

# Amesbury Public Schools

## Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Amesbury Public Schools has developed our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan utilizing the framework provided by The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department). Amesbury Public School District’s Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, was designed in consultation with state agencies, school personnel, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties. The Model Plan’s format parallels the draft Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework, and was used by our school district as a framework for developing our local Plan. In some sections we incorporated examples of specific language from the Model Plan which accurately reflected our district priorities. The Amesbury Bullying Task Force also followed many of the Model Plan recommendations for decision-making and planning strategies.

Please note that in the Amesbury Plan as in the Model Plan we use the word “target” instead of “victim” and “aggressor” instead of “perpetrator.” Also note that “aggressors” may be students and/or members of school staff.

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## I. LEADERSHIP

Amesbury Public School's (APS) leadership at both the building and central office level has played, and will continue to play, a critical role in the development and implementation of Amesbury Public School's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Amesbury Public School Leadership Team works closely with our community's efforts to promote positive school climate. The APS Leadership Team must assume a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership has been defined by the district or school, depending on existing roles and responsibilities and locally identified priorities for this initiative (Please see Appendix A for those assignments). Amesbury Public School's Leadership Team is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

- A. Public involvement in developing the plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan has been developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. (Consultation included notice and a public comment period before the Plan was adopted by the School Committee).

The Amesbury Public Schools Bullying Task Force met over a period of two months to develop this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Representatives from each of these constituencies worked to articulate current practice, research current evidence based programs, recommend steps for compliance, and complete an initial plan.

- B. Assessing needs and resources. The planning process included, school leaders, with input from families and staff, assessing the adequacy of current programs; reviewing current policies and procedures; reviewing available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessing available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. The Amesbury Plan will be each school's and the district's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. This "mapping" process assisted the Amesbury Public School District in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, each school and the district has revised or is in the process of revising or developing policies and procedures; maintaining and enhancing partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and setting priorities.

The Amesbury Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes the district plans for: at least once every four years beginning with the 2015/16 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 school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department and 2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data 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 and/or bus stops). Similar tools to the student survey can be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist

in determining school climate needs. This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. The Plan will describe the methods the school will use to conduct needs assessments, including timelines and leadership roles.

- C. Planning and oversight. The Amesbury Plan identifies the school or district leaders responsible for the following tasks under the Plan (See Appendix A): 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 the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 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 Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation; 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. Priority statements. The following is a priority statement used by the Amesbury School District in creating and implementing our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan:

The ultimate goal of the Amesbury Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is to fashion what John Dewey, educational philosopher, might have called a powerful continuum of educative experiences that will lead to “fruitful and creative” future behaviors. Our programs will set the groundwork for the practice of social interactions that will offer our children a wealth of options from which to choose as they face the daily social challenges of growing up. In his book *Experience and Education* John Dewey spoke about “freedom of judgment”. We hope to give our students the freedom to choose cooperation, empathy, and understanding as they move toward becoming productive citizens of our world. Our students will develop the habits of mind that come from a myriad experiences carefully designed to build a depth of understanding of how to be a positive contributing member of a group or community. It is the plan of the Amesbury Schools to give our students a strong foundation of social understanding upon which they can build for a lifetime.

The Amesbury Public Schools have adopted a “**Zero Indifference**” philosophy in regard to bullying. The district expects that all members of the school community will take an active role in the prevention and intervention of bullying at all levels. 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. Students are also to be protected from being bullied by a member of the school staff, which includes but is not limited to: educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessionals.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on their 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. The school or district 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, parent or guardian involvement as well as police involvement as needed.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. 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 target. 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 target.

## II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Amesbury Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan provides 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. Amesbury School District's Plan includes both the content and frequency of staff training, specific ongoing professional development as determined by the school's or district's needs, and a variety of other topics to be included in these staff programs. The additional areas of training are and will continue to be based on the needs and concerns identified by school and district staff.

The law lists six topics that must be included in professional development. Additional topics have been and will be identified by the school or district leadership as we considered the unique needs of our school or district community. Amesbury School District's Plan clearly identifies which trainings will be provided district-wide and which will be school-based.

