

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

Revised November 2018

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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Introduction

The goal of the Oxford Public Schools is to maintain a safe and secure 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. As a result of the ongoing requirements, the plan was revised on November 8, 2018.

Priority Statement

The Oxford Public Schools community is a safe and secure 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.

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

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. District administrators and principals, utilizing established council and advisory mechanism, will involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing, implementing and evaluating the Plan

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the original (2010) draft Plan was 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. As part of the process of a living document, the comprehensive plan was reviewed and revised on November 8, 2018 based upon current legislation and needed revisions.

B. Assessing needs and resources

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

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.

1. 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.
2. The District Task Force made the contents of the surveys available for the School Committee and the public to review as an informational tool.

As part of the ongoing assessment and mapping of data in the context of resources, strengths and gaps in services and supports. This process assists schools in the district in identifying needs. Based on these findings, action steps may include revising or developing policies and procedures; expanding community partnerships including law enforcement; and setting priorities for future prevention and intervention efforts. Additionally, at least once every four years beginning with 2019-2020 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. The district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

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.

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.

D. Developing priority statements

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

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic, status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The district will identify specific steps it will take 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.

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.

E. 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

F. 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 particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

G. 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 continuum of services is available to enhance the District's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services should reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors.

H. 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.

I. 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, district social worker 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.

J. 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.

K. 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, including seeking adult assistance
3. Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance
4. Emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
5. Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
6. Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

L. 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, particularly in their areas of strength

M. 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.

N. 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

O. 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. 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

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the district has established policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

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.

1. 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. The district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The 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.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the

principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

a. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

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

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

2. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student

a. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

b. Obligations to Notify Others

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

- iii. **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 student aggressor. In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

3. Investigation

The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

4. Determinations

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

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have

contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

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

5. Responses to bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

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

Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

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

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.

6. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff

All incidents of bullying by school staff will be thoroughly investigated. As appropriate, disciplinary and corrective action concerning a school employee may include, but is not limited to, a written warning, suspension, transfer, demotion, removal from certain duties, employment, termination, supervision, training, and counseling.

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 target, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

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 and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so

with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

VI. 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 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 or harm to himself or of damage to his 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. 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.

VII. 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, gender identity 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 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.

