

# ***Ayer Shirley Regional School District***



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

Revised, October 2023



## ***Ayer Shirley Regional School District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan***

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#### **APPENDIX B: PLEDGE TO STOP BULLYING**

Dear Parents/Guardians:

All parents/guardians are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the policies regarding bullying and cyberbullying to ensure that you and your children are aware of the laws.

In addition, The Ayer Shirley Regional School District has posted our *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* on the school district's website on the Student Resource tab: <http://www.asrsd.org>.

Thank you,  
ASRSD

## PREFACE

The Ayer Shirley Regional School District (ASRSD) expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. The ASRSD is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. Character development is referenced multiple times in the district's Strategic Plan, in shared beliefs and in the mission statement. The district anti-discrimination statement is below:

***It is the policy of Ayer Shirley Regional School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, housing status, or limited English-speaking ability.***

*We recognize 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 school or district will 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.*

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school related activities. We will 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. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parent or guardian involvement.

This Bullying and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. The school district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. Each building principal is primarily responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan in his/her building.

Respectfully submitted,

**Ayer Shirley Regional School District Leadership Team:**

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## **Update: Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014**

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2014/Chapter86>, amended G.L. c. 71, §37O, the anti-bullying statute, and was signed into law on April 24, 2014. G.L. c. 71, §37O, as amended, requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to “recognize” in their bullying prevention and intervention plans that certain enumerated categories of students<sup>1</sup> may be more vulnerable to being targets of bullying based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. Such districts and schools must also include in the plan the specific steps they will take to support these vulnerable students and provide all students the skills, knowledge and strategies they need to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. Under the new law, school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools must notify parents and guardians of targets of bullying of the availability of the Department’s problem resolution system and assist these parents and guardians in understanding the problem resolution process. Chapter 86 also addresses the data reporting and collection obligations of school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, requiring them to collect and report the following data to the Department: 1) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; 2) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation; 3) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation, and 4) other information required by the Department.<sup>2</sup> (The Department is required to analyze the data and to issue a report annually to the legislature which contains statewide aggregated data on the nature and frequency of bullying in schools.) Additionally, Chapter 86 requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, to 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.”<sup>3</sup> (The Department will use survey results to, among other things, assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention curricula and instruction and identify long-term trends and areas of improvement, and will make its findings available to school officials.) The law also authorizes school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to adopt an anti-bullying seal to represent its commitment to bullying prevention and intervention.

### **I. LEADERSHIP – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Assessing Needs and Resources**

Annually, ASRSD students will participate in the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) survey administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE). This survey is used to assess school climate at specific grade levels in three dimensions - engagement, safety, and school environment. Embedded within the survey are specific questions relative to bullying. Additionally, ASRSD will annually administer a locally developed school climate survey to all students in Grades 3-11 which will provide additional information regarding the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

The district leadership team, with input from families and staff, will:

- Assess the adequacy of current programs (e.g. conflict resolution, social responsibility, developmental

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<sup>1</sup> Newly amended G.L. c. 71, §37O(d)(3) reads in relevant part: *Each plan shall recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.*

<sup>2</sup> G.L. c. 71 §37O(k). *The Department is required to analyze the data and to issue a report annually to the legislature which contains statewide aggregated data on the nature and frequency of bullying in schools.*

<sup>3</sup> G.L. c. 71, §37O(k).

guidance)

- Similar tools to the student survey can be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs.
- Review current policies and procedures
- Review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents
- Assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services

Based on our findings, the district will:

- Revise or develop policies and procedures
- Establish partnerships with community agencies including law enforcement
- Set priorities and incorporate priorities annually into school improvement plans

## **Needs Assessments**

Strategies to continue:

1. School administrative teams will use the district's student information management system to collect and analyze building-specific data on incidents of bullying behaviors. The analysis will include identifying vulnerable populations and "hot spots" in school buildings, on school grounds, and on school buses.
2. Survey results and incident reports from the student information management system will be used to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.
3. Collect Student Feedback annually using surveys in student friendly language.
4. Publish and vertically align social-emotional learning curriculum guides/maps in the curriculum database.
5. Review and update, if necessary, the regional school committee policy on Social Networking.
6. Review and update, if necessary, Staff and Student Acceptable Use Policies.
7. Utilize the School Resource Officers (SRO) as liaison between staff, parents and students for safe and supportive schools.
8. Analyze the Needs Assessment and provide professional development and training based on need.

