

# KING PHILIP REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN



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The King Philip Regional School District is committed to providing a safe, positive, and productive educational environment free from bullying and cyberbullying where students can achieve the highest academic standards. This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) comprehensively addresses bullying and cyberbullying in the District. The District’s Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was reviewed and revised in May 2024 through the middle school council.

The King Philip Regional School District recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnancy, parenting status, sexual orientation, 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. The King Philip Regional School District will identify and take steps to create a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community. It will provide all students with skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, and teasing.

Each Principal shall be responsible for implementing and overseeing the Plan with their school.

**DEFINITIONS**

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of an unwelcome 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; student, or employee,
- (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his 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 a school's education process or orderly operation.

For this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, bullying shall include cyberbullying.

“Cyberbullying” 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, photoelectronic or photo-optical system, including but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communication. Cyberbullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creator or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that one person may access.

“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 the student’s education.

“Aggressor” is a student or member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

“Target” is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

## **PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Bullying, which includes cyberbullying, is prohibited:

- (1) On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds; at school-sponsored or school-related activities, 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; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the King Philip Regional School District; and
- (2) 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 King Philip Regional School District if the act creates 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, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

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

### Reporting Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Retaliation

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

Each school shall have a means for students to report bullying incidents anonymously. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely based on an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

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

Reporting may be oral or written. Reports made to a staff member will be recorded in writing. The KPRSD “Bullying Prevention & Intervention Anonymous Incident Reporting Form” has been developed for students, parents, or staff to report suspected bullying incidents. This form is available on the

KPRSD website. A member of school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, shall immediately report any instance of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee.

### Investigation Procedures

The school Principal or a designee shall promptly investigate a report that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation using a Bullying/Cyberbullying Report Form, which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged aggressor, staff members, students, and witnesses. The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a report that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, shall promptly contact the parents/guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged aggressor of bullying.

Before and after the investigation, support staff and the Principal or their designee shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and take steps to restore a sense of safety for that student, which may include creating and implementing a safety plan. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed with the parents/guardians of the alleged target and, as necessary, with the parents of the alleged aggressor. In determining the steps required to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents, the principal or designee shall consider that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, 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.

To the extent practicable, given the district's obligation to investigate the matter and as required by law, 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. The principal or their designee will consider the implementation of appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student or staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student or staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student or staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be by state and federal privacy laws and regulations and 603 CMR 49.00. basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, the principal shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. Notice shall be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. The principal shall document the reasons for the decision to notify law enforcement. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.05 shall be interpreted to require reporting to a law enforcement agency in situations where bullying and retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.

Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency.

Upon receipt of a report or complaint that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, the principal or designee will conduct an investigation and decide based upon all of the facts and circumstances and, whenever practicable, will do so within twenty (20) school working days of the principal's receipt of the complaint of bullying or retaliation. The principal or their designee may extend the investigation period beyond twenty (20) school days because of extenuating circumstances, including but not limited to the availability and cooperation of witnesses, the complexity of the investigation, school vacation periods, and the involvement of law enforcement and other outside agency investigations. If the principal or their designee extends the investigation, they will notify the complainant and/or parents of the alleged target of the extension. The investigation shall make factual findings based on a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation occurred, the parents or guardians shall be informed of this determination and the school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. Notice to the parents of students will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00. The notice to the parents or guardians of the target shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents/guardians of the target should be provided the following contact information: Problem Resolution System Office, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370; Email: [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu).

If the school principal or a designee determines that bullying/retaliation has occurred, they shall take appropriate disciplinary action; however, the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach proper behavior. Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies. They may include, as appropriate, short-term suspension from school, long-term suspension from school, or expulsion.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying reported per this policy, and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent. Data regarding bullying incidents will be reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education annually per M.G.L. c. 71 §.370(k).

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.

#### Individual Assistance

The King Philip School District shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and aggressors, and relevant family members of a student affected by bullying, as necessary.

#### Training and Assistance

All school staff members shall receive annual training on preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting bullying incidents.

### Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians. All school staff shall receive annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the school district website.

### **PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM**

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seek assistance outside the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). Information about PRS is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/> and PRS may be contacted at Problem Resolution System Office, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370; Email: [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu).

### **COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

The King Philip Regional School District is committed to promoting a strong home-school partnership regarding bullying prevention. Communication between home and school is made regularly through school notices, school and district websites, and parent conferences/presentations.

Parent education and resources: The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians focused on the anti-bullying curricula' parental components and any social competency curricula used by the district or school.

