



Superintendent's Circular

NUMBER:
SSS-18
Version 01

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATEMENT AGAINST STUDENT BULLYING

Boston Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, harassment, cyberbullying, discrimination, retaliation, or hate crimes in all forms and types towards others in any school or at school-related activities. Boston Public Schools will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying and take prompt, effective action to end that behavior and prevent its recurrence. Action will include, where appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. Boston Public Schools will support this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, family meetings/training, and extracurricular activities.

Students, staff, families/caregivers, and any others who are concerned or want to report bullying may confidently talk to a trusted staff member or call the *Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Hotline*, 617-592-2378. [Additional resources and support can be found at Succeed Boston.](#) Succeed Boston leads this districtwide initiative.

The Student Handbook, AUP (Acceptable Use Policy), and the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct are updated annually to assure alignment, to include language prohibiting bullying, and cyberbullying, and to clearly define the consequences connected to it. The district and principals/heads of schools at all levels in the Boston Public Schools play a critical role in the ongoing development and implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote a positive school climate.

Principals/school leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Principals/school leaders have a responsibility for setting priorities and for staying up to date with this policy and current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

The Boston Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses and at school bus stops, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district, and or in school-related activities.

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

A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying will

be subject to disciplinary action as defined by the BPS Code of Conduct.

This Plan has been approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is posted [at the BPS Anti Bullying web page](#). Copies of this plan shall be posted and readily accessible in all schools in an area visible to families/caregivers and staff. The Plan will be reviewed and updated biennially, as mandated by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, this Plan has been developed in consultation with various constituencies. Since May 3, 2010, the Boston Public Schools has met biennially with families/caregivers, teachers, school administrators, students, central administrators, and community stakeholders to develop this Plan.

Effective SY 2024-2025, an advisory group of teachers, administrators, families/caregivers and community members will be developed to review and make recommendations related to curricula, professional development, community and family engagement, and the Plan itself. Consultation will include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period prior to adoption.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Boston Public Schools believes that school communities serve as a network of support for its diverse students, families, and staff. We are committed to providing our students with equal educational opportunities and a safe and welcoming learning environment where all students and community members treat each other with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools.

The Boston Public Schools recognizes 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 Boston Public Schools will continuously work to 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.

Under M.G.L. Ch. 71, § 37O, at the beginning of each school year, each school will provide the community, including students, administrators, external providers, families/caregivers, and staff 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/school leader or designee
- A copy of the Bullying Incident Reporting Form and information about electronic reporting and
- Shall provide and post the available resources (including the number to the Safe Space and Bullying Hotline and information about electronic reporting) in the school's main office, the school's website, all counseling offices/spaces, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the

principal/school leader or designee

The Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school and district website, and made available to families/caregivers.

DEFINITIONS UNDER M.G.L. CH. 71, § 370

Note: The following definitions contain terms and/or phrases that are different from the language of the statute. The language of the definitions in this circular is drafted to align with the definitions that are used in the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct. BPS relies on these definitions when reviewing student conduct under the Code:

- **Bullying:** BPS has replaced the word “victim” in the statute with the word “target.”
- **Cyberbullying:** BPS has added (iv) to the definition contained in the statute.
- **Retaliation:** this definition is not provided for under the statute but is operative in the Code of Conduct.
- **School Community:** BPS has added “staff” to the definition contained in the statute.
- **Perpetrator:** this definition is not provided for under the statute but is operative in the Code of Conduct.
- **Aggressor** is a student who engages in bullying or cyberbullying.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of 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 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 themselves or of damage to their property
- III. Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- IV. Infringes on the rights of the target at school
- V. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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, photoelectric or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include:

- I. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person
- 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 (iv) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying

- III. 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
- IV. The use of the internet and/or social media used for bullying outside of school that disrupts the normal functioning of the school day.

Hostile Environment 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.

The School Community consists of students, staff and families/caregivers.

