

Greater New Bedford Regional  
Vocational Technical High School



**Bullying Prevention  
&  
Intervention Plan**

**Amended: 10/9/2020**

**Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School**  
**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

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**BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION TASK FORCE  
2020-2022**

NAME	POSITION
<b>Michael Watson</b>	<b>Academic Principal</b>
<b>Robert Watt</b>	<b>CVTE Principal</b>
<b>Heather Larkin</b>	<b>Director of Guidance &amp; Pupil Personnel Services</b>
<b>Erin Ptaszenski</b>	<b>Director of Special Education</b>
<b>Helder Angelo</b>	<b>Director of Curriculum/ ELL Services &amp; Professional Development</b>
<b>Robert Pimental</b>	<b>Vice Principal- Grades 9/10</b>
<b>Jeffrey Caron</b>	<b>Vice Principal- Grades 11/12</b>
<b>Ryan Methia</b>	<b>Athletic Director</b>
<b>Lael St. Tripp</b>	<b>School Adjustment Counselor/ McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Liaison</b>
<b>Officer LeeAnn Fisher</b>	<b>School Resource Officer (SRO)</b>
<b>Shane Texeira</b>	<b>Security Team</b>

## ***Plan Development***

In the Spring of 2019, this plan was reviewed and updated by district leaders to reflect Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, which amended G.L.c.71 370, the anti-bullying statute and was signed into law on April 24, 2014.

## **I.LEADERSHIP**

### ***Priority Statement***

The Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School's School Committee, administration and staff believes that preventing bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment and/or retaliation is critical for creating and maintaining a safe, secure and positive school climate and culture, which in turn supports high level learning, increases school engagement, respects the rights of all individuals and groups, and purposefully builds community. The School Committee expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect, regardless of differences.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming 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, disability, or by association with a person who has or s perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The district will identify the 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, teasing or retaliation.

### ***Public involvement in developing the plan***

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, 370, this *Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan* was developed in consultation with school staff, administrators, community representatives, parents/guardians and students. Parents have further opportunities to comment on the development/revision/implementation of the Plan via school council meetings, SEPAC, Possip, school-based meetings, etc. In addition, the school committee reviews the plan each year or more frequently and there will be notice and public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the school committee or equivalent authority.

### ***Assessing needs and resources***

This Plan is Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech's blueprint for enhancing our capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other safe and healthy school culture/climate initiatives. As part of the planning process and with input from families and staff, the district:

- Assessed the adequacy of current practices and programs by reviewing current policies and practices relative to previous/amended legislation.
- Reviewed available data on bullying and various behavioral incidents in our district.
- Assessed the available resources including curricula, programs and behavioral health services currently available and used by the district.

This “mapping” process will assist the district in identifying resource gaps year to year and the most significant areas of need. Based on this information the district has revised policies, procedures, and data collection; establish or enhanced partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities for improving curricula and training resources.

Further needs assessment will focus on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and in remote online learning platforms through the analysis of incident reports. This data will analyzed by vice-principals and other administrators on a regular basis. Information gathered will inform decision-making for enhancing prevention strategies including, but not limited to: adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate/non-discriminatory curricula and in-school support services.

At least once every four years, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, the district will administer a Department of Elementary & Secondary Education developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in our schools.

### ***Planning and Supervision***

The following district leaders will be responsible for the stated tasks under the district’s Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan:

1. Receive reports on bullying, harassment, retaliation: ***Security, Vice-Principals, School Counselors***
2. Collect district data regarding bullying, harassment, retaliation: ***Security, SIS Coordinator***
3. Review and monitor the process for recording and tracking incidents and accessing information related to targets and aggressors: ***Security, Vice-Principals***
4. Plan for ongoing professional development that is required by law: ***Professional Development Coordinator, Vice-Principals***
5. Plan supports that respond to the social/emotional needs of the targets and aggressors: ***Director of Guidance, School Counselors***
6. Choose and implement the curricula the district will use: ***Curriculum Director, Athletics Director, Academic Principal***
7. Update/revise policies and protocols under the Plan: ***Bullying Prevention & Intervention Committee, Special Education Director, Civil Rights Coordinator***
8. Amend student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct: ***Handbook Committee, Academic Principal, CVTE Principal***
9. Review/update the Plan every two years: ***Bullying Prevention & Intervention Committee***

## **II. TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech is committed to providing meaningful and ongoing professional development for all staff. The Plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c.71 370, by providing ongoing professional development to all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals.