A. Annual staff training on the plan. The Amesbury Public Schools provides annual districtwide staff training utilizing both in-person and on-line trainings to educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. 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 will complete training within their first month on the job, training will be orchestrated between the Central Office and the Principal. In order to keep the annual training meaningful, the taskforce recommends that annual training include a variety of modalities:

- Staff meetings
- Small group meetings (i.e. PLC's, Critical Friends or grade level/team meetings)
- On-line annual review and sign-off

B. Ongoing professional development. The Amesbury Public School District believes that improving the school climate and developing students' socially acceptable skills is essential to bullying prevention. Therefore, the majority of on-going professional development will be building or grade level specific as each school has a distinct and individual climate. Building based staff development, staff meeting and professional development blocks, will include best practices that support classroom community, a safe, nurturing and responsive climate and sets high standards for respect, responsibility and reflection. Promotion of social competency and pro social behaviors for all students as well as clear, consistent hierarchy of consequences for disciplinary infractions will also be addressed.

Reinforcement of skills to identify and respond to incidents of bullying will occur through direct instruction in all buildings. Literature, research and materials related to developing social skills, empathy, problem solving and self-regulation will also be available in each building's professional library as well as on-line. Guidance staff and adjustment counselors will also be available to respond to teacher questions and concerns as well as to help identify patterns of behavior that should be addressed during professional development.

The goal of this focused professional development is to develop a common understanding of, and comfort with, the tools and techniques 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 cyber-bullying
- vi. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying

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.

As a district, Amesbury provides on-going and need-based professional development training in each of the following areas:

- 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

Training for all teachers/staff will also focus on:

- Developmental needs of children based on building needs
- Training for assisting bystanders with strategies to intervene in bullying situations
- Differentiating typical peer struggles/conflicts from bullying
- Playground safety and supervision
- Diversity-language differences
- Parent intervention
- Safe school climate
- Respect/pride for the school
- Community pride
- Respect for others
- Promoting and modeling respectful language
- Respect for diversity and difference
- Respect for people, property and self
- De-escalation strategies for all staff
- Engaging students in classroom planning and decision making
- Identifying vulnerable populations within the school community and providing supports to reduce vulnerability.

Professional development will also provide guidance 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. (See Section III C).

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, in the teacher handbook and the code of conduct. Annual training for paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, and cafeteria monitors, etc. will include notice of the plan.



### 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 Plan describes the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the school’s or district’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 Plan includes a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students. These locally established strategies are reflected in the school or district Plan.

- A. Identifying resources. The Amesbury District will refine our process for identifying our capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families utilizing school based resources. This will included a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. This needs assessment will lead to mapping of resources and the development of recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.
- B. Counseling and other services. This Plan identifies the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the Amesbury schools and district. In addition, the Plan identifies staff and service providers (see table below) who assist schools in developing 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.

#### Amesbury School District Resources and Services

	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Program Resources</b>
<b>District (All Schools)</b>	Within District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals, Assistant Principals, Building Coordinators, School Adjustment Counselors, Guidance Counselors</li> <li>• School Councils</li> <li>• PTA (Elementary)</li> <li>• PAC (Middle and High School)</li> <li>• SEPAC</li> <li>• Student Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group work with guidance/adjustment counselors</li> <li>• Small group and individual guidance counselor interventions</li> <li>• Student Council</li> <li>• Co-curricular Activities to provide opportunities for positive social interactions and build connections to the community</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Cafeteria Staff</li> <li>• Custodians</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Local Senior Citizens</li> </ul> <p>Outside Contractors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pettengill House</li> <li>• Health and Education Services, Inc.</li> <li>• Private Therapists</li> <li>• Amesbury Police Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Brother/Big Sister Amesbury High School program pairing students with Elementary and Middle School partners</li> <li>• Every school promotes community connections by linking children to projects for places such as Our Neighbors Table, Pettengill House, Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Relay for Life Cancer Walks, etc.</li> <li>• Building Accommodation Plans</li> </ul>
<b>Elementary</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Steps Grade K-4</li> <li>• Steps to Respect Grades 3 and 4</li> <li>• One elementary uses Responsive Classroom</li> <li>• Mixed-grade level programs</li> <li>• Multi age pairing as a prevention strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Middle School</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Steps</li> <li>• Peer Mediation</li> <li>• Student Support Program</li> <li>• Girls, Inc.</li> </ul>
<b>High School</b>	Peer Leaders Coaches Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer Mediation</li> <li>• Options-Behavioral Program</li> <li>• LGBTQ-Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach Training/pre-season meetings on hazing, bullying, harassment</li> <li>• Bullying PowerPoint administered by principals outlining definitions, roles, responsibilities and consequences</li> <li>• Student Advisory Program</li> </ul>
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The Amesbury Public School District has a longstanding relationship with Health and Education Services Inc., The Pettengill House Inc., and the Amesbury Police department. These relationships have been instrumental in providing supports for the students and families of the community.

