

# Auburn Public Schools

## Bullying Prevention-Intervention Plan

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# AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Bullying Prevention-Intervention Plan

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## AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BULLYING PREVENTION/INTERVENTION PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the current School Committee Policy, JICFB “Bullying Prevention-Intervention,” the Auburn Public School District is committed to maintaining a safe school environment in which all members are treated with respect. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying, cyberbullying and other harmful and disruptive behaviors that can impede the learning process.

The definition of bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71 § 370 is, “The repeated use by one or more students or member of a school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (a) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property; (b) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (c) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (d) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (e) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this definition, bullying includes cyberbullying.”

Additional pertinent definitions can be found on page 6.

The Auburn Public Schools’ Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In addition, this plan is intended to promote tolerance and respect for differences and to reaffirm the commitment of the citizens of our school community to basic human rights and dignity. This plan meets the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 and as amended by sections 72-74 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013 and the updates of Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 and is modeled after the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Model Plan for dealing with bullying behaviors in our schools. The plan includes strategies for identifying, reporting and responding to bullying behaviors.

### PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Auburn Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school

grounds, on school buses and at school bus stops, or in school-related activities. Schools 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. The Auburn Public Schools will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- ◆ on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school sponsored or school-related activity, function or program (whether on or off school grounds), as students are walking to or from school, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned or leased or used by a school district or school or through use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school district or school; and
- ◆ at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## LEADERSHIP

School leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Schools partner with various representatives of community leadership in promoting positive school climate that is safe for all student learners.

### Public Involvement in Developing the Plan

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 including the amended sections 72-74 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013, the Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed after soliciting input from parents, students, teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, administrators, and local law enforcement agencies via an online survey. In order to effectively address this societal issue, all constituents,

including students, staff, parents, and community members alike, must be actively engaged and committed to the maintenance of environments that are free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying of any kind and instead characterized by tolerance and respect. We invited all interested community members to provide public comment relative to the proposed plan before the Plan was adopted by the Auburn School Committee at the December 20, 2010 meeting. The District had posted the draft plan on the website of the Auburn Public Schools, [www.auburn.k12.ma.us](http://www.auburn.k12.ma.us), providing an opportunity for public comment. In addition, the Plan was carefully reviewed by the Leadership Team, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Subcommittee (which includes representatives of the Safety Committee), and each building principal shared it with its School Council. Since its final approval, the plan has been posted to the APS website, with this update, once approved, likewise being posted there.

#### Assessing Needs and Resources

The Auburn Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is our system'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, students and staff, via survey results, 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. This "mapping" process assisted our schools and district in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings and in light of the amendments made in 2013 as a result of sections 72-74 of the Acts of 2013, our schools revised or developed policies and procedures, established partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement, and set priorities.

During the 2010-2011 school year, and every two years moving forward, our schools will utilize surveys to obtain input from students, staff, parents and guardians on school climate and school safety issues. Surveys were distributed in the late winter of 2013, with that data being used to update this plan. In accordance with the most recent changes as required by Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, at least once every four years beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, the District will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the Auburn Public School District will annually report bullying incident data to the Department, as required.

As determined by the team responsible for updates to this plan, they may opt to survey faculty, staff and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs; model surveys provided by DESE may be utilized. Data from each school will be collected and analyzed on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g. focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses).

This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform future decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

### Planning and Oversight

The Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has identified the building principal or his/her designee as the individual who is responsible for receiving all reports on bullying. The building principal or his/her designee is responsible for collecting and analyzing building data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes. He/she is also responsible for creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors.

As noted above, the principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

Each school, under the direction of the building principal, is responsible for planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by law and may be conducted through faculty meetings or the most effective means as determined by him or her. The building principal or his/her designee is responsible for planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors as well as for choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use to instruct students about issues of bullying and cyberbullying. Each building principal or his/her designee is responsible for implementing the Auburn Public Schools Bullying

Prevention and Intervention Plan; for amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and reviewing and updating these materials each year, or more frequently, if necessary. To ensure consistency across the Auburn Public School District, however, all events, programs, data, and professional development offered shall be coordinated through the District's Bullying Prevention-Intervention Subcommittee. A listing of anti-bullying events, activities, and initiatives, by school, is posted annually to the website of the Auburn Public Schools.

The Superintendent or her/his designee is responsible for developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an Acceptable Use Internet Safety policy, and for designating key staff to be in charge of reviewing and updating them on an annual basis. The School Committee is responsible for the approval of any new or updated policies, with the Superintendent having district oversight.

The Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Priority Statement:

The Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and each school in the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence and to promote an environment of tolerance and respect. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The building principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

Each school in the district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

As a school district, we recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Our commitment to creating and maintaining a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community is steadfast. We further commit to providing all students with the

skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

## DEFINITIONS

**Aggressor:** is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards a student.

**Bullying:** As defined in M.G.L. c.71, section 370, is “the repeated use by one or more students or a member of the school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (a) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (b) places the victim in reasonable fear or harm to himself or of damage to his property; (c) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (d) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (e) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyberbullying.”

