

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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All of the district's bullying intervention and prevention resources and forms can be found on the NPS website, <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/99>

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Introduction

Newton Public Schools is committed to excellence and equity and ensuring high levels of academic and socio-emotional learning for all students. In order to do this, we have a proactive approach to the prevention of bullying and all forms of harassment and strong interventions when violations of our norms and rules occur. Bullying or retaliation may occur in many forms, including through physical means, degrading words or actions, or social isolation. Its impact may be physically or emotionally hurtful. It instills fear of further injury, creates a hostile environment at school and, as a result, substantially disrupts a target's educational experience. Bullying makes the target feel small, while its impact looms large. Anyone can be a target, but certain groups are particularly vulnerable to bullying. This includes students who are gay and lesbian, have special needs, are from certain immigrant or religious groups, and/or who appear different in any way. Students or staff members may be targets and students or staff members may also be aggressors.

In order to create a school culture that is free of harassment and bullying, students, staff, and parents all have a responsibility to recognize and report bullying when they see it. We must also build a school environment that, by its very nature, prevents bullying before it occurs. This requires an evidence-based curriculum, clear expectations for students, sound policies and procedures, professional development for all staff, and community education and outreach.

During the winter of 2010, following a discussion that emerged out of the district's Wellness Committee, the district formed an Anti-Bullying Task Force in advance of the passage of an *Act Relative to Bullying in Schools* (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 370) in May 2010 and created and approved a comprehensive plan. This work was done in conjunction with the work of The Newton Partnership. In 2014, Massachusetts updated and amended the law, and Newton implemented updates to our Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan and the new plan was adopted by the School Committee on October 26, 2015. Subsequently, the district's policy and plan to prevent bullying have been reviewed regularly and continue to guide our efforts to ensure a healthy and supportive environment for all students.

Newton's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan consists of four components: Curriculum and School Climate, Staff Development, Parent and Community Engagement and Education, and Policy and Procedures, outlined on our website, <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/99>.

Assessing Needs and Resources

Every two years, NPS will review and assess the adequacy of the current policies and procedures, current programs, and assess various resources and update the Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan, procedures, training, and curricula accordingly.

Every two years, NPS will administer a student survey such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the district will annually report bullying incident data to DESE.

Curriculum

By law, the Newton Public Schools will provide age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade. Instruction on bullying prevention is not new in the Newton Public Schools, as a number of programs addressing bullying, harassment and retaliation have been implemented over the years. Below are brief descriptions of the curricula implemented by Newton Public Schools:

Responsive Classroom

This is an evidence-based approach to elementary teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. In Responsive Classrooms, students learn a set of pro-social behaviors and skills such as showing empathy. Studies show that students who exhibit bullying behaviors lack empathy. The goal is optimal student learning via specific guiding principles and classroom practices. The Responsive Classroom approach emphasizes the importance of the social curriculum and positive interaction skills. The program focuses on how children learn, respects the individuality of each child, utilizes partnerships with families, teaches collaborative problem solving, develops logical consequences, and models a collaborative, whole-school approach.

Bully-Proof

This is a supplement to the Responsive Classroom approach that builds a positive and safe classroom and school community from day 1, addresses gateway behaviors, creates rules and explicitly teaches expectations, addresses "tattling", identifies "hot spots" and teaches students specifically about bullying.

Middle School Second Step and Responsive Classroom

At the middle level, we utilize a range of resources from the Second Step and the Responsive Classroom middle level evidence-based curricula. These lessons target substance abuse, bullying, sexual harassment and violence prevention. They promote the development of empathy, positive communication, and emotion management; and coping, problem solving, decision making, and goal-setting skills. These positive factors enhance stress management. There are 3 core lessons for grade six that then spiral through the seventh and eighth grade curriculum. These lessons use interactive teaching methods and media to engage students to make positive choices and support social emotional learning. It includes targeted lessons on cyberbullying. The curriculum advocates a community-wide approach that links school personnel and parents to support common goals. These goals are designed to increase protective factors, such as school "connectedness" (i.e., students sense that they have at least one adult in the school that they feel connected to) and social skills development (such as assertive communication skills and positive peer relationships).

Bully-Proofing Your High School

The high schools are using the evidence-based approach, Bully-Proofing Your School. The *Bully-Proofing* approach, along with various pro-kindness initiatives, give us the ability to mobilize the "caring majority"-the 85 percent of students who are neither bullies nor victims-by developing and reinforcing their strong identities. Through their actions and influence, these students dictate the operating environment, giving strength and support to victims and defusing the power of

bullies.