The Amesbury Police Department, Amesbury Public Schools, and the Essex County District Attorney’s Office has a formal working relationship (Memorandum of Understanding – Appendix B) agreed upon by participating agencies to provide a safe and violent free educational setting. In addition, the Amesbury Police Department conducts walkthroughs of each building in the district multiple times a week.

- Participating agencies:
- Department of Children and Families
  - Department of Youth Services
  - Department of Mental Health
  - Essex County District Attorney’s Office
  - Amesbury Police Department
  - Amesbury School Department

Amesbury Police Department also has a formal contract with The Pettengill House Inc. which provides community based support services and implementations supporting Amesbury students and their families.

**The Pettengill House Inc.** is a community based social service agency which provides an array of prevention and 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. Crisis level interventions to children and families of Amesbury and surroundings communities. The mission of Pettengill House is to support and empower children and families by providing education, coordinated services, emergency assistance and basic needs. (Appendix C for

Contracted Services between APS and Pettengill House and Appendix D for “wrap around” services provided by Pettengill House to identified Amesbury students and their families.)

Other Community Partnerships

- a. Mobile Crisis Team (HES)
- b. Health and Education Services
- c. Department of Child and Family Services
- d. Family Stabilization Services
- e. Courts/probation officers
- f. Other private therapists in the area providing services through family insurance
- g. Big Brother/Big Sister
- h. Boys and Girls Club

- 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.

All students in the Amesbury Public Schools are able to participate in the services as outlined above. For special education students with identified difficulties in the areas of social/emotional skills, pragmatics, etc. the special education teams identify needed goals and objectives and the necessary service delivery and service providers. Goals, objectives and service delivery are unique to each student and respond to the individual’s needs. Common supports/instruction have included: pragmatic skills taught individually and in small groups by the speech and language pathologist, social skills instruction from the speech and language pathologist, social counselors, guidance counselors, and special education teachers providing support and direct instruction in the context of the special education classroom, and programmatic supports for students identified with social/emotional/behavior difficulties. Per the students’ IEPs additional supports have included informal behavior plans, behavioral intervention plans based on the results of functional behavior assessments or other formal assessments.

- D. Referral to outside services. Amesbury schools have established both informal and formal referral protocols for referring students and families to outside services.

1. Informal Protocol – Teacher or parent makes a request or expresses a concern directly to the school administration or counselor. Those students are discussed at IT meetings that involve both school and outside service representatives. Counselor makes referral to appropriate support services.

2. Formal Protocol – Teacher or staff make a written referral to a school-based Intervention Team. The team makes a decision on further action as needed. If the referral involves

possible criminal activity, administration must report to the Amesbury Police Department. According to the Amesbury Public Schools Memorandum of Understanding with the Amesbury Police Department and the Essex County District Attorney's Office, "School Officials retain their sole prerogative to impose any disciplinary sanctions for infractions of school rules and policies in addition to any police involvement or investigation that may be warranted. When the school has reported an incident to the police, the police will be responsible of making the decision as to the course of the criminal or delinquency investigation.

#### 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. The Department will publish guidelines for implementing social and emotional learning curricula by June 30, 2011. Other resources are currently available on the Department’s website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/bullying/>.

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches: The Amesbury Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development as specified above. The chart below articulates school-based and co-curricular “approaches” which promote learning of positive social and civic habits.

