

# Bullying: Prevention and Intervention



**Gardner Public Schools**

Updated: August 2023

# Bullying Prevention and Intervention

M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 and the District's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) prohibit bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation:

- 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, 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/or
- at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related, or through the 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 their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

# Definitions

Bullying is defined as:

- The **repeated** use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, of a written, verbal, or electronic expression of a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof that:
  - *causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;*
  - *places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;*
  - *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.*
  - *Bullying shall include cyber-bullying.*

# Definitions

Cyber-bullying is defined as:

- Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication including 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. Also includes:
  - *the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;*
  - *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 the definition of bullying; or*
  - *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 in the definition of bullying.*

# Definitions

## Aggressor:

A student or member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

## Target:

A student target of bullying or retaliation.

## Hostile Environment:

Where bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to alter the conditions of the student's education.

## Retaliation:

Reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

# Bullying: Vulnerable Populations

Certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including:

- Race;
- Color;
- Religion;
- Ancestry;
- National origin;
- Sex;
- Socioeconomic status;
- Homelessness;
- Academic status;
- Gender identity or expression;
- Physical appearance;
- Pregnant or parenting status;
- Sexual orientation;
- Disability; or,
- By association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.

The reasons for being bullied reported most often by students include physical appearance, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation ([National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016](#)).

# Bullying Prevention and Intervention

## Children with Disabilities

- M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3: Whenever the evaluation of the IEP team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the IEP shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.
- For students identified with a disability of Autism, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.
- Students with emotional impairments, developmental delays, health impairments, communication disorders, and neurological impairments are likely to have a disability that affects their social skills development.

All students should receive clear, explicit instruction on how to respond to and report bullying. For students with disabilities, this should be provided in a manner consistent with IEPs and any accommodations needed for learning.

- Applies equally to students who are aggressors of bullying

# Difference between Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably when talking about hurtful or harmful behavior. They are very similar, but in terms of definition, there is an important difference.

Bullying and harassment are similar as they are both about:

- power and control
- actions that hurt or harm another person physically or emotionally
- an imbalance of power between the target and the individual demonstrating the negative behavior
- the target having difficulty stopping the action directed at them

The distinction between bullying and harassment is that when the bullying behavior directed at the target **is also based on a protected class**, that behavior is then defined as harassment. Protected classes include race, color, religion, sex, age, disability and national origin. (<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp>)



# Power differential and complex interactions:

More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied

(<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/facts.asp>)

What are the roles that kids play in bullying?

(<https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/roles-kids-play/index.html>)

# Strategies to Prevent Bullying

Early childhood/young children:

- promote social emotional learning;
- help students develop empathy and value others feeling;
- model empathy and kindness; and,
- discourage exclusionary play and encourage relationships between peers.

School age (in addition to the above):

- follow school policy/rules address bullying behavior;
- bullying prevention in curriculum;
- culture of acceptance tolerance, respect; and,
- teach appropriate behaviors and how to respond

Immediate Intervention/Response:

- Pay attention, don't ignore it, when you see something do something, remain calm, deal with students individually

# Strategies and Interventions to Prevent Bullying

Evidence based practice:

- Multi-tiered behavioral framework: PBIS
- Adult Supervision in all areas of the school especially common areas to supervise behaviors and intervene early.
  - Bullied students reported that bullying occurred in the following places: the hallway or stairwell at school (42%), inside the classroom (34%), in the cafeteria (22%), outside on school grounds (19%), on the school bus (10%), and in the bathroom or locker room (9%).  
[\(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016\)](#)
- SEL curriculum: PATHS, Second Step, Zones of Regulation, Social Thinking, Responsive Classroom, etc.

[Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2020](#)

# District-Wide Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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

The Gardner Public School District is committed to providing all individuals 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 healthy social development and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful, disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We understand that members of certain student groups, including; race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics; or by associating with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of the characteristics. The Gardner Public School District will take steps to create a safe environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide these students with the skills and knowledge to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The Gardner Public School District affords all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our activities, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and creates a foundation for working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The Principal in each building is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

# Reporting of Bullying or Harassment

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians or others, and may be oral or written.

If you:

- Receive a complaint or report of bullying or harassment;
- Observe bullying or harassment; or
- Become aware of bullying or harassment;

**Report it to your Assistant Principal or  
Principal immediately!**

*District contact is the Chief Academic Officer*

# Responding to a Report of Bullying

The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a viable report, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged aggressor of bullying. The school procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation and actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation shall be discussed.

Notice to the parent shall be provided in the primary language of the home.

The school principal or a designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying Incident Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged aggressor, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

Support staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student.

Confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

# Bullying Investigations: Notice of Findings

If the school principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred he/she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal shall consult with the school's resource officer and the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the local law enforcement agency shall be notified. The principal shall document the reasons for his or her decision to notify law enforcement.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken. At a minimum the Principal or his/her designee shall contact the parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in the school district, the principal of the school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall notify the local law enforcement agency if the principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Please review the following **required** documentation before continuing to the next slide:

- [JICFB - Bullying Policy](#)
- [Gardner Public Schools Updated Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)
- Addressing the Needs of Students with Disabilities in the IEP and in School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Efforts:  
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/considerations-bully.html>
- National Bullying Prevention Center:  
<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp>

*If employees have any questions regarding this training module or required documentation, please contact your direct supervisor or your school's principal.*



In order to complete this training, please proceed to the form linked below to confirm receipt of all documentation:

- [Certification of Completion of the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Mandatory Training](#)