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, and paraprofessionals.

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

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the Boston Public Schools have policies and procedures in place for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that members of the school community – students, families/caregivers, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying are reported or occur (Attachment 1).

The Boston Public Schools, in accordance with MA Law M.G.L. c.

71, § 370, has designated the principal/school leader or designee as the person responsible for receiving reports, recording incidents, and investigating all incidents. The principal/head of school or designee is responsible for responding to and resolving all cases. All bullying allegations, no matter how they were reported, (e.g., through the Safe Space and Bullying reporting form or directly to the school leader, or directly to staff at the school), shall be submitted to Succeed Boston using the [Safe Schools & Bullying Investigation form](#). All findings, including supporting information, including witness statements (target, aggressor, and any other relevant person) findings, and conclusions, shall be submitted to Succeed Boston within five school days, and findings of bullying shall be documented in the BPS Student Information System (SIS).

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation can be made by staff, students, families/caregivers or others, and can be submitted through the Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Hotline at 617-592-2378 or directly online through the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Incident Reporting Form](#). To report in your native language, please call the Hotline and ask for translation services. Allegations may also be submitted via email, text, or through the Bullying Incident Reporting Form (Attachment 3).

All employees are required to report immediately to the principal/school leader or designee, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

Reports may be made anonymously (see Attachment 3 for the Boston Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form and Attachment 4 for the Boston

Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Anonymous Reporting Form).

Use of the Boston Public Schools Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form is not required as a condition to making a report.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member shall report immediately to the principal/school leader or designee when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal/school leader or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with each school's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Families/Caregivers, and Others

Boston Public Schools expects students, families/caregivers, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal/school leader or designee.

Reports may be made anonymously or not by calling the Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Hotline (617-592-2378) or filing a report online using the Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Reporting form. No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely based on an anonymous report.

Students, families/caregivers, 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/school leader.

3. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal/school leader 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. The principal/school leader or designee shall contact the families/caregivers prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

Under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, for children with special needs, the Principal/Head of School will review the child's IEP to determine whether or not the child's disability impacted or impacts their ability to comply with the Code of Conduct and/or this policy, and where appropriate, convene a TEAM meeting to discuss and decide the appropriate determination which may include behavioral support services or other specialized services.

The principal/Head of School or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Problem Resolution System (PRS) and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to:

- Creating a personal safety or support 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
- Altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target.

The principal/school leader or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during and after the investigation, as necessary. They will implement appropriate strategies to protect students from bullying or retaliation as a result of witnessing, providing information during an investigation, reporting bullying or retaliation or providing reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of bullying will be maintained to the extent possible, given the school's obligation to investigate the matter.

B. Obligations to Notify Others

1. Notice to Families/Caregivers:

Within 24 hours of receipt of the bullying complaint and *before* interviewing students, the principal/school leader or designee will notify the families/caregivers of the target and the aggressor of the allegations and their intent to interview their child.

Families of all student witnesses who may be interviewed will be notified of their intent to interview their child. Should they choose, the family has the right to be present for the interview with their child. Upon completion of the investigation (not beyond five school days after the receipt of the complaint), the principal/school leader will notify the families/caregivers of the target and the aggressor of the findings of the investigation and the procedures used in responding to the complaint.

To ensure the safety of students and compliance with all BPS mandates and State laws, repeated allegations from families/caregivers and/or no response from the head of school

will be forwarded to the Operational Leader and the School Superintendent for follow-up assistance.

2. Notice to Another School or District:

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal/school leader or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal/school leader 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 23.00.

3. Notice to Law Enforcement:

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal/school leader or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal/school leader shall consult with their Operational Leader, the School Superintendent, the Office of Safety Services and/or the Boston Police Department School Unit, and other individuals the principal/school leader or designee deems appropriate.

Note that pursuant to 603 CMR 49.06(2), notification to law enforcement is not required in those situations in which the school leader determines that the bullying and retaliation can be handled appropriately within the school district or school.