<b>Curriculum Based Prevention Approaches</b>	<b>Co-Curricular Prevention Approaches</b>
<b>Whole district</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School wide behavior expectation that reflect respect for self and others, environment and learning</li> <li>• Specific predictable progressive discipline</li> <li>• Positive behavioral support including teaching appropriate social interactions, providing positive reinforcement for appropriately modified behavior</li> <li>• Conflict resolution strategies</li> <li>• Technology class based cyberbullying instruction</li> <li>• Annual review of district behavioral expectations and procedures for reporting peer conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Brother/Big Sister program for older children to mentor younger children</li> <li>• Critical Friends/Professional Learning Groups research and implement effective intervention/prevention strategies</li> <li>• Student Councils</li> <li>• Social pragmatics instruction for students with identified needs</li> <li>• Community Connections – fostering intergenerational relationships, fostering stewardship, fostering civic responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Elementary</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All School Assemblies are used to reinforce common language and club, co-curricular school-based activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PTA after-school activities: Lego, American Girls, Destination Imagination, Brownies, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All school initiatives and special events of community, belonging, and respect</li> <li>• Science partners and story pals link older elementary students with younger students to encourage caring and respectful interactions among grade levels.</li> </ul>	
<b>Middle School</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade level assemblies are used to reinforce common language and expectations about behavior</li> <li>• Beginning of the year Team building activities to reinforce importance of building a strong school culture</li> <li>• Health curriculum activities grades 5-8 on creating and building positive relationships</li> <li>• All school initiatives related to promoting positive school culture (No-Name Calling Week, Positive Behavior recognition, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-curricular school based activities:</li> <li>• Intramural sports, peer leaders, student council, math club, destination imagination etc.</li> <li>• Parent Advisory Group (PAG) social and academic supplemental activities Peer Mediation Girls Inc.</li> <li>• School based peer/social/behavioral skills groups</li> </ul>
<b>High School</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student generated videos on cyberbullying</li> <li>• Grade 10 mandatory health course unit on</li> <li>• Healthy Relationships</li> <li>• Options program seminar for student support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varsity, Junior Varsity and Freshman Sports</li> <li>• LGBTQ – Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Peer Leaders – Building community connections</li> </ul>

These activities include practice for students in:

- 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 cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communication and

- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference

Every student in the Amesbury School District will review handbooks each year containing the information listed above. Elements of the plan will be reviewed and reinforced throughout the year as part of lessons within individual classrooms and small group settings.

**Anticipated Needs:**

- Bystander interventions strategies
- Therapeutic support groups
- Peer Mediation for High School and Elementary
- Increase student involvement in producing pro-social events, productions, programs to increase awareness and develop strategies for prevention and intervention of bullying
- Development of training for students and families entering a new building of entering after the start of a new school year

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. It is the belief of the APS that the following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. Programs such as Second Steps, Steps to Respect and approaches such as Responsive Classroom are currently widely used in the District. It is our goal to expand these practices so that every classroom in the District participates in the following type of Bullying Intervention and prevention initiatives (Amesbury Plan includes programs and approaches that will be utilized to promote social learning. See Section II B above):

- 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, homeless students, and include a student's race, religion, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.
- 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
- 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**

In order to support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, Amesbury Public School District has put in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures are intended to ensure that members of the school community - students, parents, and staff - know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. The Amesbury Public School District's Plan includes detailed 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. All of the following language is either an excerpt from the Amesbury Public School District's Policy or from the DESE Sample Plan and is based on the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

### **AMESBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Policy – JFCB/GBCBC PROMOTING CIVIL RIGHTS AND PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, HAZING, BULLYING, CYBER BULLYING, SEXTING, DISCRIMINATION, AND HATE CRIMES**

"The Amesbury Public School District is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, where all school community members treat each other with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. This Policy is an integral part of the District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning, eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior and enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential and become successful citizens in our increasingly diverse society.

The District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination, or hate crimes in our schools or school-related activities. The District will promptly[1] investigate all reports and complaints of harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, and take prompt, effective action to end that behavior and prevent its reoccurrence. Action will include, where appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. The District will support this Policy in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement. "

Additionally, students will be protected from being bullied by a member of the school staff, which includes, but is not limited to: educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff or paraprofessionals.

It is essential to understand that the objective of this law is to educate our students to both understand how the behavior is inappropriate and assist them in developing strategies to deal with challenging situations in a more acceptable manner. Every step is an attempt to inform and educate.