The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations. The KPRSD has established the Healthy KP Substance Use Prevention Coalition and collaborates with the Wellness Advisory Council, elementary districts, and Boosters.

Notification requirements: Each year, the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula being used. Information about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula that are provided to families will include (1) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the district and the Plan; (2) the dynamics of bullying, and (3) online safety and cyberbullying. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats and available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

### **ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

Based on the school-wide curricula, the King Philip Regional School District will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade. Students will also be taught about the

student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Specific bullying prevention approaches: Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research, which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or school staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, 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 in a safe, supportive school environment that respects diversity and difference.

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:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
  - using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- 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.

Specific programming used within the district includes the middle school course that addressed bullying intervention and prevention, conducted within 7th grade Health and Wellness class. Lessons were developed from the Massachusetts Aggression and Reduction Center's resources. During this unit, the class focus is on how the mistreatment of others, wrongful labeling, harassing physical/verbal, cyberbullying, etc.. are wrong and are oftentimes a cause/contributing factor to depression in teens.

School Climate Survey: The MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey is conducted every other year to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in schools. The survey results will evaluate the effectiveness of the district's bullying prevention curricula. The middle school also uses the Center on PBIS: School Climate Survey Suite to measure student, teacher, administrator, faculty, and family perceptions of school climate.

## **ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students, including targets, aggressors, and witnesses of bullying or cyberbullying, are addressed. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for providing support and services necessary to meet these needs. To enhance the schools' capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors, and witnesses. The schools provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for students who are aggressors, targets, witnesses, and family members of those students.

Identifying Resources: School counselors, together with building administrators, will work to identify the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management, and other services for these students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families. Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. The King Philip Regional School District will collaborate with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced-based curricula and provide additional preventative services to students, parents, guardians, and faculty and staff.

Counseling and Other Services: School counselors, nurses, school psychologists, and special educators provide various skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include ongoing emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community-based counseling referrals when appropriate. School counselors meet with parents and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, emotional, and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible. School counselors work with administrators to provide linguistically appropriate resources to identified families. School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community-based mental health referrals and Community Service Agencies (CSAs) within the local vicinity, providing services to Medicaid-eligible students. School counselors, school psychologists, and intensive special needs educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and social thinking groups for students with social skill weaknesses. In addition, school counselors, school psychologists, and special education professionals work together to educate and support parents, conduct parent workshops, and apprise parents of outside resources to enhance parenting skills and provide for the needs of children.

Students with Disabilities: As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, when the IEP Team determines that a student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or be vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of their 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. Whenever an evaluation indicates that a child has a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team shall consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Referral to Outside Services: The King Philip Regional School District has established protocols for referring students and families to outside services, including Care Solace, provided at no cost, and connects students, staff, and their families to mental health and substance use providers matched to specific needs. ([caresolace.com/kingphilip](http://caresolace.com/kingphilip), or 888-515-0595.) KPRSD has partnered with Transitions Counseling and Walker Community Counseling to expand student access to School counselors and other specialists, which will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. All referrals will comply with relevant laws and policies.



## **TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The King Philip Regional School District provides annual staff training and ongoing professional development to all staff regarding bullying prevention and intervention.

Annual staff training on the Plan: Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula 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 school-based training during the school year in which they are employed unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

Ongoing professional development: The goal is to establish a common understanding of the tools necessary 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 prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of schoolwide 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 cyberbullying;
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying;
- The recognition that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnancy, parenting status, sexual orientation, 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; and
- How to recognize various forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, and postural.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities, which must be considered when developing their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will focus on the needs of students with autism or whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development may include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- 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;

- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc., and bullying behaviors

Examples of professional development training used within the District include:

Professional development training has included training specific to bullying prevention and intervention in mental health areas. Bullying Prevention and Intervention training is provided annually so that staff knows the law, definitions of bullying/cyberbullying, vulnerable populations, and responsibilities for reporting, investigation, and follow-up. The district continues to foster awareness and education in social and emotional areas that can be linked indirectly to the prevention and intervention plan. Topics include QBS Safety Care Behavioral Training, Bystander Intervention Training, and awareness of microaggressions. Paraprofessionals are trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid and trauma-informed Teaching. School counselors and administrators have participated in CSTAG Threat Assessment Guidelines training Suicide Assessment & intervention training.

Written notice to staff: The school or district will publish information about the Plan, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct and provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws and the policies of the King Philip Regional School District, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, 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, 37H½, 37H3/4, other applicable laws, district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.