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/head of school or designee shall contact their Operational Leader, the School Superintendent, the Office of Safety Services and/or the Boston Police Department School Unit, for notification to law enforcement if

they have a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal/School leader will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with their Operational Leader, the School Superintendent, Office of Safety Services and/or the Boston Police Department School Unit and other individuals the principal/school leader or designee deems appropriate.

The Superintendent's Office shall be notified.

C. Investigation (see Attachment 1)

The principal/school leader or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved. **All reports of staff on student bullying shall be investigated as such**, and the Office of Labor Relations shall be notified.

During the investigation, the school leader or their designee shall notify the families/caregivers of the intent to interview their child and will proceed (in the presence of the families/caregivers, if requested) to gather information, interview students, staff, witnesses, and others as necessary.

The principal/school leader or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, per section 7.6.3 of the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct.

Interviews will be conducted by the principal/school leader or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable and given their obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal/school leader or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal/school leader or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation and upon completion, will file and forward the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Investigation Form](#) and any additional materials to saws@bostonpublicschools.org.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with district policies and procedures for investigations and for possible disciplinary action. If necessary, the

principal/school leader or designee will consult with Succeed Boston regarding consultation or appeals from families/caregivers. The Office of the Superintendent shall be notified should legal counsel pertaining to the investigation of the alleged report be necessary. (See Attachment 1 for more specifics.)

D. Determinations

The principal/school leader or designee will make a determination of bullying based upon the definition of bullying, the interviews with students, staff, and families/caregivers. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal/school leader 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.

Within 5 days of receipt of the allegation, the principal/school leader or designee will:

1. Determine what remedial action is required (e.g., Safety/Support Plan, seating plan), if any
2. Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary, if any
3. Notify the families/caregivers 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
4. Submit the investigation and findings using the [Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention Investigation Form](#) and, if bullying was found, document the finding in the BPS SIS.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal/school leader or designee may choose to consult with the student's teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's

families/caregivers, 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.

All notices to families/caregivers must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal/head of school or designee cannot report specific information to the target's families/caregivers about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directives that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

For students with disabilities, the principal/school leader will review the child's IEP to determine whether the child's disability impacted or impacts their ability to comply with the Code of Conduct and/or this policy, and where appropriate, convene a TEAM meeting to discuss and decide the appropriate determination which may include behavioral support services or other specialized services.

NEW: [Right to Appeal decisions related to the bullying investigation, findings, and/or response may be submitted using this link.](#)

E. Planning & Oversight

The following school or district leaders are responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

Task	Responsible Party
1) Receiving reports on bullying	Succeed Boston, School Administrators, School Staff
2) Collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes	Succeed Boston, Superintendent’s Office, Office of Data and Accountability, RP/SAWS
3) Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors	Succeed Boston, Office of Data and Accountability
4) Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law	Succeed Boston
5) Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors	Succeed Boston, RP/SAWS, Regional Liaison Teams
6) Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use	Succeed Boston, Office of Equity, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Advisory Group

Superintendent's Circular SSS-18

Page 19 of 44

<p>7) Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet Safety Plan, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation</p>	<p>Principals, school leaders, Succeed Boston, Office of the Legal Advisor, Office of Equity, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Advisory Group</p>
<p>8) Amending district-wide and school-based student and staff handbooks and Codes of Conduct</p>	<p>Succeed Boston, Operational Leaders, BPS Code of Conduct Team and Office of the Legal Advisor</p>
<p>9) Leading the families/caregivers or family engagement efforts and drafting information materials</p>	<p>Succeed Boston, Office of Family and Community Advancement, Parent University</p>
<p>10) Reviewing and updating the Plan biennially, or more frequently as needed</p>	<p>Superintendent's Office, Succeed Boston, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Advisory Group, Office of the Legal Advisor, Office of Equity</p>
<p>As required by Chapter 86, of the Acts of 2014, which amended G.L. c. 71, §37O, the Boston Public Schools will administer a department-developed student survey at least once every four years to assess "school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools." (G.L. c. 71, §37O(k)). This may include results of the student/staff/family climate</p>	<p>Succeed Boston, Office of Data and Accountability, Operational Team</p>

survey.	
---------	--

Each school community member is responsible for:

1. complying with this Plan, where applicable
2. ensuring that they do not harass, discriminate against, or commit a crime against another person on school grounds or in a school-related activity because of that person's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability
3. ensuring that they do not bully another person on school grounds or in a school-related activity
4. ensuring that they do not retaliate against any other person for reporting or filing a complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing or a report or complaint, or for cooperating in an investigation of harassment, bullying, discrimination, or a hate crime
5. cooperating in the investigation of reports or complaints of harassment, bullying discrimination, retaliation, or a hate crime.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As required under M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Boston Public Schools requires annual bullying prevention and intervention training (available in person or asynchronously) for all school staff, including lunch monitors, school police officers, secretaries, bus

drivers, teachers, administrators, and all other itinerant staff. All training is posted on Vector. For more information contact [Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center](#), (617) 635-8123.

Annual Staff Training on the Plan

Boston Public Schools will offer professional development to all administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and all ancillary staff members under the employment of the Boston Public Schools. This includes Identifying Bullying Behavior, Types of Bullying, Roles of Aggressors/Targets/Bystanders, Rights and Responsibilities under the Law M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Information regarding the most-risk populations (including LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners), Internet Safety, Reporting Responsibility, Adult Bias, and Addressing Student Bias-Based Speech and Behavior.

Advanced Training

To provide effective bullying prevention and intervention services and to build capacity, each school shall have at least 2 staff trained as *Bullying*

Intervention Specialists (BIS). These specialists will:

- Serve as a resource to their school community on bullying related matters
- Lead relevant training within their school community
- Coordinate the reporting and/or investigating of incidents if designated by their school leader.

The Regional RP/SAWS will provide semi-annual training to the regional BIS teams that will further develop best practices and

resources.

Boston Public Schools will provide a 2-day Bullying Intervention Specialist professional development quarterly throughout the year. The advanced bullying intervention specialist training (see Attachment 2) will be posted on Vector.

The training will include:

- i. developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent and intervene in bullying incidents
 - ii. information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying
 - iii. research findings on bullying, and resources for the development of programs in schools
 - iv. information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying and internet safety issues
 - v. bias-based bullying and sexual harassment
 - vi. issues specific to LGBTQ+ students
 - viii. students with disabilities
 - legal rights/IDEA/FAPE
 - ix. adult bias and impact on bullying intervention and prevention.
- The Regional RP/SAWS will continue to share literature covering the latest information in bullying prevention & intervention. This literature will include strategies for

creating a culture and environment that will prevent bullying.

- Professional Development opportunities to identify strategies for students with disabilities who are either accused of or are targets of bullying (per BPS Code of Conduct).
- Annual updated electronic links to the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Protocols.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates that provide students with feelings of belonging and safety is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors, and bystanders of bullying or cyberbullying. The Boston Public Schools will also address the emotional needs of these students' families. Please see [Anti-Bullying Resources](#) for further information.

Identifying resources in schools

- School staff, together with building administrators, will work to identify the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management, and other services for students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families. Curricula and resources can be accessed through the Boston Public School's Succeed Boston's website succeedboston.org
- Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.
- The Boston Public Schools will continue to work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidence-based curricula and to provide additional preventive services to students, families/caregivers and all school staff.

