

BULLYING PREVENTION

The Quabbin Regional School District is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student or member of the district staff shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying.

“Bullying” 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:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school or;
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a:

- Wire
- Radio
- Electromagnetic
- Photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents, district staff and families is expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used, it is to denote either bullying or cyber-bullying.

Bullying is prohibited:

- on school grounds;
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- at school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- at functions or programs whether on or off school grounds
- at school bus stops
- on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district;
- through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the Quabbin Regional School District.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the Quabbin Regional School District if the act or acts in question:

- create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringe on the rights of the target at school and/or;
- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Superintendent and/or his or her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include district staff, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws and collective bargaining agreements. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated annually.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan within his or her school.

Reporting

Students and district staff, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff, 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. The target shall however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students and district staff of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student or member of the district staff who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

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

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or becomes aware of to the school Principal or their designee.

Adopted 01.20.11

Revised 2.3.14

Investigation Procedures

The Principal or a designee, upon receipt of a viable report regarding student bullying, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of the student who has been the alleged target or alleged perpetrator of bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

The appropriate administrator upon receipt of a viable report regarding district staff bullying, shall promptly contact the alleged target and alleged perpetrator of the bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

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

Support staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student and or member of the district staff.

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

If the school Principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred he or she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, the Principal shall consult with the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are warranted.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parents, guardians, or district staff member(s) 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 the designee shall contact the parents, guardians or district staff member.

Disciplinary actions for students or district staff who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies and collective bargaining agreements.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the appropriate administrator. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent, upon request.

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under the law.

Retaliation

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.

Target Assistance

The Quabbin Regional School District shall provide to students counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying as necessary. The district shall provide to employees a referral to the district's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other appropriate services to both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying as necessary.

Adopted 01.20.11

Revised 2.3.14

Training and Assessment

Annual training shall be provided for all district staff and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

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

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate term

Annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan shall be provided to all district staff. District staff shall be trained annually on the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan.

Relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan relating to the duties of district staff shall be included in the employee handbook.

The Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan shall be posted on the Quabbin Regional School District website.

REFERENCES: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

LEGAL REFS: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended
Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
603 CMR 26.00
MGL c.71,370 §§ 37H or 37H1/2
MGL c.71, 370 as amended by §§72-74 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013
MGL c.71, §§41 &42
MGL c.76§5
MGL 265:43, 43A
MGL 268:13B
MGL 269:14A

CROSS REFS: AC, Nondiscrimination
ACAB, Sexual Harassment
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing
JK, Student Discipline Regulations

Adopted 01.20.11

Revised 2.3.14