

EAST LONGMEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

(HIGHLIGHTED AREAS REPRESENT NEW ADDITIONS FROM DESE OR MASSACHUSETTS ASSOC. OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES. OTHER HIGHLIGHTED AREAS ARE UPDATED INFORMATION ON CURRENT ELPS PRACTICES)

Priority Statement:

The East Longmeadow Public School System is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our continuing efforts to promote learning and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behaviors that can impede the learning process.

This **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** is a comprehensive approach addressing bullying and cyberbullying. ELPS is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community at large to prevent any issue of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, the District has established this plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal in each school building is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**.

I. Leadership

The East Longmeadow Public School System recognizes that leadership at all levels will play a critical role in developing and implementing the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** and coordinate it within the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote a positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leaders are responsible for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

This plan is an integral part of the East Longmeadow Public School System's continuing effort to foster a safe and nurturing learning environment. All members of the school community and the greater community will need to support this plan for it to be wholly successful. The East Longmeadow Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, in our schools or during school-related activities. The East Longmeadow Public Schools will investigate all reports of bullying promptly.

- A. The East Longmeadow School Committee policy **JICFB** on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes was presented and discussed at School Council meetings, PTO meetings, and building faculty meetings. Every student has been provided a copy of this policy and has had it explained to them by their teachers. In October, 2010, the East Longmeadow Public School System hosted an informational evening for *parents/guardians* and students, presenting the school system's safe schools initiatives along with information on bullying and cyberbullying. The evening was facilitated by Dr. Englander, the director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Society. School Councils and PTO groups will review the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** and provide feedback or revisions as needed.
- B. The East Longmeadow Public Schools will continue to formally survey the students **and staff** regarding school climate and school safety issues. Building-specific data will be collected and analyzed in order to identify patterns of behavior and areas of concern. This data will also inform decision making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

- C. The principal, and/or his/her designees on the faculty, is/are responsible for the following aspects of the plan: (1) receiving reports on bullying, (2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data, (3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, (4) planning for the required professional development of teachers, (5) planning supports that respond to the needs of the targets and aggressors, (6) deciding on the curricula that the school will use, (7) developing and revising policies and protocols, including an Internet safety plan, (8) amending student and staff handbooks, (9) leading the family engagement efforts and drafting *parent/guardian* information materials and (10) reviewing and updating the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** yearly or more frequently if needed.
- D. ELPS 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 promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

II. Professional Development

- A. There will be annual staff training regarding the plan which will specify policies and procedures used when investigating and dealing with issues regarding bullying. Staff members hired after the beginning of the year will be given building-based information and training regarding bullying and cyberbullying.
- B. There will be on-going professional development aimed at building the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. The professional development will be informed by research and will focus on age and/or developmentally appropriate information for the students of the school.
- C. Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to the needs of IEP students under the law, especially students whose disability affects social skills development.
- D. The school or district will provide all staff with yearly access to the policy and the comprehensive plan in the employee handbook.

III. Access to Resources and Services

A. Identifying Resources

In the East Longmeadow Public Schools, all staff members work together to support students and identify any individual student who may be in need of additional services. This process can occur through a number of ways: the MTSS process, self-referral, *parent or guardian* referral, teacher referral, and/or community agency referral.

Building-level MTSS teams utilize referral information and survey results to identify students who might need additional (Tier 2 or 3) support. Elementary and High School counselors push into classrooms to provide Tier 1 support; Birchland Park does this via advisory. Students identified as needing Tier 2 support receive intervention services from counselors. These interventions are tracked to ensure they are appropriate and meeting student needs. Students needing Tier 3 support are referred to River Valley Counseling for in-school therapeutic support.

The district employs student support teams at each building consisting of the following professionals: Administrators, Director of Student Services, Guidance Counselors, Adjustment Counselors, School Nurses,

School Psychologists, Department Chairpersons, Teachers, and Paraprofessionals. These teams work together to provide resources for students and develop specific supports and interventions when needed.

Additional Resources:

- At East Longmeadow High School
 - New Guidance Model focusing more on the transition to high school from middle school, and then, the gradual move into academic planning for post high school goals
 - Innocent Classroom Strategies

- At Birchland Park Middle School
 - Innocent Classroom Strategies
 - Second Step Curriculum
 - 6th through 8th Grade Advisory Program
 - Counselor Activities/Support

- Elementary Schools
 - MARC Curriculum
 - Second Step Curriculum
 - Responsive Classroom
 - Counselor Activities/Support

B. Counseling Services

Counseling services are available to all students through the guidance counseling and adjustment counseling staff at all schools. Students may be referred for counseling by a *parent/guardian* or by a teacher, with parental consent. Services range from 1:1 time with a counselor, social skills building lunch groups, and other groups with students and model peers.

Additionally, ELPS partners with River Valley Counseling to provide students who have been identified for more intensive counseling with licensed therapists who meet with students weekly during their school day.

C. Students with Disabilities

As required by M.G.L. c.71B, s 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 include in the IEP objectives and actions that develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

- D. Referral to Outside Services. When it is appropriate, guidance counselors and the adjustment counselor will make referrals of students and families to additional outside services, **in addition to the services possibly being received by River Valley Counseling as described above.** All referrals will follow current district protocols, as well as comply with relevant laws and policies.

IV. Academic and Nonacademic Activities

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches

The East Longmeadow Public Schools is taking a multifaceted approach to teaching students both the student-related sections of the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** (and policy) as well as

social curricula that will provide students with the skills and tools necessary to promote healthy, respectful communications and a safe environment.

