

Seaport Academy Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Seaport Academy Staff created this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. The Plan's format parallels the draft *Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework*, and is designed to meet all requirements of Massachusetts Anti-Bullying legislation.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

In keeping with Massachusetts Anti-bullying law, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), acts of bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited:

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

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

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

LEADERSHIP

The Seaport Academy administration is responsible for the development and implementation of this plan. In developing this plan, we have relied heavily on the many therapeutic and behavioral interventions already in place at Seaport to promote a positive school culture. They include our Collaborative Problem Solving policies and approach, which has been in use for several years to encourage positive social interaction among our students and to promote responsibility as students and respect for all individuals in our community, and our CPS system, which prescribes clear and consistent expectations in the area of Safety, Respect and Responsibility.

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan has been developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, administrators, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. In all cases, consultation includes, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period before the Plan was adopted.
- B. Assessing needs and resources. The Plan is the Academy's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders have, with input

from families and staff, assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services.

In assessing needs specific to this program, Seaport staff and administration will complete a thorough review of recent events and behavior data to help identify patterns of behavior and areas of concern with regard to bullying and cyber-bullying. Through the parent advisory council and written surveys available online and through the mail, the views of parents and guardians of our students will be solicited. Input from these sources will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. Under the leadership of Seaport administration these assessments will be completed by February vacation, 2011, and incorporated into the Plan by the end of the 2011 school year.

- C. Planning and oversight. The principal/director of the elementary/middle school and the high school will be the primary leaders responsible for the following tasks under the Plan: 1) receiving reports on bullying; 2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; 7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; 9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and 10) reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently. The director of Seaport Academy will be informed and kept abreast about reports of bullying.

- D. Priority statements.

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

The school 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.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, Seaport Academy has established 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.

- A. Reporting bullying or retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff,

students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A 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 staff members, may be made anonymously. The school will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, voicemail, and email.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school 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, counselors' offices, and the school nurse's office; 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 will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to a principal/director when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to administration does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

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

The school 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 an administrator. 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 may report and discuss an incident of bullying with any staff member, with their counselor, or with an administrator. In all such cases the school's policy regarding confidentiality applies. Information which might affect the safety of others cannot be held in confidence.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, administration 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; and identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target

Administrators will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

Administration will implement appropriate strategies for protecting a student from bullying or retaliation 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.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, administration 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 an administrator 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 administrator first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone an administrator 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 administration has a reasonable basis to believe that a law has been violated, the administrator will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and established agreements with the Arlington police. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student, the administrator 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, administration will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school and procedures, consult with other individuals the administration deems appropriate.

- C. Investigation. Administration 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 administration will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. Whoever is conducting the investigation will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the administration or other staff members. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, administration will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. An administrator will maintain a written record of the investigation.

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

- D. Determinations. Administration will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, administration 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. Administrators 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, administration 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.

Administration 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 will comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, administrators 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.

- E. Responses to Bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon a determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school 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 school may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with 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 administrators decide that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

If administration 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

Seaport administration 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.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, an administrator 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, administrators will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will be scheduled along with other state mandated trainings during orientation and will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that administrators will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered throughout the school. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.
- B. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - (ii) age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
 - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and

(vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

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

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

C. Written notice to staff. The school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it and including sections related to staff duties, in the school employee handbook and orientation material.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. Identifying resources. Seaport Academy is well prepared to provide therapeutic, behavioral, and educational interventions in response to any report of bullying in our community. Immediately available resources include access to administration for students and parents, individual counseling through students' Seaport therapist, conflict resolution meetings, email and phone contact between school and home, a well-established relationship with the Arlington Police, the support and resources of students' sending school districts, and contact with all outside agencies involved in a student's life. Plan development will include an administrative review of these and other resources to insure that we are well positioned for implementation. Special attention will be given to the identification and development of bullying prevention curriculum.

B. Counseling and other services. At Seaport each student is assigned a counselor. Students are scheduled to meet with their counselor one class period a week. In addition, counselors make time to meet with their students on an emergency basis upon request. Administrators, teachers, and other staff are also available to meet with students on an emergency basis. The development of trust and positive relationships with students is a key component of Seaport policy and philosophy, and is emphasized in staff training. Group development, particularly within the check-in period environment is another key component of Seaport programming. Within these groups, social skills training through staff modeling and interaction is present on a daily basis. Students with more significant social skills deficits and vulnerabilities are seen in the Learning Center of individual or small group pragmatics instruction.

C. Students with special vulnerabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by

Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

- D. Referral to outside services. Seaport Academy students and their families are frequently referred to outside services before entering Seaport or while the student is enrolled here. In developing the Plan, Seaport staff and administration will review our protocols for referring students and families to outside services.

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

- A. Specific bullying prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research and will emphasize the following approaches:
- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
 - empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
 - helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
 - emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
 - enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
 - engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan will include specific information about how and when the school or district will review the Plan with students.

- B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. Staff at Seaport Academy use the following approaches, among others, to underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:
- Use of the Collaborative Problem Solving Approach
 - setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
 - creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
 - using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
 - using positive behavioral supports;
 - developing positive relationships with students;
 - modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
 - using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;

- teaching students to use the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources. In collaboration with the Parent Advisory Council, Seaport Academy will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the school.
- B. Notification requirements. Each year the school will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's Internet safety policy. All notices and information will be available to parents or guardians in the language(s) most prevalent. The school will post the Plan and related information on its website.

DEFINITIONS as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, 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 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.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, maintenance personnel, 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.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to Seaport Academy or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study at the Academy on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school 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 to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or school policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the plan covers the behavior.