## Sequence of Events:

**Student/Parent/Staff File Report**



**Administration Investigates  
Copy of Report to Equity Coordinators  
Administration**



**Guidance Counselor  
Adjustment Counselor**



**Administration**



**Police**

**Resolution can take place at any level.**

**Anonymous Reporting - no disciplinary actions are taken.**

- 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 but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member to complete a written report. Reports can also be made by all community members; students, staff, parents, guardians, volunteers or anyone who has knowledge of incidents of bullying, using forms available on the district and school web pages as well as the Town Library, Town Hall and the Police Station, through drop boxes, dedicated voicemail lines, and dedicated email addresses (See Appendix A).

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. However, the school or district 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. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians but can also be translated upon request.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district 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 Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

For specific Amesbury Public School reporting procedures and responsibilities see Appendix F, Section II A and 11 B, pgs 2-3.

### **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 or to the superintendent when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the aggressor, 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, or 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. Students will have access to report problems directly to teachers, counselors, and administrators.

### **3. Officials for Reporting**

#### **a. In Each School Building**

1. In each building, individuals have been designated to receive building-based reports. (See Appendix A)
2. In addition, the District's Equity Coordinators are responsible for receiving reports and complaints of violations of this Policy at the school level. A report or complaint of a violation of this Policy may be filed with the Equity

Coordinator, Lyn Jacques, 5 Highland Street, Amesbury, MA, (978)388-0507.

b. For the Central Administration

1. The District Equity Coordinator is responsible for receiving and addressing reports or complaints of violations of this Policy at the district level.
2. A report or complaint involving the District Equity Coordinator should be filed with the Superintendent; a report or complaint involving the Superintendent with the School Committee.

**4. Protection against Retaliation**

The district will take appropriate steps to protect persons from retaliation who take action consistent with this policy or who report or file a complaint or cooperate in an investigation of a violation of district policies. Threats or acts of retaliation whether person to person by electronic means or through third parties are serious offenses that will subject the violator to significant disciplinary and other corrective action(s).

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. 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.

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;
- Altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target;
- Ordering interim disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct,
- Reassigning classroom seating;
- Temporarily transferring the student subject of the complaint from his/her class(es) with the complainant or to an alternative school assignment;
- Instructing the subject of the complaint to avoid communication or contact with the complainant and to maintain a safe distance (for example, fifteen feet) from the complainant while on school property or in school-related activities;

- Monitoring compliance and reporting non-compliance of protective orders issued by a court.

Prior to a resolution of the complaint or report, the designated official will make reasonable efforts to monitor the success of the interim measures in achieving their goals. At the discretion of a school and/or District administrator, a student complainant may also temporarily transfer classes or schools, where available, but only where the student and his/her parent or guardians voluntarily consent to the transfer.

## **2. Investigations - Process**

### *a. Step One*

The designated official will meet separately in a timely manner with the complainant and the subject of the complaint. If a student is involved, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified and may be invited to attend the meeting. The official will review the formal process, explain the prohibition against retaliation, and determine the corrective action the complainant seeks. The designated official will also explain that the investigation will be kept as confidential as possible, but that the District cannot promise absolute confidentiality, and may not be able to withhold the complainant's identity from the subject of the complaint, since such a promise could interfere with the District's ability to enforce its Policy, conduct a fair and thorough investigation, or impose disciplinary or corrective action.

### *b. Step Two*

A designated official will conduct an investigation in accordance with the procedures described in Section D, Investigations.

### *c. Step Three*

The designated official, in consultation with the District Equity Coordinator as needed, will determine whether the allegations have been substantiated, and whether the Policy, or if the subject of the complaint is a student, the Student Code of Conduct, has been violated. If the complaint is substantiated, the designated official, in consultation with the District Equity Coordinator, will decide, based on the investigative findings, on the appropriate action. If legal issues arise, the designated official will seek the advice and guidance of legal counsel for the District.

The designated official, in consultation with the District Equity Coordinator, will prepare a written report that includes the investigative findings, the investigative steps taken, and the reasons for those findings. These findings will specify whether the allegations have been substantiated, whether the Policy, or if the subject of the complaint is a student, the Student Code of Conduct, has been violated, and any decision for disciplinary and corrective action.