Staff presents the **Code of Conduct** and **Student Handbooks** to all students at the beginning of the school year and emphasizes the rules pertaining to bullying and harassment. **Parents/Guardians and students also are provided access to both the Code of Conduct and the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on the District's web page.**

Present bullying prevention curricula utilized by the East Longmeadow Public Schools includes MARC Curriculum, Second Step Curriculum, and Responsive Classroom in elementary school, Second Step Curriculum and the Birchland Park Middle School Advisory Program at the middle school, and the East Longmeadow High School through the guidance curriculum. **Guidance and adjustment counselors at all grade levels implement and support social and emotional curriculum for students.**

All bullying prevention curricula are informed by current research, which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- a. Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- b. 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;
- c. Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- d. Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- e. Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- f. Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives and can be found in guidance and advisory programs as well as all of our bullying prevention curricula:

- a. Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- b. Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- c. Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, including when students require discipline;
- d. Using positive behavioral supports;
- e. Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- f. Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- g. 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;
- h. Using the Internet safely; and
- i. 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

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. East Longmeadow Public Schools will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including an **Incident Reporting Form**, a voicemail box, and an email address. Reporting may be made anonymously.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. 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. At the beginning of each school year, East Longmeadow Public Schools will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation within its **Code of Conduct**. The specific steps to address bullying reports are outlined in the attached Policy on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination and Hate Crimes.

As outlined in the School Committee policy, **JICFB**, on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes, the reporting process is as follows:

Reporting Procedures

1. Any student who becomes aware of or has a reasonable belief that harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime has occurred or may have occurred on school property or in a school-related activity **should** promptly report the incident(s) to the principal or his/her designee. In situations where a student or other person does not feel comfortable reporting the incident to a designated official, (s)he may report it to a trusted school employee, who must promptly transmit the report to the principal or his/her designee.
2. All complaints or reports about a violation of this Policy must be documented on the School's Incident Reporting Form (see Appendix A). The form is available from designated school officials and on the school system's web page. If a complainant or reporter is either unwilling or unable to complete the District's Incident Reporting Form, the school official who receives the oral complaint or report will promptly prepare a written report by filling out the District's Incident Reporting Form, using, to the extent practicable, the reporter's or complainant's own words to describe the potential violation.
3. 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 his/her designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. The School official will promptly provide the principal or his/her designee with the completed Reporting/Complaint Form.
4. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, **may be made anonymously**. The school or district will utilize a variety of reporting resources including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address. **No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.**
5. Through the ELPS **Memorandum of Understanding** with the East Longmeadow Police Department, the East Longmeadow Public Schools may share any and all information with regard to student safety or possible illegal activity with the East Longmeadow School Resource Officer and/or other members of the ELPD.
6. If the principal or his/her designee determines that bullying has occurred, (s)he shall take appropriate disciplinary action. If it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, the principal will consult with the School Resource Officer and the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are

warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the East Longmeadow Police Department will be notified.

A. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not be limited to the following: 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. See individual school handbooks for more detailed information.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the 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.

B. Investigation

The principal or designee will promptly investigate 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.

The procedure used in an investigation of a report of bullying or retaliation has been outlined specifically in the School Committee policy **JICFB** on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes. All principals or their designees will follow these steps.

C. Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after the 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 are necessary.

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

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to *parents or guardians* 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.

Regardless of the determination, 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.

D. Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-building

Once the principal or designee has determined 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)

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 district's **Code of Conduct** and the School Committee policy **JICFB** on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes.

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

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

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

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

VI. Collaboration with Families

A. Family Education and Resources

The East Longmeadow Public School district provides parents and guardians with educational resources to allow them to understand district policy and curricula in ways that assist them in reinforcing the program(s) at home. Some of the educational resources and outreach include:

- a. The School Council of each school meets annually to review the **Student Handbook**.
- b. All high school students, and the middle school and elementary school students and *parents/guardians* sign a form acknowledging that they have received the **Student Handbook** and the **Code of Conduct**, which have a copy of the district's bullying policy.
- c. Some anti-bullying programs include informational components for *parents or guardians* and may have take-home letters explaining the programs and ways to reinforce the skills learned at home.
- d. The District provides information and resources on the District website
- e. District administrators and counseling staff provide individualized bullying prevention to students and their parents and guardians as needed.

B. Notification Requirements

- a. The East Longmeadow Public School District provides information regarding bullying prevention and social and emotional curriculum to parents and guardians. Notification is provided in several formats including: automated phone calls and emails, the **Program of Studies**, the **Code of Conduct**, course-related documents, District and school websites, and parent/guardian meetings.
- b. The East Longmeadow Public School District provides annual written notice of the student-related sections of the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan** to students and their parents and guardians in the **Student Handbooks** and the **Code of Conduct**.
- c. The East Longmeadow Public School District provides information to parents and guardians regarding the District's Internet Safety Policy in the **Student Handbook** and the **Code of Conduct**, in both hard copy and electronically through our District website.

VII. Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

According to Massachusetts General Law M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (b):

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (I) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on

- a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

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

VIII. Problem Resolution System:

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

IX. Definitions

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

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students 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:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

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

Interference with, intimidation of, and/or retaliation against any individual, including a student, parent or guardian, for filing a complaint, filing a grievance, or opposition discrimination is strictly prohibited and shall be treated as an actionable, wrongful act in and of itself.

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 school or 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.

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