

OXFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BULLYING PREVENTION

and

INTERVENTION PLAN

"Take a stand, lend a hand."



RECOMMENDATIONS PREPARED BY

ANTI-BULLYING TASK FORCE

Respectfully submitted for review
to the Oxford School Committee

December 13, 2010

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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Introduction

The goal of the Oxford Public Schools is to maintain a safe school environment conducive to teaching and learning.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in response to M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 (as added by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010), prohibiting bullying in schools.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. The intention of this plan is to strengthen existing protections for our students. Additionally, it will serve as a tool for our faculty and administration to promote strategies that will allow our District to prevent issues of violence, bullying and other acts of aggression. The District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies and our community to prevent issues of violence.

The District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner, respecting individual differences.

The development of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan included surveying Oxford's students, parents, and faculty. Data collected from the survey responses were reviewed and analyzed by the Anti-Bullying Task Force. The survey results are attached.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was drafted by a committee comprised of members of the community, including school committee members, administrators, faculty, parents, students and a representative from the police department.

The draft plan was presented to School Committee on December 13, 2010 and approved on December 13, 2010. The plan was submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on December 14, 2010.

Priority Statement

The Oxford Public Schools community is a safe environment which provides for the education of the whole student, including healthy habits of the mind and body.

Therefore, the District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. Toward that end, we will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in school buildings, on school buses, on school grounds, or in school-related activities.

We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. We will take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

I. LEADERSHIP

Leadership at all levels will play a critical role in developing and implementing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“the Plan”) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership 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 school committee members, administrators, faculty, parents, students and a representative from the police department and presented to the School Committee for review and public comment on December 13, 2010. The final draft of the Plan was adopted by the Oxford School Committee at its December 13, 2010 meeting.

B. Assessing needs and resources

The Oxford Public Schools assessed needs and resources in the following manner:

1. The District disseminated bullying and cyberbullying surveys to all students in grades 3 through 12, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff in October of 2010.
2. The data gathered from the survey was used to develop the Plan and establish daily curriculum. The data was presented to the Anti-Bullying Task Force on October 13, 2010. Survey responses were reviewed and analyzed by the Anti-Bullying Task Force.
3. The District Task Force made the contents of the surveys available for the School Committee and the public to review as an informational tool.

C. Planning and oversight

The following list identifies those responsible for tasks required under the Plan:

1. Principals and vice principals or their designee will receive all reports on bullying and prompt investigation will ensue.
2. Teachers and support teams will collect and analyze school wide data on bullying and present problems with measures of improvement.

3. Administrative team will create a process for recording, tracking, and accessing information related to targets and aggressors and plan for required professional development of teachers.
4. School Committee will develop and revise policies under the Plan and designate key staff to implement the policy as approved. Additionally, the School Committee will make informational materials available and advise parents and families on proper reporting procedures.
5. School Committee and Administrative Council will amend student handbooks and codes of conduct to include to the Plan and provisions under Massachusetts General Law.
6. Anti-Bullying Sub Committee, PTOs and School Councils will work with parents, faculty, administrators, law enforcement and the community to make recommendations to the School Committee.
7. Superintendent and Administrative Council will review and implement the curricula that the District will adopt. They will review and update the Plan, making recommendations to the School Committee for approval as needed.
8. School psychologists, adjustment counselors, guidance, building principals and student support teams will implement supports that respond to the needs of targets, aggressors and by-standers.
9. Director of Technology will develop protocols, policy and procedures for computer and Internet safety. Additionally, he/she will designate key staff to oversee implementation and maintain all policy changes as they occur by vote of the school committee.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The District will organize a team of M.A.R.C. (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center) certified trainers to conduct annual training as needed. Training for faculty and staff will be included with the mandated topics currently required by regulation. The training will be conducted within the first month of each school year.

Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan

Annual training topics for all school staff on the Plan will include:

1. Staff duties under the Plan
2. An overview of the process that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation
3. An overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district

B. Ongoing professional development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

1. Age or developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
2. Age or developmentally strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents
3. The complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and bystanders to the bullying
4. 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
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying

6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying

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

C. Written notice to staff

The 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 school or District faculty/staff handbook. The Plan will also be published on the District website.

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.

A. Identifying resources

The District will conduct a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. After the initial mapping of resources is complete, the District will develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. This may include adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services. The mapping of resources will be conducted by members of the Administrative Council. Recommendations for new programs will be the joint responsibility of the Administrative Council and the Bullying Curriculum Task Force.

B. Counseling and other services

The District will continue its practice of connecting with students and families with community service agencies as appropriate. The site-based student support team, the building principal, the school psychologist and any other appropriate staff member will be responsible. School adjustment counselors and school psychologists will assist school administration 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. Possible interventions may include but will not be limited to behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

C. Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities will have the same access to curriculum and intervention as offered to students in the general education population.

