing professional development builds the skills of staff members in preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying. As required by law, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development is informed by research and includes information on:

- **District** developmentally/age appropriate strategies to prevent, intervene in, and stop bullying behaviors including training in the implementation of programs such as Second Step, PBIS, The Virtues Project, Responsive Classroom, STRAT (Students and Teachers Raising Awareness Together), Anonymous Alerts, Life Skills Curriculum, and Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Model Program.
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- 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;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.
- 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) and/or Section 504 plan. This will include a focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.
- Anti-discrimination statutes (Title VI – prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin; Title IX – prohibits discrimination based on sex; Section 504 & Title II – prohibits discrimination based on disability).

#### School-Based:

- Annually - All building-based staff training on the Plan, which includes responsibilities and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and 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/district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.
- Review with staff the bullying prevention curriculum and evidence-based social competence curriculum offered at each grade level within the school.
- Review staff duties under the Plan and an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation.

#### District-Wide:

- Annually – All district staff, including such positions as lunch monitors, bus drivers, custodians, etc. will receive training regarding Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention, procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation, and other aspects of the “Plan”.
- Annually - New staff will be trained on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and bully prevention curriculum/evidence-based social competence curriculum appropriate to each respective grade level.
- Annually - Training of special education teachers addressing ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' IEPs.

## RESPONSES TO BULLYING

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.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building - Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- Implement a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals.
- Offer small group and/or individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's Bullying Prevention curriculum.
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel.
- Meeting with parents/guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the Bullying Prevention curricula and social skills building activities at home.
- Adopting behavioral plans to address the function of the behavior and to include a focus on developing specific self-regulation and/or social skills.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action - If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on 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 district's Code of Conduct as outlined in the student handbook.

- Progressive discipline procedures - Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and permit the steps of disciplinary action to occur at the lowest level possible. Through the process of progressive discipline, if any additional bullying behavior occurs, the next resulting consequence may be more significant than the preceding consequence. It is our goal to help students learn to make better decisions.
- Disciplinary actions may include loss of privileges, meeting with parents/guardians, detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, referral for evaluation, expulsion, police notification.
- 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.

**\*\*\*If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.**

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

- 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 that of others as well. One strategy that

the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

- Within a reasonable period following the determination and the implementation of intervention strategies 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.

#### 4. Other

- Referral of either the target and/or aggressor for an evaluation under Section 504 or Special Education
- Conducting a Risk Assessment of the Aggressor to determine the level of safety for aggressor and the school environment.

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

#### **Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71: Section 37H**

The Easthampton Public Schools' Student and Family Handbook contains Easthampton School Committee policies and procedures that are in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 37H, 37H ½, and 37H ¾ of the Massachusetts General Laws. It is our expectation that all students will comply with these policies and procedures in order to foster an atmosphere of civility and respect. Moreover, it is our belief that compliance with these policies and procedures will encourage students to achieve their maximum potential thereby becoming lifelong learners and responsible citizens. Student handbooks are provided at the beginning of each school year to students and parents/guardians. It is expected that students/parents/guardians become familiar with the contents and indicate via signature that they have read this handbook and will abide by the policies and rules set forth in the handbook.

## ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed by the following:

In district supports:

- School Counselors
  - Prevention strategies
  - Small skill group interventions
  - Individualized interventions
  - Evening hours for parents/guardians' sessions
  - Parent/guardian groups/training
- School Nurses
- School Psychologists
- School Resource Officer
- School and District Administration
- Health/PE department
- High School Advisory Program

- Peer Mediation when appropriate
- Club or Activity Advisors and Coaches
- Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)
- Second Step curriculum
- Steps to Respect curriculum
- School-based Data Team

Community based supports:

- Health care agencies
- Counseling agencies
- Easthampton Police Department
- Hampshire County District Attorney Office
- Department of Children and Families
- Crisis hotlines
- Faith/Church groups

## ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A whole school approach, evidence-based classroom curricula, and focused strategies for bullying prevention are all a part of the Easthampton Public School's approach to bully prevention. Approaches and curricula presently being implemented within the Easthampton schools include:

- *Power School Administrative Software* – a preK-12 student information software system to manage information and streamline administrative tasks. Data is stored over time and across schools enabling longitudinal data to be accessed. There is a discipline module that enables the district to track bullying incidents as well as harassment & civil rights violations.
- *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* – a violence prevention curriculum that is supported by research to help students develop strong bonds to school, solve problems without anger, and treat others with compassion. Teaching topics include empathy training, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management. Lessons include a review of objectives, a script for the teacher to follow, discussion questions, role plays as well as other activities and suggestions on ways teachers can model the skill throughout the week. Several research studies have evaluated the efficacy of the Second Step curriculum in teaching prosocial behavior and in reducing antisocial and aggressive behavior.
- *The Virtues Program* - The *Virtues Project* fosters academic excellence while creating a culture of social responsibility, integrity and leadership. It nurtures children in the skills and qualities they need to be successful in school and in life. Although they are the oldest practices in the world, virtues are essential to the true goal of education – intelligence plus character.
- *Strengthening Families* - The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a parenting and family strengthening program for high-risk and general population families. SFP is an evidence-based family skills training program found to significantly improve parenting skills and family relationships, reduce problem behaviors, delinquency and alcohol and drug abuse in children and to improve social competencies and school performance. Child maltreatment also decreases as parents/guardians strengthen bonds with their children and learn more effective parenting skills.