## **Planning and Oversight**

Building Principals are responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- Receiving reports on bullying and conducting initial investigations
- Collecting and analyzing school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem
- Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law
- Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors and to measure improved outcomes
- Leading parent or family engagement efforts and disseminating parent information materials
- Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct

District Leadership is responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- Creating processes for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors
- Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law
- Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors
- Choosing and implementing the curricula that the schools will use
- Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them
- Leading the parent or family engagement efforts including parent information materials
- Reviewing and updating the Plan annually, as required by M.G.L. c. 71 §370

## II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The District will provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, school volunteers and paraprofessionals.

**A. Annual Staff Training on the Plan** Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years. An overview of the regulations and plan highlights will be provided at the start of each school year and will include: administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. The district's Teacher Induction program will include a review of the plan.

**B. Ongoing Professional Development** The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- (i) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- (ii) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- (iii) Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- (iv) Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

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

Additional areas for professional development include:

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language
- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference
- Building relationships and communicating with families
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors
- Using positive behavioral intervention strategies
- Applying constructive disciplinary practices
- Teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others
- Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making

- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students
- Integrating kindness and mindfulness into the school-wide culture
- Vertical alignment of these skills to facilitate the transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school
- Integrating social competency and digital citizenship into the curriculum
- Strengths-based Approach to Learning

**C. Written Notice to Staff** The district will provide all faculty and staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct. ***The plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.*** Faculty and staff will be required to “sign off” on annual ASRSD’s *Required Staff Training* to document their participation.

### III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

#### A. Identifying Resources

The Ayer Shirley Regional School District has access to the following staff that is qualified to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families: school psychologists, school adjustment counselors and/or social workers, and behavioral specialist (Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)). In addition, District and School based Safety Teams have been established with community representation from emergency responders to review protocols and tools for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and students.

#### B. Counseling and Other Services

The staff listed above assists their school in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, supporting social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

Services and programs that the Ayer Shirley Regional School District currently offers include:

- Access to school counseling through a school counselor, school adjustment counselor, and/or school psychologist
- Access to Special Education Services
- Transition to outside therapy
- Assistance for students returning from hospitalization or who have school avoidance issues
- Student-Teacher Assistance Teams facilitated by School level administrators
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training
- Consultation with outside mental health professionals
- Outreach to Community Resources
- Functional Behavioral Assessments and behavior modification plans
- Social pragmatics instruction and courses
- Programs that teach prosocial skills and conflict resolution at the elementary level (e.g. Social Thinking, Second Step, and Responsive Classroom)
- Social skills groups with Counselors and Special Educators
- Second Step curriculum implementation at the Middle School
- Restorative practices pilot at the high school level

School Climate and Safety Surveys will help us evaluate the programs we have in place as well as to identify needed resources and services. Click [here](#) for a list of resources to support the why and how of school climate measurement.

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

**D. Referral to Outside Services** The Ayer Shirley Regional School District will refer students and families to outside services when needed. Each school will maintain an up-to-date list of resources in the area for this purpose.

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

**A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches:** Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for developing empathy and engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communication;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference;
- Developing student understanding that all members of the school community, including themselves, are responsible for understanding and following through with this plan.

Each school will begin the school year with an assembly or class meetings to review Bullying Prevention. This will be followed-up by small group instruction as needed to reinforce aspects of the plan.

Additionally, schools may engage students to create messages and visual reminders that can be displayed around the school which support kindness and "upstanding" behaviors. Instructional technology specialists and/or general education teachers will use a variety of tools to create a digital behavior checklist to remind students of their responsibilities as good digital citizens.