### ***Annual staff training the Plan***

Training on the Plan will occur for all staff, in conjunction with the mandated annual special education and civil rights training prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> each year. The training will include an overview of bullying, harassment and retaliation definitions, the steps educators must take to report a behavioral incident that may be determined to be bullying, harassment or retaliation, the steps the principals or their designees will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying, harassment or retaliation. Staff members hired after September 30<sup>th</sup> are required to participate in school-based training by the principal/designee during the school year in which they are hired. All staff will sign-off on participation in the training.

Additional areas of training will be provided based on needs and concerns identified by district staff. While bus drivers are trained through their employer, Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech encourages all bus drivers to attend an annual training facilitated by the district.

### ***On-going 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, 370, the content of district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- Information regarding complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- 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;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

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 communication 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.

***Written notice to staff***

The district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities.

**III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed.

***Identifying Resources***

Currently the district has/uses the following resources for providing information, counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families.

- Guidance Counselors
- School Adjustment Counselors
- Special Education Liaisons
- Security Team
- School Resource Officer (SRO)
- Therapeutic groups: Social Skills, Anger Management, Support Groups
- Class presentations
- Referrals to Child & Family Services
- Referrals to the New Bedford Woman’s Center, local clinicians, New Bedford Crisis Center, and other community-based organizations.
- GNBVT Student Mentors

***Special considerations for counseling and other services***

The district will access personnel/agencies such as the following to help provide linguistically and culturally appropriate counseling and other services to ***ELL Students, Students with Disabilities, Homeless, Foster, GLBTQ or other High-Needs/Medicaid Eligible Students*** and their families impacted by bullying:

- ELL Teachers/Liaisons
- Immigrants Assistance Center
- SPED Teachers/Liaisons
- Southeastern Massachusetts Education Collaborative (SMEC)
- Child & Family Services Therapeutic Services
- New Bedford Crisis Center
- SouthCoast Behavioral Health
- McKinney-Vento Liaison
- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- GLBTQ Club Advisor

The following staff and service providers may assist in the development of safety plans (with parent/guardian input) for students who have been targets of bullying, harassment or retaliation, or may offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. School staff will consult and refer families to outside agencies as necessary. School staff will assist families in accessing appropriate and timely services. If consent is obtained, school staff will collaborate with outside providers.

- School administrators
- Guidance Counselors
- School Adjustment Counselors
- School Psychologist
- School Nurse
- School Security
- School Resource Officer

### ***Students with Disabilities (SWD)***

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 a student has a disability that affects social skills development or that 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. It will be the responsibility of the Team Chairperson of each Special Education Team to ensure this topic is addressed by the Team.

### ***Referrals to Outside Services***

The established protocol for referring students and families to outside services is consistent throughout the district. If a student or family is identified for outside services, a referral is made to by the Guidance Counselor to the School Adjustment Counselor (SAC) for further assessment. The SAC will facilitate a plan of action and begin the referral process to outside agencies and obtain necessary releases of information to maintain communication with outside service providers.

## **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

The Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech Bullying Prevention & Intervention Task Force will oversee the selection of specific bullying prevention approaches.

**Bullying prevention curricula** (including Social Skills and other therapeutic groups) will be based on current research, which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- Empowering student 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 cyber safety, 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.

The education of the student population on the process and protocols of the student related portions of the Plan will occur annually within the first month of the school year. The details regarding the avenues for educating students will be determined on an annual basis and may change due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., late school start and limited students in the school building due to Covid-19).

The GNB Voc-Tech *Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan* and policies will also be referenced in the Student Handbook, on the district website (<https://www.gnbvt.edu/parents-students/stop-bullying/>), and other school-wide communications, publications and virtual platforms.

Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech believes the following *general teaching approaches* support bullying prevention efforts. These emphasize our overall bullying intervention and prevention initiatives, not only in our classrooms, but throughout the school (including classrooms, hallways, athletic facilities, busses, field trips, CVTE placement/Co-Op, etc.):

- Setting clear expectations for students;
- Establishing clear classroom and school-wide expectations, rules and routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for ALL students, regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, housing status, and as covered by law;
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral supports;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Create positive peer mentoring opportunities;
- Modeling, teaching and rewarding pro-social, healthy and respectful behaviors;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including skills building, peer mediation, collaborative problem-solving, etc. that aid in social and emotional development;
- Setting clear expectations for safe Internet usage;
- Setting clear and safe expectations for remote online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Supporting students’ interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities;
- Creating a non-judgmental acceptance for ALL students to utilize school counselors for a variety of needs.

## **V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING, HARRASSMENT AND RETALIATION**

### ***Reporting bullying, harassment or retaliation***

Reports of bullying, harassment or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by a student to a staff member shall be recorded in writing and by that staff member. All staff are required to report immediately to the

building principals, security team or other administrator any instance of bullying, harassment or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech has developed an *Incident Reporting Form* which is accessible in the Security office, on the website, and under the staff's public folder files for staff to access. Oral or email reports by a parent/guardian are also acceptable.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the *Incident Reporting Form* in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The *Incident Reporting Form* will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an *Incident Reporting Form*, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

### ***Reporting by Staff***

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

### ***Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others***

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

incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

**Anonymous Reporting:**

- Send an email to [reportbullying@gnbvt.edu](mailto:reportbullying@gnbvt.edu)
- Leave a message with Security at (508) 998-3321 ext. 272
- Mail Information to:
  - Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School  
Attn: Security Office  
1121 Ashley Blvd.  
New Bedford, MA 02745

**Reporting in Person:**

- Complete an *Incident Report Form* in the Security Office with Mr. Texeira – [shane.texeira@gnbvt.edu](mailto:shane.texeira@gnbvt.edu) (Ext. 272)
- Talk with your Vice Principal in the Security Office:
  - Mr. Pimental – 9/10 Grade – [Robert.pimental@gnbvt.edu](mailto:Robert.pimental@gnbvt.edu) (Ext. 381)
  - Mr. Caron- 11/12 Grade – [Jeffrey.caron@gnbvt.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.caron@gnbvt.edu) (Ext. 277)

**RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING, HARASSMENT OR RETALIATION**

***Allegations of Bullying by a Student***

***Safety***

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

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

***Obligations to Notify Others***

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to 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 principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
  
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

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

### **Investigation**

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

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

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

### **Determinations**

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

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

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

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

### **Responses to Bullying**

#### ***Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building***

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

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;

- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

### ***Taking Disciplinary Action***

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

### ***Promoting Safety for the Target and Others***

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

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

### ***Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff***

#### ***Safety***

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents; when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor.

### ***Obligations to Notify Others***

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to 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 principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency.

### **Investigation**

The principal or designee (or the superintendent or designee when the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor) will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee (or the superintendent or designee when the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor) will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary.

The authority responsible for conducting the investigation will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. The investigator will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

## **Determinations**

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

The principal or designee (or the superintendent or designee when the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor) will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech believes that anti-bullying efforts will be most effective when the school engages and collaborates with students' families. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The district will inform parents/guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention plan and curricula used by the school including:

- The effects of bullying on all involved;
  - The importance of online/social media safety and the effects of cyberbullying
- A. Parent education and resources. The district will offer education information for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social skills building curricula used by the school. The information will be offered in collaboration with the PTO/PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations. Information flyers and social media posts may also be provided to parents and the public throughout the year.
- B. Notification requirements. Parents and guardians will be notified in writing at the start of each school year about the student-related sections of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* via their child's Student Handbook. The Plan, policies and forms will be located on the district website and is made available in various languages.



## VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include 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.

## VIII. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Problem Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/> and emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700.

### DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.

**Aggressor** is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards a student.

**Bullying**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff 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.

**School 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 against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **X. 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, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

**Laws and Regulations:**

- [An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools](#) (approved April 2014)
- [An Act Relative to Bullying, Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010](#), approved May 3, 2010
- [Notification of Bullying or Retaliation Regulations](#) (603 CMR 49.00)
- [Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g](#) and [34 CFR Part 99](#)
- [M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O](#) (School Bullying Prohibited: Bullying Prevention Plans)
- [Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00](#)

Adopted: 12/2011

Amended: October 9, 2020