**Cyberbullying:** “Bullying through the use of technology (including cell phones) 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, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying shall also include: (a) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (b) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (a) to (e) inclusive of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (a) to (e) inclusive of the definition of bullying.”

**Hostile Environment:** 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.

**Target:** A student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

**Aggressor:** A student or school staff member who engages, either individually, or as part of a group, in bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation.

Bystander: A student or staff member who witnesses bullying, who does not report it and does nothing to intervene.

Local law enforcement agency: Local police department

Retaliation: Intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

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

#### TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Auburn Public School District's ongoing professional development plan will reflect 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.

- A. Annual Staff Training on the Plan: Annual training for all staff of the Auburn Public Schools on the Bullying Intervention and Prevention 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 and/or expectations 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 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.

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

- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.
- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies (PBIS);
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors; 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.
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;

C. Written Notice to Staff: The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, 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. The Bullying Prevention-Intervention Plan will be posted to the District's website.

D. Communication Among and Between Schools: As students transfer from one school to the

next, communication between staff members, to include the guidance counselors, school nurse and/or principal, will take place to ensure that the receiving school is aware of any “history” between students to further ensure that safe environments are provided for all.

## ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, student aggressors, families, and others are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors or bystanders of bullying or cyberbullying. Schools will also address the emotional needs of these students’ families. The Auburn Public Schools’ Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order 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, student aggressors and bystanders. The schools provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for students who are student aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

A. 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, student 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. Currently, at the elementary schools, Second Step and Steps to Respect, both research-based programs, are implemented. In addition, the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) is embedded in grades K-8 of the Auburn Public Schools.

Auburn High School is currently engaging with Dr. Paul Poteat (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Counseling Psychology), a professor at Boston College whose expertise lies in the area of bullying behavior. Special areas of interest for him include peer group social networks and the socialization processes within peer groups that influence the prejudiced attitudes and behaviors of individuals; developmental trajectories of prejudice from early adolescence to adulthood; social norms and ideology beliefs connected to homophobic and racist attitudes and behaviors. His research in this area has been extensively published as noted below and his public speaking engagements have taken him across and beyond the United States.

Through this partnership between Auburn High and Dr. Poteat – which may ultimately expand to additional grades – staff and students will work closely with Dr. Poteat to critically examine the high school culture, to outline steps for enhancing an affirming culture, and to begin implementing any needed programming.

- B. Counseling and Other Services: School Counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the education setting that include on-going 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 maintain up-to-date information on community based mental health referrals as well as 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 skills 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.

Below is a list highlighting activities offered at various schools:

- One-on-one and small group counseling
- Case management services
- Crisis intervention
- Facilitating classroom meetings to resolve problems
- Lunch/friendship groups
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Parent workshops
- Transition planning from one district school to the next
- Parent guidance
- Behavioral plan development
- Classroom observations
- Teacher consultation

- 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 Auburn Public Schools has established a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services, most notably Auburn Youth and Family Services. School counselors and other specialists will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies.

#### ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Auburn Public Schools provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into each school's evidence-based curricula, the goal of which is to establish and maintain a positive school culture in which all students feel safe and respected. Currently, at the elementary schools, Second Step and Steps to Respect, both research-based programs, are implemented. In addition, the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) is embedded in grades K-8 of the Auburn Public Schools. Auburn High School is currently engaging with Dr. Paul Poteat of Boston College (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Counseling Psychology), a professor at Boston College whose expertise lies in the area of bullying behavior. Special areas of interest for him include peer group social networks and the socialization processes within peer groups that influence the prejudiced attitudes and behaviors of individuals; developmental trajectories of prejudice from early adolescence to adulthood; social norms and ideology beliefs connected to homophobic and racist attitudes and behaviors. His research in this area has been extensively published as noted below and his public speaking engagements have taken him across and beyond the United States. A listing of anti-bullying events, activities, and initiatives, by school, is posted annually to the website of the Auburn Public Schools.

Through this partnership between Auburn High and Dr. Poteat – which may ultimately expand to other grade levels – staff and students continue to work closely with Dr. Poteat to critically examine the high school culture, to outline steps for enhancing an affirming culture, and to begin implementing any needed programming.

Other resources are currently available on the Department's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/bullying/> including social and emotional learning guidelines.

Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches: Bullying prevention curricula is informed by current research which, among other things, may emphasize 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 and its effects on other students;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and
- providing parents and guardians with information regarding the schools' bullying prevention curricula.

Student-related sections of the Auburn Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be annually addressed through school assemblies and/or small group meetings at the beginning of each school year.