The principal or his designee, the employee's supervisor (if the subject of the complaint is an employee), or the Superintendent (if the subject of the complaint is an assistant principal or principal) or school committee (if the subject of the complaint is the superintendent) will impose any disciplinary or corrective action. The disciplinary actions will balance the need for accountability with need to teach appropriate behavior. The disciplinary actions will be consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and state and federal law.

*d. Step Four*

The designated official will promptly notify the complainant and the subject of the complaint in writing to let them know whether the complaint has been substantiated. If the complaint is substantiated, the designated official will also promptly notify the complainant of any non-disciplinary corrective action imposed to protect him/her from future Policy violations. If the complaint is substantiated and the offender remains a student in the school, the designated official will meet with the offender and his/her parent or guardian, to describe the disciplinary and/or corrective action imposed, the school's expectations for future behavior and the potential consequences for retaliation or future violation of the Policy.

If a complaint is substantiated, a report of the incident and its resolution will be placed in the offender's applicable student record or employee personnel file.

File Retention: If the incident occurs at the school level, the principal (and if the principal is the subject of the complaint, the District Equity Coordinator), will (a) maintain in a separate confidential file the original completed Reporting/Complaint Form, investigatory interview notes and reports, findings made, the results of the investigation, including any decision for action, and other relevant investigatory materials, (b) provide a copy of the file to the District Equity Coordinator, and (c) maintain a copy of the file in the applicable student record or employee personnel file. If the complaint occurs at the district level, the District Equity Coordinator will maintain the original documents.

If the District's investigation results from a third party report, the designated official will inform that person that the District has taken steps consistent with the Policy, while not providing information about any disciplinary action imposed or any other information that would violate applicable state and federal confidentiality laws or student record regulations.

*e. Step Five*

A designated official will monitor the situation, and will follow-up with the complainant at least weekly for two months to determine whether there are further incidents or concerns, and whether the corrective action imposed has been effective. The designated official will maintain a written record of the follow-up.

*f. Step Six*

The complainant may ask the District Equity Coordinator to review, and, if appropriate, revise any non-disciplinary corrective action imposed through a Formal Proceeding, if the complainant believes that the corrective action is not adequate to protect him/her from future harassment, discrimination, bullying, retaliation, or a hate crime.

Any right of appeal from a disciplinary decision is governed by the Student Code of Conduct, the school's disciplinary code, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and Massachusetts and federal law.

### **3. Additional Information Relevant to Investigations**

Any disciplinary or corrective action against a student or employee must conform to the due process requirements of federal and state law.

- a. Emergencies: School officials will immediately call 911 in case of a threat of imminent physical harm or actual physical harm to a school community member or where police, fire, medical, or other emergency assistance is needed.
- b. Communication During Investigation: Throughout the investigatory and complaint resolution process, the designated official will make reasonable efforts to regularly inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint and their parent(s) or guardian(s) of the status of the complaint, and the anticipated timing for concluding the investigation, and making a determination. The designated official will notify each person interviewed or made aware of the investigation that the investigation is confidential and should not be discussed with other students or District employees. The designated official will tell them that the District will not tolerate retaliation against the complainant or reporter, or anyone else who cooperates with the investigation. The District will notify the parents or guardians of a target of the action taken to prevent any further acts of harassment, bullying, discrimination or retaliation.
- c. Target Assistance: The designated official (or his/her designee) will make appropriate referrals for target assistance, including counseling and crisis intervention, if requested, or as needed.
- d. Target Non-Cooperation: Where a violation of the Policy has been reported by a third party, and the alleged target fails to cooperate with the investigation, or denies the incident occurred, disciplinary and corrective action may be precluded or limited, depending on the circumstances and the availability of information from other sources.
- e. False Charges: Any person who makes knowingly false charges or brings a malicious complaint is subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action.

C. Obligations to Notify Others

1. 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 (See Appendix G ).
2. 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.
3. 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 Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

D. Determinations

1. A designated Amesbury Public Schools official will determine whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this Policy. The determination will be based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances, including the context, nature, frequency and severity of the behavior, how long the conduct continued, where the incident(s) occurred, the number of persons involved in the wrongful conduct, the ages of and relationships between the parties, past incidents or patterns of behavior, and whether the conduct adversely affected the education or school environment of the target or other school community members or materially or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
2. 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.
3. Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target 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.
  4. 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 access that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination. The website is: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>.

