



# Quabbin Regional School District

## Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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This format follows the guidelines recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s suggestion of the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework.

## **I. LEADERSHIP**

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan: The Quabbin Regional School District (QRSD) Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (the Plan) is developed in consultation with district staff, school volunteers, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. This plan applies to students and members of the district staff. The Plan's development includes consultation of all stakeholders via public notice and a comment period before it is adopted by the school committee. The development includes needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings.
1. Those involved in the development of the Plan are Quabbin professional staff that have been trained in identifying bullying, aggressive and retaliation behaviors, imparting the definition of bullying and cyber-bullying, identifying the aggressor and target, and the reporting process. The Quabbin Regional School District referred to the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) model of bully prevention. This group assessed age-appropriate prevention curriculum and intervention techniques and is as part of this Plan. Through the school improvement councils, parent-teacher organizations, and from public comment, parents and community will have input into needs assessments and procedures.
- B. Assessing needs and resources: This Plan is the QRSD blueprint toward preventing and responding to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. Through administrative and faculty meetings, parent group meetings, and school improvement council meetings, the procedures for training and educating our staff, students and community will be reviewed. As culture, climate and needs change based on data received through incident reporting, behavior referral forms, and our Student Information Management System (SIMS), the recommendations will be discussed, and if pertinent to the Plan's success and student safety, will be proposed to administration. Working with the Director of Student Services, and support services staff, and in collaboration with local law enforcement, programs and resources for prevention education and skills and techniques will be made available to the QRSD community. The district regularly accesses the data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

A school climate survey may be done at 'Open House' time as parent and guardians are newly engaged in the academic year. The survey will include items on perceptions of bullying and school safety as well as a resource for community/parents/guardians and staff to share their reality of the climate on said subjects. Areas of concern will be queried before and after school events to assess a benchmark, then improvement, once a bully prevention curriculum has been adopted. 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.

- C. Planning and oversight: At each school building, the Principal or designee will oversee the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and integrate the intervention age-appropriate curriculum into the school's academic plans. Principal or designees will receive all reports of bullying, follow the protocol for response and will notify the Superintendent of filed reports on the day it is received and reviewed.

At the Administrative Office, the Human Resources Manager will oversee the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Human Resources Manager will notify the superintendent of filed reports on the day it is received and reviewed.

With the schools support staff, the Principal or designee of each building and the Director of Student Services if deemed necessary, will address reports and incidences immediately. A report shall be provided to the Superintendent.

The District's administrative team will assure the Plan is implemented, training for staff and students occurs, the public is notified, and that we work in collaboration with local law enforcement for direction and guidance to assure all students and staff are safe. The Plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

- D. Priority statement: The District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

Quabbin Regional School District is committed to providing all students and staff with a safe learning and working environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process or working environment.

We understand that members of certain student and adult groups, such as those with disabilities, those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and those who are homeless may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The school or district will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students and staff with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities by students or district staff members. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curriculum, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and the District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation by students or district staff members. The Principal or designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the Principal or 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 the safety of the alleged target. 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 alleged target.

## II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Annual staff training: Annual training for all district staff on the Plan will include staff expectations and responsibilities under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the appropriate administrator will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curriculum to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in training during the school year in which they are hired.
- B. Ongoing professional development: The goal will be to learn a common set of skills and tools for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences.

Professional development will build the skills of staff members to promote a positive, supportive school environment and to respond to behaviors that undermine that environment. It will include training on how they can identify, prevent, and respond to bullying. The initial and primary focus of that training will be on how staff can support efforts to prevent bullying and other disrespectful behaviors by creating a positive school environment. This may include but not be limited to:

- ways to interact with students, colleagues and others that promotes a positive school environment;
- the language and concepts being promoted through the social skills/bully prevention curriculum;
- ways they can support all members of the community in preventing bullying and other behaviors that undermine the positive community atmosphere;
- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- teaching the specifics of the social/emotional education curricula that is adopted; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

As required by MGL c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- 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 cyber-bullying; and

- internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing a student's Individualized Education Programs (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan. This may include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism, students whose disability affects social skills development and those students who are identified as English Language Learners.

Professional development will include, but not be limited to, general presentations, targeted workshops/working groups, and follow-up within the school setting to support staff in the actual implementation of the training goals. All professional development will include an evaluation of effectiveness with respect to supporting behavior change that leads to a positive school environment.