**B. General Teaching Approaches That Support Bullying Prevention Efforts:** The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including students of color, students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students, among others.
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral supports;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- Using the Internet safely; and



- Supporting students' interest and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

There are a number of activities that schools within our district are doing to engage students to create a sense of belonging and community and that encourage thoughtful and kind behavior. Some examples include:

- Advisory groups at the middle school, high school levels
- Second Step Curriculum (PreK-8 Classroom Based)
- Trails to Wellness Curriculum (9-12)
- Student Mentoring Program (6-12)
- Core Values Program - behavior expectations based on values
- Positive behavior incentives (Random Acts of Kindness, PAWS Program, etc.)
- Community Service Initiatives (e.g. Nashoba Park Connection/ Loaves and Fishes volunteering and collecting food)
- Community Service Requirement for ASRHS Diploma
- Morning Meetings
- Bucket Filling
- PAWS program
- Panther Leadership Team
- Lunch Bunch
- Student Recognition- (e.g. Community Meetings, *Student of the Term Awards*)
- Youth Venture programming
- After School Clubs and Activities
- Great Kindness Challenge
- Silent Mentoring of select students by school staff

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

### A. Reporting Incidents of Bullying or Retaliation

**Bullying or Retaliation** Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not 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, and may include, but are not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form,<sup>4</sup> a voice mailbox, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address. The form is available in the most prevalent languages of origin of students and parents / guardians in the district.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form ( Appendix A) is not required as a condition of making a report; however, the building principal receiving the report will be required to document the incident using this form.

1. At the beginning of each school year the school or district will: Provide a copy of the Incident Reporting Form to students, parents and/or guardians
2. Make the form available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations as determined by the principal or designee
3. Post it on the school's website.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for ARSD Incident Reporting Form.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, 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.

Faculty, staff, parents and students will be required to sign a statement indicating that they have received and read the district's policies and procedures. The schools will keep a record of these signed statements.

## **Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may possibly be bullying or retaliation. It is the responsibility of the staff member to intervene to the behavioral incident consistent with district policies and procedures, and then report it to the principal or designee. Our district sees faculty and staff's obligation to report bullying as analogous to the mandate to report child abuse or neglect (51A).

## **Reporting by Students**

Students, who believe that they are the target of a bully, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are encouraged to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Students 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.

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

The district expects 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. 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.

Reporters need to understand that any report of bullying or retaliation requires the school to conduct an initial investigation. If you call to make a report, it will be documented and investigated. Because of the school's responsibility to prevent bullying and intervene when incidents of hurtful behavior or bullying occur, it is advisable to file a report even if it isn't a complaint.

Students, parents or guardians, and others who want to report an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student will be able to access a PDF version of our Reporting Form on the district website ([www.asrsd.org](http://www.asrsd.org)). A hard copy of our Reporting Form will be included in our school handbook and will be available in school and district offices.

## **B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation**

### **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 will 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/or altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target if possible. The principal or designee may 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 students who have reported bullying or retaliation, students who have witnessed bullying or retaliation, students who provide information during an investigation or students who have 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 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 603 CMR 49.00.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and aggressor of 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 notices to parents will 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.

**B. 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 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 aggressor.

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

The Principal or his/her designee, upon receipt of a report, will promptly contact the parents or guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged perpetrator of bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

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

Staff will 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 will 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.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation will be in accordance with district disciplinary policies. Each school will document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file will be maintained by the Principal or designee. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

#### **D. Investigation:**

The principal 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.

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 will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the 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 and will access said legal counsel in accordance with school and district procedures.

- **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.

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.

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

underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development or counseling support.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation. If bullying or retaliation is found, the action being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation will be communicated to the parents of the aggressor. All notices 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. If bullying or retaliation is found, the parents of the target will be informed of the school's plan to monitor the situation and to help ensure the safety of their child.

## **E. Responses to Bullying**

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

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

- Offering individual or group 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; or
- Making a referral for an evaluation.

### **2. 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 incident, 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 consulted 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.

### **3. 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. Possible strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Increasing adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur;
- Adjust transportation arrangements;
- Change schedule;
- Teaching skills that will increase the child’s resiliency; and
- Notify relevant faculty and staff to alert them to the need for increased vigilance.