- *High School Advisory* – The Advisory Program addresses the emotional needs of young adolescents, while fostering family and community partnerships, strong, trusting teacher-student relationships, and a positive school climate. It provides an avenue for adult guidance and peer support in a small setting to personalize each student’s educational experience, as young adolescents cope with one of life’s more challenging periods.
- *Anonymous Alerts* – an online student anti-bullying app designed to help combat bullying and other negative activity in schools by empowering students to come forward to help themselves and other students. Social and peer pressures are some of the hardest obstacles for students to overcome, now they can report bullying and safety issues quickly using our Anonymous Alerts mobile app to report it.
- *Zones of Regulation* - The Zones of Regulation is a framework for teaching students’ strategies for emotional and sensory self-management. Rooted in cognitive behavioral therapy, The Zones approach uses four colors to help students identify how they are feeling in the moment given their emotions and level of alertness as well as guide them to strategies to support regulation.
- *Restorative Practices* - Restorative Practices are ways of pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done. After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about, and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better.
- *Responsive Classroom* - Responsive Classroom is an evidence-based approach to education that focuses on the strong relationship between academic success and social-emotional learning (SEL). The Responsive Classroom approach empowers educators to create safe, joyful, and engaging learning communities where all students have a sense of belonging and feel significant.

*It is recognized that the effectiveness of these programs and curriculum depends on the fidelity to which they are implemented. The Easthampton Public School district emphasizes the importance of fidelity of implementation and principals work with the counseling department and the professional development committee to ensure the appropriate training of staff as well as the implementation of programs at the school level.*

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reported incidents using the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Incident Investigation Form and determine whether bullying occurred. Other related complaints, if any, will be reviewed in making this determination.

- During the investigation the principal/designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. The principal/designee shall 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/designee, other staff members as determined by the principal/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/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/designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation. The district has developed a Bullying Incident Report form as well as an investigation form. Additionally, School Committee Policy JBA *Sexual Harassment, Bullying, & Hazing*, outlines policy and procedures.
- Upon investigation and determination that bullying, or retaliation has occurred, the principal shall promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor of the determination and the school district or school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. The principal shall inform the target's parent/guardian of actions that school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.05(l) prohibits the principal/designee from contacting a parent/guardian of a target or aggressor about a report of bullying or retaliation prior to a determination that bullying, or retaliation has occurred. The principal shall notify parents/guardians of the target about a report of bullying or retaliation. Notice required in 603 CMR 49.05 shall be provided in the primary language of the home.
- Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal/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. 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; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The principal/designee will take additional steps to promote safety during and after the investigation, as necessary. The Easthampton Public Schools has also developed an Emergency Preparedness Handbook.
- 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/designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal/designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communication will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

**Confidentiality** - A principal's notification to a parent/guardian about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

- A principal may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent/guardian unless the information is about the parent's/guardian's own child.
- A principal may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his/her parent/guardian. The principal shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
- At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, the principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against an aggressor. Notice shall be consistent

with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. The principal shall document the reasons for her/his decision to notify law enforcement. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.06 shall be interpreted to require reporting to a law enforcement agency in situations in which bullying, or retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.

- In making the determination whether notification to law enforcement is appropriate, the principal may consult with the school resource officer and any other individuals the principal deems appropriate.
- Nothing in 603 CMR 49.06 shall prevent the principal from taking appropriate disciplinary or other action pursuant to school district or school policy and state law, provided that disciplinary actions balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
- The principal shall respond to the incident as set forth in relevant provisions of the local Plan consistent with 603 CMR 49.06.
- If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in the school district or school, the principal of the school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.
- The Easthampton Public Schools has a written Memorandum of Understanding between the district and the Easthampton Police Department outlining our collaboration agreement and procedures. Additionally the Easthampton Public School has a Memorandum of Understanding between the school district, the Easthampton Police Department, and the Hampshire County District Attorney agreeing to work together to ensure a safe and secure school environment for all students, to foster a zero tolerance attitude regarding the illegal use of drugs, alcohol, weapons or violence and to provide parent/guardians, teachers and other staff with confidence that there is a consistent, cooperative effort by appropriate officials to prevent crime in the Easthampton Public Schools.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal/designee will promptly notify the parents/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/designee contacts parents/guardians prior to any investigation.

- Upon substantiation of bullying or retaliation, the principal/designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent reoccurrence and to ensure the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefitting from school activities.
- The principal/designee will determine what remedial action is required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

## COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Easthampton Public Schools offers parent/guardian workshops and speakers. Additionally, several parent/guardian and family events are held at each individual school.

Each year the Easthampton Public Schools notifies parents/guardians about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used in our schools. We collaborate with existing School Councils, PTOs, Special Education Parent Advisory Council and other such organizations in offering education programs that are focused on the parental/guardian components of the district anti-bullying curricula and social competency curricula used.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent/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.

Any parent/guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's office.

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, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in this Plan prevents the school or district from acting 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 such 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.