Professional Development

The Newton Public Schools will annually provide professional development to all staff members that will review the district's policies and procedures, refer staff to information on the district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention website, and provide training that includes the following components:

- Strategies for intervention to stop bullying.
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target, and witnesses to bullying.
- Information on supporting students who are vulnerable to bullying.
- Information on how to provide all students with skills, knowledge and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying and harassment
- Information on cyberbullying.
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying
- The reporting, intervention, investigation, notification and reporting procedures and duties under the Plan;

In addition, the district trains teachers who teach the anti-bullying curriculum within their schools, and supports administrators who respond to complaints of bullying.

Parent and Community Engagement

Newton has developed and updated a comprehensive Bullying Prevention and Intervention website. It offers easy access to the policy, plan, and procedures, and it will provide a vehicle for reporting instances of bullying or retaliation providing useful resources and links to related sites. The web address for the Newton Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention webpage is as follows: <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/99>

Newton's Bullying Prevention and Intervention webpage includes information about the following:

- How to reinforce the school/school district's bullying prevention curricula at home.
- The dynamics of bullying.
- Online safety and cyberbullying

In addition, Newton Public Schools, will continue to conduct parent workshops and produce communications for parents/guardians to reinforce the school district's curricula and policy and to deepen understanding of the dynamics of bullying and retaliation.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

The Newton Public Schools maintains updated copies of all of our policies as approved by the Newton School Committee on our website. The full text of our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy is linked here <https://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/newtonset/newton/JICFB> .

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy includes sections on definitions, the scope of school authority, reporting obligations, notification requirements, investigations, intervention outcomes and reporting requirements, and its intent is to meet the obligations of M.G.L. c.71 sec. 370, as amended. In addition, the district's Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook has been modified to include disciplinary codes relating to bullying, retaliation, or aiding, abetting or encouraging bullying. There are also reporting and investigation forms, as well as a flow chart, which all supplement the policy. These procedures seek to protect the target, inform parents of all parties, and restore a sense of safety, while both disciplining and educating the target, aggressor, and bystanders. Furthermore, our district's policy and procedures prohibiting and for investigating Discrimination and Harrassment are also relevant and supportive of our goals as a district. They can be found here: <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/page/3323> .

The policy defines bullying (including cyber-bullying) as the repeated use by one or more students or staff member, of a written, verbal, or electronic communication or expression, or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target. Bullying results in the outcomes that:

- cause physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to his or her property;
- place the target in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringe on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The policy notes that bullying can include any form of repeated behavior, either in person or via electronic means, that involves an imbalance of power or strength and a pattern of behavior which interferes with another person's sense of safety, dignity, comfort or productivity in the school environment. Possible behaviors may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Physical intimidation or assault
- Name calling (verbal/written), teasing, mimicking, slurs, or other derogatory remarks
- Displaying materially and substantially disruptive graffiti, symbols, posters, pictures, cartoons/caricatures, notes, book covers, or designs on clothing
- Phone calls, and/or electronic communications
- Touching of a person or person's clothing
- Words, pranks or actions which provoke feelings of embarrassment, hurt, or intimidation
- Stalking
- Threats, threatening gestures or actions
- False accusations or rumors
- Social isolation

The above behaviors are not necessarily bullying in isolation, but they constitute bullying when they occur in a repeated context and they:

- have the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive school or work environment;
- have the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance; or
- otherwise adversely affect an individual's educational opportunities.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Procedures

A. Reporting Obligations

Reporting by Staff: All faculty, staff, independent contractors or school volunteers who become aware or have a reasonable belief that bullying or retaliation has occurred shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation orally or in writing, to the principal/designee(s). 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 or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others: In keeping with the Newton Public School System's core value of providing a safe, healthy, respectful environment, any student, parent/guardian, and others who become aware of or has a reasonable belief that bullying or retaliation has occurred or may have occurred to other members of the school community is strongly encouraged to promptly report the incident(s) to the principal/designee. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action. Anonymous reporting is possible and is outlined below.

Reporting to Local Law Enforcement: In the event that bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal/designee will notify the local law enforcement agency in writing, if s/he suspects that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Anonymous Reporting: Anonymous reports may be made utilizing the Newton Public School System's bullying reporting form, which can be accessed on the webpage <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/99>. Anonymous reports may also be delivered to a designated area in each school. The school will investigate such reports to the extent that sufficient information is provided to do so. Formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Annual Reporting to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): In accordance with the M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(k), NPS will annually provide the following data to DESE: 1) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; 2) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation; 3) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation; and 4) other information required by DESE.