#### 4. Follow-up

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the implementation 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.

## VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

**A. Parent education and resources** It is our expectation that home and school will work together to increase our capacity to grow socially responsible students in response to bullying situations. The district will research the effectiveness of various educational programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The district will collaborate with the following organizations to present specific programs to the parents of the school district.

- Ayer Shirley Regional School District Parent Teacher Organizations
- Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPAC)
- Ayer Shirley Education Foundation
- School Councils
- Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC)

We may also benefit from partnerships with local colleges/universities as well as community organizations such as:

- LUK, Inc Crisis Center
- Ayer and Shirley Police Departments
- The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)

**B. Notification requirements** Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

*The law requires each Plan to include a statement prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The statement must be included in the Plan and included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and describes*

*the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying. It may be tailored to meet the specific priorities of the school or district.*

Acts of bullying, which include cyber bullying, 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 Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

## **IX. DEFINITIONS**

*Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted below.*

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

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

Hazing is any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include, but is not limited to, whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any student or person, or which subjects any student or person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of basic necessities (i.e. sleep, food) or extended isolation.

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

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, 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, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. 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, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

**This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan shall be annually reviewed and posted on the Ayer Shirley Regional School District website <http://www.asrsd.org>.**

## **REFERENCES**

MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

## **LEGAL REFERENCES**

Title VII, Section 703 Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended

Federal Regulation 74696 issued by EEO Commission

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

603 CMR 26.00

MGL 71:370

MGL 265:43, 43A

MGL 268: 13B



MGL 269: 14A  
CROSS REFERENCES: AC, Nondiscrimination  
ACAB, Sexual Harassment  
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment  
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing  
JK, Student Discipline Regulations

## **APPENDICES**

### **ASRSD Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form**

#### **Pledge to Stop Bullying**

**AYER SHIRLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION  
INCIDENT REPORTING FORM**

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. **Check whether you are the:**     **Target of the behavior**                       **Reporter (not the target)**

3. **Check whether you are a:**     **Student**     **Staff member (specify role)** \_\_\_\_\_  
                                                  **Parent**     **Administrator**     **Other (specify)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your contact information/telephone number:**  
(H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **If student, state your school:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

5. **If staff member, state your school or work site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Information about the Incident:**

**Name of the Target** of the bullying behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the Aggressor** (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s) of Incident(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time When Incident(s) Occurred:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident(s)** (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_    • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_    • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_    • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.**

9. **Signature of Person Filing this Report:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10: **Form Given to:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

II. INVESTIGATION

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interviews:

Interviewed aggressor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed target Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed witnesses Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor?  Yes  No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?  Yes  No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION  Yes  No

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

YES:  NO, Discipline referral only

Bullying

Retaliation

2. Record of Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_  Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: \_\_\_\_\_  Law Enforcement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

Loss of Privileges  Detention  Suspension

Community Service  Develop Safety Plan  Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe Safety Planning:

ASRSD Administrator Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date \_\_\_\_\_

(If principal was not the investigator)



## PLEDGE TO STOP BULLYING

This contract will be a record of your commitment to reduce bullying in your school. Read each item carefully. Then choose whether you want to sign this pledge. If you decide that you want to help stop bullying, print your name on the line below and then sign the bottom of the sheet in the space provided. By doing so, you are making a promise to your peers and to your school community. We congratulate you for your brave and important decision!

I, \_\_\_\_\_, wish to reduce bullying in my school, \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Print your name here) (Name of school)

### ***I agree to:***

1. Do my best to treat ALL my peers with respect and dignity.
2. Not isolate, threaten, or harm my peers, or hurtfully tease, exclude, insult, or mock them.
3. Try to prevent or discourage my peers from humiliating, threatening, isolating, or harming others.
4. Try to assist any student who is being mistreated for the simple reason that it is wrong to be unkind to another human being.
5. If I am comfortable doing so, inform my parent/guardian, teacher, or school administrator when I learn about or see hurtful behavior.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's Date