#### E. Responses to bullying

This section of the Amesbury Public School's Plan enumerates the school and/or district's chosen strategies for building students' skills, and other individualized interventions that the school or district may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation. The actions listed below are reasonably calculated to end the complained of conduct, deter future conduct, and protect the complainant(s) and other similarly situated individuals. In imposing disciplinary and corrective measures the District will take into account harm the target and other members of the school community suffered and any damage to school climate or property. The decision whether discipline is imposed and the nature of any disciplinary action must comply with the District and school's disciplinary policies and state and federal law.

Please see Sections 11, 111, and IV for specific Amesbury strategies for teaching appropriate behavior through skills building. These strategies and programs include some or all of the following:

##### 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, §

370(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
- Awareness training (to help students understand the impact of their behavior)
- Participation in empathy development
- Cultural diversity, anti-harassment, anti-bullying or intergroup relations
- 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, counseling 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 Plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Disciplinary and corrective action concerning a student may include, but is not limited to:

- A written warning
- Classroom or school transfer
- Short-term or long-term suspension
- Exclusion from participation in school sponsored functions, after-school programs, and/or extracurricular activities
- Limiting or denying access to a part or area of a school
- Exclusion, expulsion, or discharge from school
- Adult supervision on school premises
- Parent conferences
- An apology to the target
- Or any other action authorized by and consistent with the Student Code of Conduct, school disciplinary code, or state and federal law
- In appropriate cases, the District may contact law enforcement agencies or other state agencies.

## VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Amesbury 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.

Amesbury Public School District believes that families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The Plan includes provisions for informing parents or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the school district or school including: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyberbullying. Parents and guardians will be notified in writing each year about the student related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents or guardians. Our approach to collaboration takes into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and the parents.

- A. Parent education and resources. The Amesbury 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.

### 1. Parent Resources

- a. Student Handbook - there are elementary, middle and high school handbooks
- b. Brochures
  - i. Produced by MARC (please see Appendix J) that provide families with strategies for dealing with and preventing bullying.
  - ii. The APS hopes to develop a brochure that addresses frequently asked questions for both families and staff.
- c. Parent Orientation Nights/Back to School Nights include information on strategies employed in classroom to promote positive social skills and understanding of bullying prevention skills. It is the goal of the APS in the next year to research effective strategies to link school programs to families and the school community as a whole.
- d. It is our goal to have a link from each school web page to main resource page. This page will include the district bullying policy and reporting document as well as link pages specific to elementary, middle, and high school main pages. It is our intention to include following headings and information.

- i. Home/School Partnership
  - 1. Definitions
  - 2. Bullying 101-Powerpoint of key basics of the law
  - 3. Anti-bullying curriculum
  - 4. Reporting Form
  - 5. Links to online parent resources for example
    - a. [www.parentbooks.ca/bullying.html](http://www.parentbooks.ca/bullying.html)
    - b. [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org)
    - c. [www.bridgew.edu/MARC](http://www.bridgew.edu/MARC)
    - d. [www.amesburyma.gov/policedepartment](http://www.amesburyma.gov/policedepartment)
    - e. [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)
- ii. Parent Teacher Organizations
  - 1. Will work cooperatively with the school to develop a common language, common understandings and share resources.
  - 2. This may include trainings for parents, discussions and book study groups.
- iii. Educational Vignettes-Videos
  - 1. It is the intention to have students at each school level to include roleplays defining:
    - a. Bystander responsibilities
    - b. Retaliation
    - c. Bullying vs. Harassment
    - d. Cyberbullying
  - 2. Online quiz testing and understanding of definitions presented in roleplaying

B. Notification requirements. Each year the Amesbury Public School District 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. Amesbury Public School District will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of our 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 will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. Amesbury Public School District will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The law requires each Plan to include a statement prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The statement must be included in the Plan and included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying. It may be tailored to meet the specific priorities of the school or district. Alternative language is included in the draft priority statements in Part I D above.