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. This will include determining whether specific accommodations, specially designed instruction or related services are necessary in order to meet the needs of the child.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The District will provide age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade in the school district's curricula. Curricula will be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches

Bullying prevention curricula for the Oxford Public Schools will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

1. Using scripts and role playing to develop skills
2. Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation
3. Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

The Oxford Public Schools will promote teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment and they underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

1. Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines
2. Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homeless students
3. Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students may require disciplinary action
4. Using positive behavioral supports
5. Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students
6. Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors
7. 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

8. Using the Internet safely
9. Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities

C. Curriculum development

The Oxford Public Schools is committed to working with building principals, the curriculum coordinator, the Administrative Council and the Bullying Curriculum Task Force to:

1. Review existing appropriate evidence-based curriculum vehicles for the delivery of the Bullying Prevention curriculum
2. Review new materials where necessary and make recommendations for adoption to the Curriculum Planning Council and the School Committee
3. Develop lessons, referring to the stated objectives and guidelines, for consistent use at each grade level
4. Make recommendations for the frequency of lessons.

D. Curriculum implementation

The Oxford Public School plans to implement approved evidenced-based curricula beginning in the fall of 2011, including but not limited to:

1. K-4 school *Announcement of the Day* created by a student
2. "Take a stand, lend a hand" practiced daily throughout the District
3. Implementation of the M.A.R.C. Curriculum throughout the District
4. K-8 Early Learning Block, *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect*
5. Internet safety presentations for students and parent/guardians

E. Additional curriculum support activities

The District supports programs and activities that promote the value of a positive school climate with healthy and respectful behaviors. Although some of these programs and activities are not evidence-based or specifically targeted to bullying prevention, they will continue to be evaluated for potential implementation.

1. Positive bus behavior

2. Positive Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
3. Rachel's Challenge/Friends of Rachel Groups
4. Morning meeting
5. Responsive classroom
6. Service learning projects

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

It is an expectation of the district that all staff members are required to report any bullying or harassment incident they see or learn about. The district will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of harassment, including bullying. The principal or designee of each building will be responsible for handling all complaints alleging harassment or bullying.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited. Gateway Behaviors such as teasing, name calling, taunting, exclusion, spreading of rumors or gossip including online, staring, making faces, mimicking, rough housing and physical altercations will not be tolerated.

A. Expectations

The Oxford Public Schools will follow set procedures and guidelines for the implementation of an anti-bullying protocol. This protocol includes:

1. A student/parent complaint process
2. A staff logging process
3. A reporting process for staff
4. An investigation process
5. A disposition report
6. A process for communication with parents/guardians and staff
7. Record keeping and reporting

B. Procedures for reporting acts of bullying

If any employee of the District becomes aware of a possible act of bullying, that person **must** report the event to a school administrator within one school day, using the Bullying Incident Reporting Form (*see Appendix*).

If a student expresses a desire to report or discuss a possible incident of bullying with a staff member, the staff member will, in a timely manner, provide the student with a practical, safe, confidential way of doing so.

If a student requires help completing the form, a staff member will provide the necessary assistance. Information obtained from the Bullying Report Form shall be recorded in the District as a "complaint" for the reporting student.

If a student chooses to anonymously report an incident of bullying, he/she may do so with the understanding that no disciplinary action will be taken against another student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

C. Procedures for the prompt investigation of acts of bullying

The principal or administrative designee must initiate an investigation of a report of bullying within one (1) school day after being notified of a possible bullying incident, consistent with due process rights, using the Bullying Investigation Form.

If the target is injured, medical treatment will be provided without delay, and the student's parents will be notified immediately.

The principal or administrative designee will conduct an investigation to determine whether an act of bullying occurred, and which person(s) were responsible for the act(s) and/or played a role in perpetuating it. Other related complaints regarding the involved parties, including those from previous schools, will be reviewed as part of the investigative process.

The principal or administrative designee will make every attempt to contact the parents/guardians of all related parties by the end of the administrator's day in which the investigation was initiated and inform them of the status of the investigation.

Discussions with all parties should be documented by the investigating administrator as soon as possible after the event. When an act of bullying has been determined, the principal or administrative designee will apply consequences consistent with due process rights, using the student handbook as a guide.

If the aggressor's actions are delinquent acts, they shall be reported by the principal or administrative designee promptly to the responsible law enforcement agency according to the Massachusetts General Laws.

The principal or administrative designee will notify parents/guardians of all parties involved of the incident that the stated process has been followed.

The principal or administrative designee will create a written record of the bullying incident and any disciplinary actions taken, as well as the statements of the target, bystander(s), and aggressor(s). The Superintendent shall be notified and will summarily document the investigation.