- C. Written notice to staff: The District will provide all staff and volunteers with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff, duties and bullying of students by district staff. The notice will also be available on the district website. Any staff that begins working with students after the start of the school year will be provided this written information as part of the pre-employment process.
- D. Parents and community members will also be provided with opportunities to learn about the social-emotional learning curriculum, the bullying prevention plan, and the procedures of that plan. The training for parents and community members will include 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;
  - the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying;
  - internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying; and
  - steps they can take to support their children in addressing any incidents of bullying or inappropriate behavior that might occur.
- E. Staff development efforts will be reviewed each year. The focus will be on developing more effective training and on effective ways to support staff in implementing this plan. Surveys interviews, and focus groups may be used in conjunction with other approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development.

### **III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

- A. The district currently has a range of resources available to support the development of a positive school climate and to respond to behaviors that undermine that climate. They include but are not limited to:
- school counselors in each building who are trained in prevention of and response to bullying and other disrespectful behaviors;
  - nursing staff in each building trained to respond to physical aggression both medically and through emotional support;

- adjustment counselors in the middle and high school to address issues related to bullying and other student difficulties;
- school psychologists are available to address student needs;
- school wide positive behavior support systems have been implemented in the elementary schools;
- ongoing coordination with town law enforcement agencies in developing a school safety plan and in responding to inappropriate behaviors;
- school based counseling services are available from outside vendors for those students who may need more intensive support than that provided by the school counseling resources;
- the district has access to the State Mobile Crisis Intervention Services;
- a referral process for working with Community Services Agencies to address the needs of the Medicaid clients is developed and in place;
- student support teams have been established at the schools to support staff in planning for and responding to student needs; and
- referral for services generally involves consultation between counselors, nurses, teachers, and administrators who work with a given student;
- the Quabbin Regional School District is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and services are accessible to all students regardless of their status under the law. We do not discriminate based on race, color, disability, national origin, sex, gender identity, religion, disability, homelessness or sexual orientation;
- the Quabbin Regional School District is committed to ensuring that all of its employment services are accessible to all employees regardless of their status under the law. We do not discriminate based on age, criminal records (inquires only), disability, gender, gender identity, genetics, military status, national origin or ancestry, race or color, religion, retaliation or sexual orientation.

**Support Services:** The strategy to help the target and aggressor will be based on the nature of the offense, the age of the targets & aggressors, and the decision based upon the results of the investigation. It may require the district to review its student curriculum or staff training program to assure it is clear, and achieves the objectives of properly educating and imparting the message to the students and district staff.

The counseling services for the targets and aggressors:

1. In school staff and service providers:

Social emotional skills programs to prevent bullying by:

- Classroom Teachers
- Guidance Counselors
- School Adjustment Counselors
- School Psychologists

Intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors:

- Guidance Counselors
- School Adjustment Counselor
- School Psychologists

To provide services for targets, aggressors and their families, the district uses culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within and outside the district. The district maintains a list of translation services and interpreter services for building administrators to access. For targets and their families, Quabbin has established relationships with local community-based counseling centers. Students and their families may be referred to the most appropriate service to meet their needs. A list of current local community-based counseling centers is available in the Principal's office.

Targets, aggressors and their families may be referred to Quabbin's support staff for further counseling. Students may also be referred to their own physician, family practitioner or pediatrician. The district's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for members of the district staff. The need for additional resources is generally determined at the building level with consultation with the Director of Student Services and the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Needs are identified by Principal or designees and other staff and then discussed with district level administrators.

B. Addressing service gaps will continue as needed.

- Developing a more formal referral process for the provision of services to the general population of students and those students affected by bullying or other forms of disrespectful behavior. This will include, but not be limited to, ways to screen for and identify students who may not readily be identified (autistic, depressed, internalizing, etc.), steps to take to assess the level of service that is necessary, ways to provide support, and ways to track the effectiveness of those supports;
- formalizing the connection with town law enforcement and the steps to determine when they should be involved in a situation and how to proceed;
- selecting a curriculum to address social/emotional learning in all of the schools and all of the grades;
- a district wide plan to address ways to create a positive school wide behavior support system in all schools that is consistent across schools and from kindergarten to grade 12.

