Burlington Public Schools

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Burlington Public Schools adopted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. An incident reporting form is attached as Appendix A.

Please note that within the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan we use the word “target” instead of “victim” and “aggressor” instead of “perpetrator.”

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APPENDIX A: BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM
I. LEADERSHIP

Leadership at all levels plays a critical role in developing and implementing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan within the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference.

A. Public involvement in developing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, guidance counselors and school psychologists, professional support personnel, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, and parents/guardians representing all grade levels. All aforementioned parties met three times (6/8, 9/23, 10/12/10) as a committee prior to submitting this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to a public comment period and the School Committee for adoption.

B. Assessing needs and resources. This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is the Burlington Public School’s blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. Additionally, the Burlington Public Schools has established partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement and mental health providers.

C. Planning and oversight. The building principal or their designee is responsible for the following tasks under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan: 1) receiving reports on bullying; 2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) planning for ongoing professional development; 5) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; 7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; 9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and 10) reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently.

D. Developing priority statements. The priority statement is used to communicate within the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan the Burlington Public School’s vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

The school or district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning
process. The Burlington Public Schools will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target’s sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement. The Burlington Public Schools is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. The law lists six topics that must be included in professional development.

A. Annual staff training on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 Burlington Public Schools. 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 hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

B. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of 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 school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

(i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
(ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
(iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
(iv) 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;
(v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
(vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

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

The Burlington Public Schools will hold the following professional development for the 2010-2011 school year:

- June 18 & 23, 2010 → Preparing For the New Bullying Prevention Law: A Day for Administrators - School Psychologists
- August 30, 2010 → District-wide, including teachers and other school staff training
- September 3, 2010 → Pupil Services training
- September 16, 2010 → Administrative Council training
- September 27, 2010 and an extended Wednesday → Building-based training on the plan, policy, procedures and forms by Principals.
- September 29, 2010 → Bullying and the IEP workshop – Select Pupil Services staff
- October 15, 2010 → Bullying workshop – MSMS guidance
- October 19, 2010 → Junior/Senior Activity Block on Bullying
- October 20, 2010 → HS teacher training on use of reporting forms
- October 22, 2010 → Threat/Suicide/Risk Assessment training for HS crisis team and select Pupil Services staff
- November 8, 2010 → Student and Parent Assembly at MSMS
- December 6, 2010 → Pre-Kindergarten Training
- December 15, 2010 → Addressing IEP Requirements for Victim and Perpetrator – Select Pupil Services Staff
- January 27/28, 2011 → PREPaRE workshop on crisis intervention and recovery for select Pupil Services staff

C. Written notice to staff. The Burlington Public Schools will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan describes the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the Burlington Public School’s 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 and aggressors. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan includes a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

A. Identifying resources. The Burlington Public Schools offers counseling with guidance counselors and school psychologists. Referrals are also made to private local agencies, such as, The Burlington Community Life Center.

B. Counseling and other services. Counseling and related services will be available to all
Burlington Public School students. Such services are provided by guidance counselors and school psychologists during the school day. The Burlington Community Life Center and other private service providers are available for counseling outside of school. School staff, including, but not limited to guidance counselors and school psychologists will work to develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

C. Students with disabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her 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.

D. Referral to outside services. The Burlington Public Schools has followed a protocol for referring students and families to outside services. This protocol helps students and families access appropriate and timely services. Such referrals comply with relevant laws and policies.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school’s or district’s curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula will be presented within the classroom or in a small-group setting. The 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 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 cybersafety, 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 is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be presented and reviewed with students within each of their respective school buildings and/or classrooms.
B. 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 for 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.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Burlington Public Schools has responded promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, by putting in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan details procedures for staff reporting of incidents, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee once a report is made. The following is based on the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The Burlington Public Schools has made available to all members of the school community an Incident Reporting Form.¹

The Burlington Public Schools will: 1) make a copy of the Incident Reporting Form available in the school’s main office, the counseling office, the school nurse’s office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post the Incident Reporting Form on the school’s website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

¹ See Appendix A for Incident Reporting Form.
At the beginning of each school year, the Burlington Public Schools will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. 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.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee 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; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student 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. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

2. Obligations to Notify Others
a. **Notice to parents or guardians.** Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b. **Notice to Another School or District.** If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c. **Notice to Law Enforcement.** At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with applicable school and/or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. **Investigation.** The principal or designee will investigate promptly 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 principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.
Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations. The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students’ teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target’s or aggressor’s parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents will comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. 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.

E. Responses to Bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the Burlington Public Schools anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary
action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with Burlington Public School’s code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students’ families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication are essential aspects of effective collaboration.

A. Parent education and resources. The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula 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.

B. Notification requirements. Each year the Burlington Public Schools will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The Burlington Public Schools will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be 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.
VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and describes the law’s requirements for the prohibition of bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include 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 disrupt 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.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted below.

**Aggressor** is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

**Bullying**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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** 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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

**Hostile environment**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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.

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.

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, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Burlington Public Schools, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan covers the behavior.