Counseling and other services

- Succeed Boston's [Student Support and Prevention Workshops](#) provide an alternative to a suspension to increase students' understanding about the impact of bullying, build empathy and social and emotional skills to stop and prevent bullying.
- School counselors, nurses, school psychologists, and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include ongoing emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community-based counseling referrals when appropriate.
- School staff meet with families/caregivers and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible.
- Regional liaisons, especially the RP/SAWS, will work with school teams and administrators to develop and, if needed, co-facilitate culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to identified families.
- School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community-based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSAs) within the local area, providing services to students and families.
- Regional liaisons, especially the RP/SAWS, will work collaboratively with and support the BIS, school counselors, school psychologists, and intensive special needs educators

to:

1. Develop behavior plans and groups for students to build upon their social and emotional skills,
2. Educate and support families/caregivers,
3. Conduct workshops for families/caregivers
4. Connect families/caregivers of outside resources to build skills

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

As required by M. G. L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines that 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 their 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.

REFERRAL TO OUTSIDE SERVICES

Boston Public Schools school counselors and other specialists will help students and families access appropriate and timely services necessary to address student needs as a result of bullying. Referrals shall comply with relevant laws and policies.

ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Boston Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade and incorporate it into the school's or district's curricula. [Succeed Boston](#) provides online Student Support and Prevention Workshops to students in

grades 1-12 to learn about the impact of bullying and develop skills to stop and prevent bullying.

Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, focused strategies for bullying prevention, and social skills development.

Specific bullying prevention 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.
- Build and reinforce student empathy.
- Reinforce and elevate students who model being helpful bystanders
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and resolving conflicts with respectful communications.
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that
- is respectful of diversity and difference.

General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts:

- Create a strong anti-bullying plan that will be enforced first and foremost by adults
- Build in learning and embed bullying in the curriculum (e.g., ELA, social studies, history, health classes)
- Empower bystanders who witness bullying activities with skills and support to intervene appropriately
- Promote acceptance and respect in order to improve the school climate to include all students in meaningful ways
- Help students and staff understand the definition of bullying – what it is and what it isn't (e.g., conflict, fighting, teasing)
- Recognize the dynamics and complexities involved in aggressor-target relationships
- Develop intervention programs that will reduce the prevalence of bullying behaviors and create a safe school climate that fosters positive learning experiences for all students
- Be creative in developing strategies to promote social competence for children who are aggressors, targets of bullying, and bystanders
- Develop ways to help students who are aggressors find more prosocial ways of experiencing positive rewards
- Build an effective support system for protecting targets of bullying.

The Boston Public Schools has incorporated a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's skills or to prevent further incidents of bullying and/or retaliation. Combining and incorporating a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), social and emotional skill building, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) focused on prevention services school-wide, creates a level change across the classroom, school, and district. These changes not only improve outcomes but address and improve the academic and non-academic needs of all students, including students with disabilities.

TEACHING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR THROUGH SKILL BUILDING

Upon the principal/school leader 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.

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

- referring students to Succeed Boston online Student Support and Prevention Workshops for students in grades 1-12 to learn about the impact of bullying and develop skills to stop and prevent bullying
- providing relevant push in support and co-facilitation of educational and social and emotional skill building activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic

positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals.

- meeting with families/caregivers to support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home
- adopting support plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; making a referral for evaluation.

TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION

If the principal/school leader or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on facts found by the principal/school leader or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, a child's IEP where appropriate, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior.

Discipline will be consistent with the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct, and with the school-based student handbook. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal/school leader or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the BPS Code of Conduct.

PROMOTING SAFETY FOR THE TARGET AND OTHERS

The principal/school leader or designee(s) will consider what adjustments (including a safety/support/action plan) are needed in the school environment to assure the target's sense of safety and that of others.

Within a reasonable period following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal/school leader or designee will contact the target and the families/caregivers to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal/school leader or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES/CAREGIVERS

The Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families/caregivers to increase the capacity of each of our schools as well as the district to prevent and respond to bullying.

Resources for families/caregivers and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the schools shall be made available to families/caregivers and include:

1. How families/caregivers can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan
2. The dynamics of bullying
3. Online safety and cyberbullying

Families/caregivers will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the Boston Public Schools Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

Schools will collaborate with School Site Councils and parent organizations to create families/caregivers' resources and information networks. Schools will join with these families/caregivers groups to offer education programs for them that are focused on the components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the school(s).