B. Investigation

The school principal/designee shall promptly investigate a report of bullying or retaliation, giving consideration to all circumstances at hand, including the nature of allegations, ages of the students

involved, and whether any behaviors are related to a student's disability. The following are general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. The guidelines will be adapted as necessary to respond appropriately to the complaint. Upon receiving a complaint, the parents/guardians of all parties (both the target and the aggressor) involved will be notified of an incident in a timely fashion, preferably on the same day of the report, by the principal/designee. Even before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to support the alleged target and or/protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. In taking any such action, however, the rights and safety of the alleged target, alleged aggressor, and bystanders must be considered.

If the principal/designee determines that a bullying incident had the effect of placing the target in reasonable fear or harm, or adversely affected their educational environment, then a formal investigation would be initiated. The principal will use a "reasonable person" standard in making this determination. (When applied to children, the "reasonable person" standard is generally, "that a reasonable person of like age, intelligence and experience under like circumstances.")

Allegation involving Staff Member: If the complaint involves an allegation against a staff member, the principal/designee will inform the staff member of the allegation and investigation, and consult with the Director of Human Resources prior to interviewing the staff member.

Written statement of complaint: The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gathering information from the target, including such matters as:

- what specifically happened,
- who committed the alleged acts,
- who was present or may have information about the events,
- when the events occurred (date, time of day), and
- where the events occurred.

Gathering information: Once the allegations of the target are established, the investigator will gather information, which often involves interviews of all parties. The principal/designee should remind the alleged aggressor and witness that retaliation against whom they believe might have reported the incident or cooperated with the investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action and/or possible referral to local law enforcement.

Confidentiality: During an investigation, the confidentiality of the target and the other witnesses will be maintained to the extent practicable given the school's obligation to investigate and address the matter.

C. Determination and Intervention Outcomes

School personnel must weigh all of the information objectively to determine whether the alleged event occurred and, if it did, whether the events constitute bullying or retaliation. The determination must be based upon all of the facts and circumstances and the perspective of a reasonable person.

Students who engage in bullying or retaliation will be subject to consequences, which may

include disciplinary action; however, action taken must balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. The range of disciplinary actions includes, but is not limited to, verbal or written warning, reprimands, detentions, short- or long-term suspensions, or expulsion from school, as determined by the school administration and/or school committee.

If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the school will work to assure the safety of all parties. The school will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The district will also take appropriate steps to protect from retaliation persons who take action consistent with this policy, or who report, file a complaint of, or cooperate in an investigation of a violation of this policy.

Threats or acts of retaliation, whether person-to-person, by electronic means, or through third parties are serious offenses that will subject the violator to significant disciplinary and other corrective action.

As with the investigation, the response will be individually tailored to all of the circumstances, including the nature of the conduct and the age of the students involved. In addition to taking disciplinary action, the following are examples of steps that may be taken to prevent the recurrence of bullying or retaliation:

- Monitor and assure the continued safety of all parties. Develop and implement a safety plan for the target and witnesses as needed.
- Provide necessary supports for the target.
- Require relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students.
- Refer to psycho/social educational groups or workshops.
- Develop an action plan directed toward helping the aggressor recognize and correct behaviors.
- Conduct parent conferences.
- Refer to intervention groups and/or individual counseling for all parties as appropriate.
- Monitor behaviors and, as needed, develop a behavioral contract.
- Work with bystanders to empower them in becoming part of the solution.
- Enhance adult supervision on school premises.
- Limit or deny student access to a part or area of a school and/or to the students involved.
- Require classroom or school transfers.
- Exclude from participation in school-sponsored or school-related functions, afterschool programs, and/or extracurricular activities.
- Determine with the families whether a family member of the involved students (target, aggressor, bystanders) would be well served by counseling or referral to services. If appropriate, referrals may be made to in-house counseling or psychological services, local agencies, and/or Project INTERFACE.

A disability that affects social skills development may in turn affect a student's participation in (as an aggressor) or vulnerability to (as a target) bullying. In addition to the possibility of the above actions, the Team may consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to refrain from or respond to bullying behavior. This may include creation of or

adjustment to behavior plans and/or instruction in social pragmatics.