C. 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 that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his or her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

D. Referral to outside services will be formalized as noted above. A clear, formal protocol will be developed to help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals will comply with relevant laws and policies. Local referral protocols will be evaluated to assess their relevance to the plan, and revised as needed.

E. Support service efforts will be reviewed each year. The focus will be on determining which services are most effective and where there may be gaps that need to be addressed. Surveys interviews, and utilization reviews may be used in conjunction with other approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of support services.

#### IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A. Social/Emotional Learning curriculum has been adopted to support students in participating in a positive school climate. In addition, specific bullying prevention approaches will be developed and taught as part of that curriculum. The curriculum will be selected using the following process:

- the student education sub-committee of the Anti-bullying Task Force reviewed a number of curriculum using the following criteria: empirical support, ability to be incorporated into the ongoing school curriculum, cost effectiveness, applicability from grades K -12, level of training and support needed, and ease of use;
- training for teachers will be provided annually to implement the curriculum when the school year begins;
- district staff and volunteer training will also be provided on the curriculum and how all staff can support students in learning the curriculum.

Curriculum will be evidence based and updated by emphasizing the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- follow up in the classroom;
- ways to recognize feelings and social cues to help in decision making; and
- ways to problem solve and make good decisions.

The bullying prevention curriculum will include:

- empowering students and district staff to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or district staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adults or administrator assistance;
- helping students and district staff understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students and district staff in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Lessons will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan will be reviewed with students. This will include providing them with grade/age level written material regarding what they can do when an incident occurs that makes them feel unsafe or harassed. In addition, the review of the Plan will be followed up by the in class social-emotional learning curriculum and discussion of any issues related to creating a positive school environment.

Student education may also include an annual student assembly regarding respectful behavior, student led programs, and other events designed to educate and reinforce the lessons taught in the classroom.

B. Part of the staff training will include 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 and support the creation of a positive school climate:

- setting clear expectations for students and district staff in establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students and staff, including students and adults with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homelessness;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students and other adults;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

The district will review the non-academic and extracurricular activities that are available to students to assure that they provide a broad a range of opportunities as possible.

C. The curriculum, implementation, and follow up will be reviewed annually. The focus of the evaluation will be on whether the curriculum was effective in supporting students in learning, how to handle difficulties and whether it decreased incidents of bullying. In addition, the evaluation will also focus on how well teachers were able to implement the curriculum. Some tools that may be used to assess the effectiveness of the student education process include surveys, interviews of students and teachers, and reviews of discipline and incident reports.

## V. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

### A. **Reporting bullying or retaliation**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. **A district staff member is required to immediately report to the Principal or designee, or to the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.** Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. Each school will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, available at all school offices, the Superintendent's office and a link to the

report on the district's website, the voicemail box of the Superintendent and/or the building Principal.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the Principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's 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 district will provide the school community, including district 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, and the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

### **1. Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will immediately report to the Principal or designee or to the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he or she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Principal or designee or to the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor 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.

### **2. Reporting by Students, Parents or 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 or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students and district staff will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member or with the Principal or designee or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor.

## **B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation**

### **1. Safety**

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal or designee or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor 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 or designee or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal or designee or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student or district staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student or district staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student or district staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student or district staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

### **2. Obligations to Notify Others**

- 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 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 or designee 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 or designee will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, and collective bargaining agreements consult with any individuals the Principal or designee or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor deems appropriate.

- d. Notice to appropriate Administrator or School Committee: Upon determining that bullying or retaliation of a staff member has occurred the appropriate administrator will promptly notify the Superintendent or School Committee.

### **C. Investigation**

The appropriate administrator 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 appropriate administrator will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The appropriate administrator will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their 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.

Interviews may be conducted by the appropriate administrator, or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor other staff members as determined by the appropriate administrator, and in consultation with the school counselor or Director of Student Services, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his or her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the appropriate administrator will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The appropriate administrator will maintain a written record of the investigation<sup>1</sup>.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with District policies and procedures and collective bargaining agreements for investigations. If necessary, the appropriate administrator will consult with the Superintendent for possible legal counsel about the investigation or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parents, guardians and district staff member shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken. At a minimum the Principal or designee shall contact the parents or guardians or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant principal is the alleged aggressor

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A and B for Procedural Report Form and Instructions

or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor as to the status of the investigation.