D. Disciplinary consequences

The Oxford Public Schools will investigate reports of bullying and/or harassment. Disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation shall balance the need for accountability with

the need to teach appropriate behavior. Should the investigation determine that such bullying and/or harassment has taken place the following disciplinary consequences may be taken. Consequences may include one or more of the following, taking into consideration the frequency:

1. Short-term or long-term suspension
2. Expulsion from school
3. Referral to the Oxford Police Department for criminal action
4. Possible Corrective Action
5. Restorative justice
6. Awareness training
7. Participation in empathy development, cultural diversity, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, or intergroup relation programs
8. Mandatory counseling
9. Classroom transfer
10. Limiting or denying student access to a part or area of a school
11. Adult supervision of student on school premises
12. Any other action authorized by and consistent with the disciplinary code

E. False charges

Any student who knowingly makes false charges or brings a malicious complaint regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination or hate crimes may be subjected to any of the disciplinary and/or corrective actions detailed above.

F. Procedures for following up acts of bullying

After the determination that an act of bullying has occurred and after appropriate discipline has been enforced, the Principal or administrative designee will develop with the target student and their parents or guardians a *safety plan* and with the aggressor student and their parents or guardians a *conduct plan*. Both plans will include notifying the teachers not only of the incident, but also of all the parties involved, specifying their roles.

The safety plan for the victim will include, but not be limited by, the following:

1. A staff member (as designated by the administrator, student, and the parents/guardians) will be assigned as a check-in person to regularly meet with the student to ensure the following:
 - a. No acts of retaliation have occurred
 - b. Strategies are provided for dealing with future incidents, emphasizing immediate reporting of any further acts
 - c. Information regarding outside support services are provided to student and family
 - d. The frequency and duration of check-ins will be determined on a case by case basis, but will not be less than two (2) times per week for a period of four (4) weeks.
 - e. After two weeks, the check-in person will provide a progress report on the emotional well-being of the student to the Principal or administrative designee.
 - f. The safety plan cannot be discontinued without the agreement of the student, the parents/guardians, the designated check-in person, and the principal or administrative designee.
2. The conduct plan for the aggressor will include, but not be limited by, the following and the principal or administrative designee will conduct compulsory conduct meetings to ensure the following:
 - a. No further acts of bullying have been committed
 - b. The student has been educated regarding acceptable alternative behaviors
 - c. The student has received further education of the school's anti-bullying policy, including the potential for more severe school consequences and/or criminal charges being filed
 - d. The frequency and duration of these meetings will be agreed upon and will depend upon future actions
 - e. Information regarding outside support resources will be made available to the student and their parents/guardians.

f. A progress report identifying student conduct will be provided within two (2) weeks

Discontinuation of the conduct plan will be determined by the principal or administrative designee. All meetings and the ending of the conduct plan should be documented and kept throughout the student's school career. Parents/guardians will be made aware of any changes or discontinuance to the conduct plan.

G. Reporting orientation

Schools will inform staff about the availability of the Bullying Incident Report Form for their use during opening-of-school meetings and then periodically throughout the school year.

Schools will inform students and parents about the availability of the forms and their use during orientation sessions and periodically throughout the school year.

Samples of the form, as well as a description of the form's availability will be included in the faculty and student/parent handbooks. Forms will be available in the school's main office, counselor's office, library, and other locations as determined by the individual schools. Electronic versions of the form will be available on the district and individual school websites.

H. Bullying protocol for teachers/staff members

With the bullying protocol in place, there may be a question regarding what constitutes an incident, what is a logging incident and what is a bullying incident limited to. Teachers are always advised to use their knowledge to determine if immediate action needs to occur.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent education and resources

The District will offer educational programs for parents/guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the District. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, School Councils, and Special Education Parent Advisory Council and School Committee.

B. Notification Requirements

Each year the District will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, cyberbullying and online safety. The District will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the District's Computer and Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents/guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats. The District will post the Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Oxford Public Schools pledges to prepare all students to be life-long learners and responsible citizens. The Oxford Public Schools are committed to maintaining a safe school environment free of bullying, in accordance with the current School Committee Policy.

Bullying of students by other students, student to teacher, teacher to student, parent to teacher, teacher to parent, administrator to teacher, teacher to administrator any district employee against another district employee will not be tolerated by the Oxford Public Schools.

The District has the implemented strategies for protecting a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses bullying or has reliable information about an act of bullying. Such strategies include but are not limited to:

- A. The development of a safety plan
- B. Check-in with guidance, administration or other staff
- C. Witness protection
- D. Staff escorts
- E. Modified schedule/class assignment
- F. Increased supervision in high traffic areas
- G. Increased communication among staff

Bullying Shall be Prohibited:

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

VIII. Definitions

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

Bullying is "The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear or harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyberbullying."

Cyberbullying 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. Cyberbullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of 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 (i) to (v) inclusive of the definition of bullying."

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.

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.

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.

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.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. 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 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 the District to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H¹/₂, 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.