

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

The Mansfield Public Schools is committed to providing a safe haven that fosters a culture of respect free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation to support the diverse human needs of all our students, employees, volunteers, visitors, and patrons. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning in a safe environment, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

The District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, in district school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. This prohibition applies to all MPS employees, volunteers, independent contractors, students, and parents/guardians, including conduct between/among all parties. All reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation will be investigated promptly and action taken to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. This commitment will be supported in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

Administrators and supervisors are expected to make clear to students and staff that any bullying behaviors, as defined below, will not be tolerated in school buildings, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored events or activities.

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 Mansfield Public Schools

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 Mansfield 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.

I. Definitions

To effectively support a comprehensive and collaborative approach to school safety, it is essential for school personnel, students, parents/guardians, law enforcement agencies and other interested parties to use common language. The following definitions, several of which are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, are provided to help facilitate this:

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Aggressor is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school 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 oneself or of damage to their property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber bullying is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which will include, but will 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 will also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Cyber bullying will 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 clauses, inclusive, of the definition of bullying. 37O(a)

Hostile environment is 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 a student's education.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements:

- (a) data for decision making,
- (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data,
- (c) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and
- (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices.

Response to Intervention (RTI) integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior

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problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.

Retaliation is 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.

School Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

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

II. Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Superintendent will oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, and parents/guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws.

The Superintendent or designee will review and update the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by December 31 every other year.

Each Principal will implement and oversee the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan within their school.

III. Reporting

Responsibility of Students

Students 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, should report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target will, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school will have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying may be subject to disciplinary action.

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

Responsibility of School Staff

School staff will take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying. Any employee that witness, hear of, or have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying behaviors are taking place, is obligated to report such behaviors to the principal or their designee immediately. Additionally, any employee who observes an incident of bullying on school property or at a school-related event on or off school property must immediately notify the principal or their designee.

This report should be made verbally as soon as possible but no later than the end of the student's school day. Staff members are required to report all acts or incidents of bullying.

IV. Investigation Procedures

The building Principal or designee first assesses the safety needs of the alleged target and/or protects the alleged target from possible further incidents. The building Principal or designee work with staff to create a personal safety plan; assign seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identify a staff member (in most cases the guidance counselor) who acts as a "safe person" for the target; and, when feasible, altering the aggressor's schedule so there is no access to the target. The administrator alerts the parents/guardians about the safety plan as needed. The Principal or designee will promptly investigate the report of bullying, in accordance with current state regulations.. The investigation may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

Student support staff will assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety for that student. Confidentiality will 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 Principal or designee determines that bullying has occurred, they will take appropriate disciplinary action.

Furthermore, school staff also must report all crimes to the police. Staff should notify the Principal, who will notify the Superintendent and the School Resource Officer. The SRO will coordinate notification to the police. Reporting of any such incident will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

The investigation will be completed promptly. The parents or guardians will 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 to the parents of the alleged aggressor, whether disciplinary action has or will be taken.

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Retaliation

The Mansfield Public Schools prohibits retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Confidentiality

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

VII. Disciplinary Action

The Mansfield Public Schools is committed to creating a campus environment that promotes timely and fair adjudication of bullying incidents. Principals will establish guidelines to protect the rights and privacy of the targeted student as well as the due process rights of the alleged aggressor. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by a student, the Mansfield Public Schools will take such action as it deems appropriate under the circumstances and that is consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct. Such action may range from counseling and/or discipline up to and including suspension or expulsion from school. All employees, including supervisors and managers, who engage in bullying are subject to immediate disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment.

The District will provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to both the targeted student and aggressors as necessary.

The Principal or designee will document and maintain a file on any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy. The Principal will provide a monthly report to the Superintendent.

VIII. Prevention: Training and Education

Staff Training

The Mansfield Public Schools will provide annual training in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students and will provide annual training for faculty and staff at each school on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan as it pertains to their respective school.

Student Education

On-going, age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention will be incorporated into the curriculum for all K-12 students.

IX. Publication and Notice

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Notice of this policy and plan will appear in all district publications that discuss comprehensive rules, procedures, and student conduct, including but not limited to student handbooks and the Mansfield Public Schools website.

The Superintendent or designee will provide annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to all school staff. Employee handbooks will include relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as they relate to the duties of faculty and staff.

Principals will provide annual written notice of the relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in age-appropriate terms, to students and their parents/guardians in student/parent handbooks.

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August 30, 2022
August 24, 2021
December 15, 2020
January 23, 2018
January 26, 2016
October 7, 2014

SOURCE: MASC
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, Notification of Bullying or Retaliation Regulations
MGL 71:37O, as added by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010
MGL 265:43, 43A
MGL 268:13B
MGL 269:14A

CROSS REFS.: AC, Nondiscrimination
ACAB, Sexual Harassment
IJNDB Responsible Use Policy
JIC, Student Discipline
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing
JICFC, Teen Dating Violence
JK, Student Discipline Regulations