All employees will be expected to cooperate fully in the district's efforts to investigate.

## **D. Determinations**

### **1. For Students**

The Principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The Principal or designee will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any,
- 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, Director of Student Services, 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.

The Principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or 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.

### **2. For Staff**

The appropriate administrator will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the appropriate administrator will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted while employed with the district. The appropriate administrator will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any,
- 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

## **E. Responses to Bullying**

### **1. 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 or designee 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 pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

## **2.A. Taking Disciplinary Action – Students**

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 school committee policies which may include a warning, demerits or suspension, depending on the severity of the offense and the history of the aggressor's behaviors. The procedure as cited in the student handbook may dictate:

- demerits or other penalties allowed by existing policy;
- institution of a School Safety Plan (part a: Stay Away Order, part b: Victim Safety Plan, & Memorandum of Agreement) as appropriate;
- suspension for up to 10 (ten) school days as allowed by existing policy;
- involvement of the local police as appropriate;
- referral to discipline council for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, a suspension of an additional 20 (twenty) school days for a maximum of 30 (thirty) school days;
- referral to school committee for an exclusion hearing.

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.

## **2.B. Taking Disciplinary Action – Staff**

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by a member of district staff, district administration will take such action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such action may include disciplinary action up to and including termination from employment.

## **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 of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the appropriate administrator 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 appropriate administrator will work with appropriate support staff to implement appropriate supportive measures.

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

- A. Parent education and resources: The Quabbin Regional School District will provide opportunities for parental and community information sessions at least once per year in each of the schools. The information for parents/guardians and community will coincide with the age-appropriate anti-bullying curricula that are being used in the schools, as well as the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The sessions will be devised and implemented in collaboration with all parent-teacher groups within the district. The Principal or designee of each school is responsible for scheduling the sessions. They will be incorporated into the School Improvement and School Safety Plans. The educational component considers the overall socio-economic factors and cultural climate of the district. It will be adjusted as trends in population change.

Links such as Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center of Bridgewater State University's website, which provides guidance, suggestions and resources, will be available on the district's website. The information will be imparted and reinforced through school newsletters and notices that go home with students. As more information or resources become available, they will be included with the bully prevention page of the website and referenced in information being sent home to parents.

- B. Notification requirements: At the beginning of the school year, parents or guardians of enrolled students will be informed of the age-appropriate bully prevention curricula and the district's Plan via the written informational packets, in the student handbooks, and on the website. We will include information about the dynamics of bullying including cyber-bullying and online safety. The district will continue to send its Acceptable Use Policy for parent and/or guardian's signatures. This information will be provided in the most prevalent languages represented in the district among the parents and/or guardians.

The Plan will be included under the Parents and Staff pages of the Quabbin Regional School District website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The Quabbin Regional School District prohibits all bullying, cyber-bullying and resulting retaliation:

- (i) 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 a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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.

As stated in M.G.L. c.71, §37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## VIII. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor/perpetrator is a student or a member of the district staff, who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying as defined in M.G.L. c.71, §37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or members of the district staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target 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.

Cyber-bullying is 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, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c.71, §37O for the legal definition of cyber-bullying.

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

Local law enforcement agency is defined as the local police department.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or member of the district staff who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Target is a student or member of the district staff against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER 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, religion, ancestry, national origin sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, , sexual orientation or 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. 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.

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, M.G.L. c.71 §§41 and 42 M.G.L. c.76 §5 or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies or collective bargaining agreements in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