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. Parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor, to the extent consistent with state and federal law, will be notified of actions taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Regardless of the outcome of the bullying or retaliation determination, the principal or designee will inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system. Any parent or guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the DESE Program Resolution System. That information can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 784-338-3700.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS AND POLICIES

Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

There are several applicable sections and references within the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook addressing Bullying Intervention and Prevention, including:

Associated Rights of Students, Section C - Right to An Equal Education

and

Rules of Behavior and Discipline (Section B- Discipline Guidelines and Codes

Non-Discrimination Policy, including Harassment and Retaliation and Protocol

Newton Public Schools does not exclude from participation, deny the benefits of NPS from or otherwise discriminate against, individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, active military/veteran status, marital status, familial status, homelessness, ancestry, ethnic background, national origin, or any other category protected by state or federal law in the administration of its educational and employment policies, or in its programs and activities, and provides equal access to all designated youth groups. Newton Public Schools requires all members of the school community to conduct themselves in accordance with this policy.

The full text of the policy, which was revised and adopted on November 1, 2021, can be found here, [New Non-Discrimination Policy](#).

The Non-Discrimination Protocol

All members of the school community are responsible for reporting any incident that they believe to be discrimination. Using the [Protocol](#), which was revised in January 2022, NPS will respond promptly

to any reports or complaints of discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, or other violations of civil rights. Where it is determined that discrimination has occurred, NPS will act promptly to address the conduct and will take developmentally-appropriate restorative, corrective, and/or disciplinary action.

Corrective, restorative and/or disciplinary measures will be implemented to address the behavior and support the individuals or groups impacted with the intention to:

- Provide protection and support for those harmed by understanding their needs,
- Promote accountability and learning for the aggressor(s) through intentional and restorative action, and
- Facilitate/foster healing for all involved, as possible and appropriate

Restorative or corrective action may be implemented regardless of whether the non-discrimination policy has been violated in to order support any students, families or other community members involved.

Other laws, policies, and practices

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the Newton Public Schools to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37HY2, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L. c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, Newton Public Schools' policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

**Newton Public Schools
Bullying Incident
REPORTING FORM**

Bullying is serious and will not be tolerated in the Newton Public Schools. If you wish to report an incident of alleged bullying, either contact the principal, assistant principal, or dean or complete this form and return it to the school so that staff can investigate the matter. In addition, we encourage you to work directly with school staff as they take steps to resolve problems and assure the safety of all parties. You can find more information about the Newton Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on our website, <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/99>. This form can be completed anonymously.

Today's date: _____

Name(s) of target(s) of bullying:	Age(s)	Grade(s)/Position(s)	School

Relevant Demographic information or identity of target:

Name(s) of aggressor(s):	Age	Grade/Position	School

Name(s) of witness(es):

When did the incident(s) happen? (Include date and time.)

Where did the incident(s) occur?

Please check the box or boxes next to the statement(s) that best describes what happened (choose all that apply):

Retaliation Teasing Physical Violence Intimidation Extortion

Hurtful, demeaning remarks or actions Public Humiliation Aggression encouraged by others

Maliciously excluding from group Cyberbullying Rumors or Spreading Falsehoods

Stalking Defacing clothing or other property Threat Theft Other

Give a brief description of the incident(s) and/or your concerns. (Use reverse side if necessary)

Did a physical injury result? Please check one of the following:

- No Yes, but it did not require medical attention Yes, and it required medical attention

Do you know of other incidents of bullying directed at this student? No Yes

Name of the person reporting incident(s)? (You may report anonymously) _____

Relationship to Student: _____ Telephone: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Newton Public Schools
Bullying Incident
INVESTIGATION FORM**

This form should be completed by the school principal/designee after completing an investigation of an allegation of bullying.

Today's date: _____ / _____ / _____
Month Day Year

Name(s) of target(s) of bullying:	Age	Grade	School

Relevant Demographic information or identity of target:

Name(s) of alleged aggressor(s):	Age	Grade	School

Date, time and location of incident(s):

Description of incident(s):

List who was interviewed: [Include Target(s), Alleged Aggressor(s), and any Witness(es)]

Findings: This incident constituted bullying because the following criteria has been met: There has been the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target. One or more of the following outcomes apply to this situation: (check all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Caused physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to his or her property
<input type="checkbox"/> Placed the target in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property
<input type="checkbox"/> Created a hostile environment at school for the target

- Infringed on the rights of the target at school
- Materially and substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of a school

Corrective Action:

Parent notification regarding outcomes as it pertains to their child, including action(s) taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation: (date and time)

Administrator Investigating Incident(s):	Title:
Name:	