

The Norwood Public Schools (NPS) in partnership with parents, guardians, and the community and in keeping with the NPS mission believes that students have the right to learn and staff have a right to work in a safe and nurturing environment, a community thrives when individuals contribute to the well being of others, and integrity, respect, and cooperation are essential in building trusting relationships. Bullying and harassment are major distractions from learning and compromise a school's ability to educate its students to their greatest potential. The Norwood Public School System is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students and staff can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation; therefore, The Norwood School Committee prohibits bullying (as defined by M.G.L. c. 71, §37O) throughout the Norwood Public School System.

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying and retaliation, are prohibited

- 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 the school district; and
- 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 the Norwood Public Schools, 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.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person associated with a report of bullying or the investigation thereof is also prohibited, as is falsely accusing another as a means of harassment or bullying. Disciplinary action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation will treat such retaliation as a de facto repeat offense (regardless of whether the initial act was attributed to the retaliator) and therefore deserving of significant disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

In order to work as collaboratively and efficiently as possible, to prevent and intervene on all acts of bullying, it is essential for school personnel, students, parents or guardians, law enforcement agencies, and other interested parties to use common language. The following definitions are provided to facilitate this goal.

**Aggressor** is a student or a 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, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

**Bullying**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, §37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a 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 of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target 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 herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile learning and/or social environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Bystander** is a person who has knowledge or an awareness of an act of bullying.

**Cyber-bullying** 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 cyber-bullying.

**Hostile environment**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive so as to alter the conditions of a student's education.

**Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or staff member 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, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

**Target** is a student or staff member against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

**Witness/Bystander** is a person who has knowledge or an awareness of an act of bullying.

#### **Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially as mandated by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention and Implementation Plan within his or her school.

#### **Reporting**

Students who believe that they are a target of bullying, witness an act of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, either directly or as bystanders/witnesses, or have reasonable grounds to believe that these bullying behaviors are taking place are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents or guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation as soon as possible to the school's administration or a faculty member.

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school Principal or their designee.

### **Investigation Procedures**

The school Principal, or a designee, shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, using a Bullying/Cyber-Bullying Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses/bystanders.

The Principal, or 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 perpetrator of bullying. Actions taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

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.

If the school Principal, or 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 perpetrator, 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 investigation shall be completed as soon as possible. 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, cyber-bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with NPS disciplinary policies as stated in the school handbooks.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation 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.

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

### **Retaliation**

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

### **Target Assistance**

The Norwood Public Schools shall provide counselling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, to both targets and perpetrators affected by bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, as necessary.

### **Training and Assessment**

Annual training shall be provided for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.

### **Publication and Notice**

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians in age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be shared at the beginning of the year faculty meetings prior to the start of school.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be posted on the Norwood Public Schools website.

**REFERENCES** Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

**LEGAL REFS:** Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended  
Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission  
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972  
603 CMR 26.00  
M.G.L 71:37O, as amended on July 1, 2013  
MGL 265:43, 43A  
MGL 268:13B  
MGL 269:14A

**CROSS REFS:** Policy AC, Non-Discrimination  
Policy ACAB, Sexual Harassment  
Policy JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment  
Policy JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing  
Policy JK, Student Discipline Regulations

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