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.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION – Allegations of Bullying by a Student

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the Auburn Public Schools have policies and procedures in place for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation, most notably “Policy JICFB, Bullying Prevention-Intervention.” These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and school staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation Involving Student Aggressors: 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 using the district’s Incident Reporting Form. All employees are required to report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, 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, however unless credible evidence supports such an anonymous complaint, the district will be very limited in its response – and potentially completely unable to appropriately respond. At Auburn Middle and Auburn High School, a “text line” has been established whereby students can confidentially report incidents of bullying to administration and guidance counselors. School Resource Officer, Brian Kennedy, along with members of the District’s Bullying Prevention-Intervention Subcommittee, will provide an informational program to Auburn Middle and High School students on how this “text line” will operate and students’ effective use of it. This text line will be monitored during school days and within normal school hours. The schools will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, the Auburn Public Schools’ Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, which is available on the Auburn Public Schools’ website and found in this document on pages 19 and 20.

Use of the Auburn Public Schools’ Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. Schools will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it 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 it on the school’s website.

At the beginning of each school year, schools will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, , 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, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Auburn Public Schools' 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 or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. Such report will be documented to include all pertinent details, including targets, aggressors, and bystanders. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with each school's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. Failure to report incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
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, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. 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, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

**B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student:**

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. 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.

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. The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of bullying will be maintained to the extent possible given the school’s obligation to investigate the matter.

## 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 student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it.
- 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 through the Auburn Public Schools' School Resource Officer. 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 student aggressor.

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

- d. Notice to Receiving District Schools: As students transfer from one school to the next, staff will share pertinent information with the receiving staff so that any prior incidents are documented and the staff is aware of any "history" between students. Guidance counselors, school nurses and/or principals will be responsible for the sharing of this information.

#### C. Investigation:

The principal or designee (the assistant principal at the middle and high school levels, but referred to as "designee" throughout) 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 student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation 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 and for possible disciplinary action. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with the Superintendent regarding consultation with legal counsel pertaining to the investigation of the alleged report.

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 student's teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student 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 must 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.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

E. Responses to Bullying:

The Auburn Public Schools have incorporated a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's skills or to prevent further incidences of bullying and/or retaliation.

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 school's/district's 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;
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 Plan and with the 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 consistent with the school's code of conduct/student handbook.

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. One strategy that the principal or designee

may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

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.

#### F. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff

As is the case with reports of students bullying others, if any allegations are made, by a students, against a staff member, all of the above procedures/guidelines will be strictly adhered to. The appropriate parties will be notified, a thorough investigation will be conducted, a determination will be made and an appropriate response will be developed. In keeping with the procedures outlined above when a student is alleged to have bullied another, all parties involved in the reporting and investigation of an alleged instance of bullying by a staff member must be truthful. Retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension and termination.

1. Reports of bullying by a member of the support staff or a teacher should be made to the building principal or designee.
2. Reports of bullying by the principal or assistant principal should be made to the superintendent.
3. Reports of bullying by the superintendent should be made to the school committee.

#### COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES:

The Auburn Public Schools is committed to engaging and collaborating with students' families in order to increase the capacity of each of our schools as well as the district to prevent and respond to bullying. We believe that communication with them is an essential aspect of effective collaboration. We will inform parents and guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the schools and how they can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; the dynamics of bullying; and online safety and cyberbullying. Parents and guardians will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as well as the Internet Acceptable Use Policy, requiring their signature

annually to indicate such receipt.

Schools will work with their local school councils, PBIS Teams and/or Bullying Prevention teams to ensure that communication with parents remains open and collaborative. In addition, the District will maintain a Bullying Prevention-Intervention subcommittee, a subsidiary of the District's Safety Committee. This group will be responsible for overseeing the District's efforts to promote a positive school culture, free from bullying and cyberbullying, in which all children feel safe and can excel academically. A listing of anti-bullying events, activities, and initiatives, by school, is posted annually to the website of the Auburn Public Schools.

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 Auburn Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information will also be posted on the website.

#### PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 370 of Chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats.

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside the District may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, e-mails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's Office.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Auburn Public School District, 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 Auburn Public Schools' 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 Auburn Public Schools 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, M.G.L. c.71, sections 41 and 42, M.G.L. c.76, section 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

# BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior  Reporter (not the target)

3. Check whether you are a:  Student  Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent  Administrator  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information/telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. If student, state your school: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If staff member, state your school or worksite: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 6. Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

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## FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

# BULLYING INCIDENT REPORT FOLLOW-UP FORM

## II. INVESTIGATION

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Interviews:

- Interviewed aggressor Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed target Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed witnesses Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor?  Yes  No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?  Yes  No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION  Yes  No

### Summary of Investigation:

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

## III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

### 1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

YES

NO

- Bullying   
Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_
- Retaliation   
Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Contacts:

- Target's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Action Taken:

- Loss of Privileges  Detention  Suspension  Community  
Service  Education

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Notified School Resource Officer

Notified Other Law Enforcement  
Personnel (note who) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Describe Safety Planning: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(If Principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Auburn Public Schools Bullying Prevention-Intervention Plan  
Adopted by Auburn School Committee December 20, 2010  
Updated June 19, 2013  
Updated October 16, 2013  
Update Submitted for Approval August 13, 2014

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_