### **AMESBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICY- JFCB/GCBC**

#### **PROMOTING CIVIL RIGHTS AND PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, HAZING, BULLYING, CYBER BULLYING, SEXTING, DISCRIMINATION, AND HATE CRIMES**

"The Amesbury Public School District is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, where all school community members treat each other with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. This Policy is an integral part of the District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning, eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior and enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential and become successful citizens in our increasingly diverse society.

The District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination, or hate crimes in our schools or school-related activities. The District will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, and take prompt, effective action to end that behavior and prevent its reoccurrence. Action will include, where appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. The District will support this Policy in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement."

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, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## VIII. 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. This information may be made available in both hard copy and in electronic formats:

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern seeking assistance outside the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary education Problem Resolution System (PRS).

That information can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>. Emails 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 is also available at the Superintendent's office.

## IX. DEFINITIONS

Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, as noted below. Schools or districts may add specific language to these definitions to clarify them, but may not alter their meaning or scope. Plans may also include additional definitions that are aligned with local policies and procedures.

Aggressor - is a student/staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying - as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students or a 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:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

Complainant - A person who complains about conduct covered by this Policy who is the alleged target of the conduct, and if a student, their parent or guardian.

Cyber-bullying - Cyber-bullying is 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, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying 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. Cyber-bullying 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.

Disability - A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (a) where the person has such an impairment, (b) has a record of such an impairment, (b) is regarded as having an impairment, or (d) has an individualized education program (IEP).

Harassment - Harassment is oral, written, graphic, electronic or physical conduct on school property or at a school-related activity relating to an individual's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability (i.e. protected status),



that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the district's programs or activities or to interfere with or limit an individual's employment, by creating a hostile work environment. For purposes of this Policy, harassment shall also mean conduct, if it persists, that will likely create such a hostile, humiliating, intimidating or offensive educational or work environment.

Harassment based on a person's protected status may include, but is not limited to:

- Degrading, demeaning, insulting, or abusive verbal or written statements
- Taking personal belongings, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors
- Drawing or writing graffiti, slogans, visual displays (such as swastikas), or symbols on school or another person's property (e.g., books or backpacks)
- Telling degrading or offensive jokes
- Unwanted physical contact of any kind
- Physical violence, threats of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or stalking;
- Threatening letters, e-mails, instant messages, or websites
- Defacing, damaging, or destroying school (e.g., desks, lockers or school walls) or another person's property; or throwing objects (eggs, paint)

Hazing - The term "hazing" shall mean any conduct or method of initiation, even if consented to, into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include, but is not limited to, whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Whoever knows that another person is the target of hazing and is at the scene of such activity, shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such activity to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such behavior shall be subject to discipline.

Hostile Environment - as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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.

Independent Contractor - Any person, organization, or company who contracts with and/or provides goods, supplies, or services to the District or a school, and who is not a school employee and is not under the direction or control of the District (for example, bus drivers and school vendors).

National Origin - A person's ancestry, country of origin, or the country of origin of the person's parents, family members or ancestors.

Reporter - A person reporting an incident who is a third party and not the target of the alleged conduct that violates the Policy.

Retaliation - Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment by a school community member directed against another school community member for reporting or filing a complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing of a report or complaint, for cooperating in an investigation under this Policy, or for taking action consistent with this Policy.

School Community Member - Any student, District or school employee, school committee member, independent contractor, school volunteer, parent or legal guardian of a student, or a visitor on school premises or at a school-related or school-sponsored function or activity.

School Employee - Any District or school administrator, teacher, school counselor, nurse, secretary, librarian, and any other professional or support staff member employed by the District, and subject to the District's direction or control (and who is not a school volunteer).

School-Related Activity - Any school-sponsored activity, such as a field trip or an athletic competition; any school-related function or event, such as a PTO meeting; where school officials have supervisory responsibility for students; or where students are using school transportation or are at a designated school bus stop.

School Volunteer - Any person who without compensation provides goods, supplies, or services to the District or its schools on a one-time or an ongoing basis, and who is not a school employee or independent contractor.

Sexting - is the act of sending sexually explicit photos, images, or messages electronically, primarily by cell phone and/or the Internet.

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.

## **X. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the 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 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 or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.