Schools will annually inform families/caregivers 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. All notices and information made available to families/caregivers will be in hard copy and electronic formats and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent in BPS. Each school will post the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege, and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Boston Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership, or perceived membership, in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or

school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this Plan covers the behavior.

For more information about this circular, contact:

Owner:	Senior Director of Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center
Department:	Succeed Boston @ the Counseling and Intervention Center
Mailing Address:	515 Hyde Park Ave, Roslindale, MA 02131
Phone:	617-635-8123
Email:	Operations-Department-Heads@bostonpublicschools.org saws@bostonpublicschools.org

Mary Skipper, Superintendent

ATTACHMENTS:

1. How to Conduct a Bullying Investigation
2. Professional Development — Bullying Intervention Specialist Training
3. Safe Schools and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form

ATTACHMENT 1:

HOW TO COMPLETE A BULLYING INVESTIGATION

Step 1: After contacting families/caregivers, set up a meeting with the alleged targeted student (target)

Are there safety concerns? If yes, develop a safety plan with the input of the target and the families/caregivers.

- a. Consider class seating, bus, lunch, recess, and “specials.”
- b. With the help of the targeted student, identify a trusted adult the student can go to for assistance.
 - Notify the trusted adult of the plan.
 - Notify the teacher(s) of the allegation and the trusted adult.
- c. Consider an inconspicuous way the target could signal in real-time that something was happening and/or the target needed to leave the room to go to a prior agreed-upon class, office, person.
- d. Take a statement from the target and get the names of witnesses if any.

Step 2: After contacting the families/caregivers of the alleged aggressor, set up a meeting with the student.

Are there any safety concerns? If yes, develop a safety or action plan with the input of the aggressor and the families/caregivers.

- a. Consider class seating, bus, lunch, recess, and “specials.”

- b. With the help of the aggressor, identify a trusted adult the student can go to for assistance.
- c. Notify the trusted adult of the plan.
- d. Notify the teacher(s) of the allegation and the trusted adult.
- e. Consider an inconspicuous way the target could signal in real-time that something was happening, and/or the target needed to leave the room to go to a prior agreed-upon class, office, or person.

If there are no safety concerns for the aggressor, develop an action plan that keeps the target and aggressor separate.

- a. Consider class seating arrangements, lunch bus, "specials" and recess.
- b. Notify the teacher(s) of the allegation, and any action plans developed.
- c. Take a statement from the alleged aggressor.

Step 3: Document statements from all witnesses

Step 4: Assess whether the situation meets the standard for bullying:

1. Power imbalance
2. Repeated
3. Intentional

Step 5: Does this allegation involve targeting based on, or perceived, membership in a protected class (race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, pregnancy, homelessness, criminal record, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, genetics, or active military status?) If yes, contact the Boston Public Schools [Office of Equity](#).

If no, proceed to step 6.

Step 6: All allegations of bullying that have been investigated must be filed with Succeed Boston by completing the [Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Investigation Reporting Form](#) and documented in the BPS SIS.

1. Document dates of meetings and calls with families/caregivers.
2. Document all interviews.
3. Determine if the allegation is bullying, retaliation, simple conflict, or Code of Conduct violation.
4. Document action taken.
5. Schedule a date to follow up with all parties.
6. Document incident in SIS under the Conduct Module Section 7.1. of the Code of Conduct.

Please note:

- Upon receipt of the bullying complaint, the principal/school leader or designee must confirm receipt of the complaint to the families/caregivers **within 24 hours**.

- The investigation must be completed **within 5 school days**, and the principal/school leader or designee will notify the families/caregivers of the target and the aggressor of the findings, and of the procedures for responding to it.
- To ensure the safety of students and compliance with all BPS mandates and State laws, repeated allegations from families/caregivers and/or no response from the principal/school leader will be forwarded to the operational leader and the school superintendent for follow-up.