## Appendix A

### QRSD BULLYING HARASSMENT PROCEDURAL REPORT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Any individual who believes that he or she has been subjected to or has witnessed bullying will report the incident(s) to the building Principal or designee or to the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor.
  - a. Staff members other than the Principal or designee who take incident reports **must also complete steps 1-7 of the Bullying Harassment Procedural Report.**
  - b. For cases involving multiple aggressors, the Principal or designee or staff member or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor needs to complete only part 6 for each aggressor and include each additional page with the original report.
  - c. Staff members who are not designated by the Principal or designee to continue the investigation beyond step 7 will make a copy of the report for their records prior to handing over the report to the Principal or designee.
  - d. Upon receipt of the report, the appropriate administrator will inform the Superintendent that a report has been filed and of the investigation to follow.
2. The Principal or designee or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will investigate the report utilizing the QRSD Bullying Harassment Procedural Report and attempt to resolve the problem through the following process:
  - a. **The Principal or designee** or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor **will warn all parties involved that any continuation or retaliation will result in disciplinary action** in accordance with district disciplinary policies and collective bargaining agreements.
  - b. The Principal or designee will contact the target's parent/guardian and the aggressor's parent/guardian to notify the parties that an investigation is underway and a warning issued to both parties regarding continuance or retaliation.
  - c. If the results of the investigation for # 5 indicates that either the target or aggressor is a special needs student, the Director of Student Services will be contacted as part of the investigation process.
  - d. The Principal or designee or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will confer with the charging party in order to obtain a clear understanding of that party's statement of the facts, and may interview any witnesses.
  - e. The Principal or designee or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will then attempt to meet with the charged party in order to obtain his/her response to the complaint.
  - f. The Principal or designee or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor will hold as many meetings with the parties as is necessary to obtain the facts.
  - g. On the basis of the Principal or designee's or the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor investigation, he or she may:
    - i. Attempt to resolve through reconciliation.
    - ii. Extend warning through specified date.
    - iii. Require students comply with a specific safety plan which may include, but is not limited to: mediation, regular visits with the adjustment counselor, restricted movement during the school day, and exclusion from extra-curricular activities.
    - iii. Issue appropriate discipline including, but not limited to, suspension of student or termination of employee.
    - iv. In all cases the Principal or designee will communicate the findings of the investigation to the target's parent/guardian, aggressor's parent/guardian, the building Principal or designee (if not involved in the investigation), the Harassment Officer, the Superintendent, and Law Enforcement (where applicable).
3. The parties, to the extent permissible by law, shall be informed of the disposition of the complaint. All matters involving sexual harassment complaints will remain confidential to the extent possible.
4. The Bullying Harassment Procedural Report will be kept in the aggressor's and target's file for a period of **no less than one calendar year** or until all matters regarding the case have been resolved, whichever is greater.

**QRSD BULLYING HARASSMENT REPORT**

**1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

**2. Check whether you are the:**     **Target of the behavior**                       **Reporter (not the target)**

**3. Check whether you are a:**     **Student**         **Staff member (specify role)** \_\_\_\_\_  
    **Parent**                       **Administrator**                       **Other (specify)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your contact information/telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. If student, state your school:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. If staff member, state your school or work site:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**6. Information about the Incident:**

**Name of Target(s) (of behavior):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior):** \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Complete one report for each aggressor*

**Date(s) of Incident(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time When Incident(s) Occurred:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Provide a detailed description of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Attach additional information or documentation if necessary.**

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**7. Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

**8. Signature of Person Filing this Report:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

**9: Form Given to:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of delivery:**

In-hand  Secretary  Mailbox  Sent Electronically  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Recipient's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Recipient must inform appropriate administrator of this report upon receipt*

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**II. INVESTIGATION**

**1. Investigator(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Assigned by appropriate administrator)*

**2. Interviews:**

Interviewed aggressor **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed target **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed witnesses **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor?**  Yes  No

**If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?**  Yes  No

**Any previous findings of BULLYING and/or RETALIATION?**  Yes  No

**4. Any prior documented incidents involving the target?**  Yes  No

**If yes, were previous incidents confirmed as BULLYING and/or RETALIATION?**  Yes  No

5. If students are involved in the incident, are any students designated as special needs?

- a. Target             Yes             No
- b. Aggressor         Yes             No

Summary of Investigation:

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

**1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:**

YES/NO	CLASSIFICATION	ACTION TAKEN
	<b>BULLYING</b>	
	<b>RETALIATION</b>	
	<b>OTHER:</b>	

**2. Contacts:**

- Target's parent/guardian    Date: \_\_\_\_\_     Aggressor's parent/guardian    Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Target if staff member        Date: \_\_\_\_\_     Appropriate Administrator    Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- District Harassment Officer    Date: \_\_\_\_\_     Law Enforcement                Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Describe Safety Planning:** \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target:        scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_        Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor:    scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_        Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal or designee:    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Superintendent:        Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If Principal or designee was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_