



Dearborn STEP Assessment Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

In keeping with Massachusetts Anti-bullying law, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), acts of bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited:

- (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 disrupts 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. The school expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The school is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Reporting an Incident of Bullying

Staff, students, caregivers, or others may report incidents of possible bullying. Staff members will report immediately to an administrator when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. Reports from others may be made anonymously, in writing, by phone, or by email, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, caregivers, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students may report and discuss an incident of bullying with any staff member, their counselor, or an administrator. In all such

cases, the school's confidentiality policy applies. Information that might affect the safety of others cannot be held in confidence.

Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

Before fully investigating an allegation of bullying or retaliation, the administration 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; and identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target. Administrators may take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The administration will implement appropriate strategies for protecting a student from bullying or retaliation who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

Notice to Caregivers

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the administration will promptly notify the caregivers of the target and the aggressor, as well as the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which an administrator contacts caregivers prior to any investigation. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the administration has a reasonable basis to believe that a law has been violated, the administrator will notify the local law enforcement agency.

Investigation

The administration 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 administration will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, caregivers, and others as necessary. Whoever is conducting the investigation will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

The administration or other staff members may conduct interviews. To the extent practicable, and given our obligation to investigate and address the matter, the administration will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, administrators will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determination

Administration will make a determination based on all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, we will take steps reasonably calculated to

prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or benefiting from school activities. Administrators will:

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

Administration will promptly notify the caregivers of the target and the aggressor about the investigation results and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, administrators cannot report specific information to the target's caregiver about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of to report violations.

Responses to Bullying

If it is determined that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school use a range of responses and disciplinary actions that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct. If the administration determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action. Dearborn STEP's administration will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others.

Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students 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.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying 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.

Retaliation

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.