ATTACHMENT 2:

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 12 HOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Bullying Intervention Specialist Training”

To build capacity across the district and effectively deal with allegations of bullying, each school must have at least two staff complete the 12-hour training leading to certification as a “Bullying Intervention Specialist.” Once certified, these specialists will lead the annual bullying prevention and intervention training at their schools and will spearhead the creation and maintenance of Caring Communities and Bully Free Schools. Succeed Boston will offer quarterly training sessions throughout the school year. Please register on Teach Point.

In this training, staff will:

- Learn about state and district regulations, procedures and protocols
- Become familiar with BPS reporting and investigation protocols
- Develop safety plans for targets and action plans for aggressors
- Learn about the different types of bullying
- Differentiate between bullying and conflict and how to respond to each
- Understand the role school staff play in preventing bullying
- Learn about culturally and linguistically sustaining practices

that lead to spaces that feel safe, welcoming and are inclusive

- Understand how adult bias and micro-aggression impact staff's ability to effectively develop relationships with students involved in bullying
- Develop an awareness of suicide and suicide prevention resources
- Understand the unique way bullying impacts LGBTQ+ and ELL students and students with disabilities
 - Become familiar with FAPE and IDEA as they relate to bullying
- Develop strategies to empower bystanders
- Learn to differentiate bullying and bias-based speech and behavior
- Learn best practices to address bullying
- Listening and talking to families with empathy
- Become familiar with resources to develop and implement school-based programs.
- Develop plans for family workshops

ATTACHMENT 3:

SAFE SPACE AND BULLYING PREVENTION REPORTING FORM - *Boston Public Schools*

1. Name of the person reporting this bullying allegation. Write "NA" if you want to report anonymously. Note, no disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
2. Phone number of the person reporting this bullying allegation. Write "NA" to remain anonymous
3. Who is **reporting** this bullying allegation?
 - I'm a student reporting for myself
 - I'm a student reporting for another student
 - I'm a family member/caregiver reporting on behalf of my child
 - I'm a school staff member (admin, educators, support staff, etc.) reporting for a student
4. Name and email of person **completing this form** (if different than above): Write "NA" if not relevant.
5. Role of person **completing this form** (if different than above)
 - Bullying Hotline Staff (Succeed Boston staff only)
 - BPS Help Line Staff
 - School Staff member

- NA
6. Have you already reported this incident to the school leader?
- Yes
 - No
7. Name of alleged target:
8. Student ID# of alleged target: (Please put 0 if unknown)
9. School of alleged target:
10. Grade of alleged target:
11. Does the alleged target receive special education services?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
12. Name and grade of the alleged aggressor(s): (If the alleged aggressor is an adult, please indicate)
13. Do any alleged aggressor(s) attend a different school? If yes, please type the name of the school(s) below. (If not, please write "NA")
14. Date, time, and location of incident(s): (If not known, please write "NA")

15. If the incident occurred on a school bus, please list the bus number below: (If not on a bus, please write "NA")
16. Describe the incident, including names, details of what happened, and specific words used. You may send additional evidence (i.e., video, screenshots, emails) to saws@bostonpublicschools.org.
17. Witnesses: List the names of any people who saw the incident or may have information about it: (If none, please write "NA")
18. Does this bullying allegation involve bias-based speech or behavior? "Bias-based" bullying, including cyberbullying or harassment, is when a person is bullied because of membership in, or perceived membership in, a protected class. Protected classes: race, color, age, physical or mental disability, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, criminal record, homelessness, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, genetics, natural or protective hairstyle, socioeconomics, and retaliation. **Please note:** All investigations involving bias-based speech or behavior will be forwarded to the Office of Equity by Succeed Boston.
- Yes
 - No

19. Are you concerned for the student's safety?

- Yes
- No