

# **BULLYING PREVENTION and INTERVENTION PLAN**

Pittsfield Public Schools  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201  
2010-2011

The mission of the Pittsfield Public Schools is to serve our community and its children by creating an environment where lifelong learning is valued, excellence is expected, and improvement is continuous.

**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN (BPIP)**  
Pittsfield Public Schools  
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## Pittsfield Public Schools

Administration Center  
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*Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201*

**Superintendent**  
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**(413) 499-9512**  
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December 10, 2010

Dear Pittsfield School Community:

Enclosed is the Pittsfield Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Pittsfield Public Schools remains focused on eliminating bullying and peer harassment in our schools. This plan outlines all the steps that have been and will continue to be taken to train staff, educate students, and respond to cases of bullying. There is no room for bullying in the Pittsfield Schools and/or the City of Pittsfield, and this plan lays the groundwork for ensuring safe schools across the district.

I must commend the many individuals who have been part of preparing this plan. While we had the district advantage of applying federal funds through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant to launch training, deliver an anti-bullying curriculum, and pass a bullying policy prior to the passage of the new state bullying and intervention law (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as added by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010), we have used the last few months to refine this plan and include elements required under the state statute. In doing so, I am confident we have strengthened our efforts to make our schools free from bullying.

I do encourage you to read this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan carefully. Pay close attention to the section on Reporting and Responding. I want to emphasize to ANY student who feels bullied or witnesses bullying that you must report this behavior immediately to school personnel. We are here to help you. Additionally, we ask that any parent of a child who is the victim of bullying do the same. Without reporting, we cannot respond, and if we do not respond, the bullying cannot be stopped. Thus, we all have to be partners in helping to create schools that are academically, emotionally, and physically safe so that we can stay focused on supporting the positive growth and progress of each child under our care.

If you have any questions about this policy or any aspect of bullying, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 413-499-9512 or email the bullying hotline at [web@pittsfield.net](mailto:web@pittsfield.net).

Sincerely,

## **I. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force**

The District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force met for two professional development days on 10/15/10 and 11/16/10. The Task Force was comprised of representative staff with various job functions from each school building.

Thank you to the following individuals for their dedicated and thoughtful collaboration on the creation of the PPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force.

Kimberly Abderhalden	Teacher, Williams Elementary School
Joseph Benjamin	Dean of Students, Pittsfield High School
Michelle Bienvenue	SAC, Herberg Middle School
	Certified Olweus Trainer
Kerri Carlson	SAC, Reid Middle School
Ann Marie Carpenter	Unit Leader, School Psychs/SACs
Kimberlee Chappell	Reading Specialist, Capeless Elementary School
Brendan Dillon	Teacher, Reid Middle School
Catherine Heath	SAC, Egremont Elementary School
Brandon Harms	Teacher, Crosby Elementary School
Lisa Herland	SAC, Crosby Elementary School
Melissa Kamp	SAC, Taconic High School
Brenda Kelley	Reading Specialist, Allendale Elementary School
Brian Kelley	SAC, Morningside Community School
Kerry Light	Special Education Teacher, Reid Middle School
Linda Mayorchak	Teacher, Conte Community School
Gracemary O'Connell	Dean of Students, Taconic High School
Julianne Pellerin-Herrera	Teacher, Capeless Elementary School
Judy Rush	Principal, Egremont Elementary School
Carol Scorpa	Special Education Unit Leader/Teacher Stearns Elementary School
Nicole Shepardson	SAC, Williams and Allendale Elementary School
Jennifer Stokes	SAC, Pittsfield High School
	Olweus Certified Trainer
Michael Taber	Dean of Students, Herberg Middle School

### **III. BULLYING DEFINITION**

**Throughout the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the term bullying refers to the following definition that is inclusive of both bullying and cyber-bullying:**

Bullying: The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying.

### **IV. PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROHIBITION OF BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND RETALIATION:**

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, and retaliation as defined in this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP), is not acceptable conduct and is prohibited within the Pittsfield Public Schools. Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. Pittsfield Public Schools leadership and other staff will endeavor to maintain learning and working environments free of bullying. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion in accordance with state law, district policy and student handbooks. A student's bullying may also be addressed through other interventions.

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

Any form of bullying is prohibited:

- in any school building and on all school grounds
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds
- at a bus stop or on a school bus or any other school sanctioned transportation, such as another vehicle whether owned, leased, or used by the school district
- at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether it takes place on or off school grounds
- through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school
- at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

As the District's Anti-Bullying Policy (STU-80) states, it is not the District's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the District does not condone and will take disciplinary action in response to conduct that creates a hostile environment and interferes with students' opportunity to learn.

## **V. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS:**

The following language and definitions are applied throughout this BPIP and are to be used consistently within the Pittsfield Public Schools in relation to incidents of bullying/cyber-bullying:

**A. Bullying:** The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)

**B. Cyber-bullying:** Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any 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, including, but not limited to blogs, websites, and social networking. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)

**C. Retaliation:** Any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a student or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**D. Aggressor:** A student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. (The use of the term aggressor varies from the term "bully" in the Act to Prevent Bullying, yet is being used in the plan under the guidance of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.)

**E. Target:** A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is directed.

**F. Hostile Environment:** 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 the student's education. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, 37O)

**G. Staff:** Staff includes, but is not limited to, central office administrators, building principals and administrators, school adjustment counselors and school psychologists,

teachers and related service providers, paraprofessional staff, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, bus drivers, athletic coaches and extracurricular advisors.

## **VI. LEADERSHIP**

### **A. Public/Staff Involvement in the Development of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan:**

Pittsfield Public Schools involved a variety of stakeholders in the revision of the District Anti-Bullying Policy to ensure compliance with An Act to Prevent Bullying (M.G.L. C. 71, s. 37O signed into law on 5/13/10) and the development of the District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Anti-Bullying Policy Revision: An initial subcommittee consisting of staff with an expertise in bullying prevention and intervention (school adjustment counselors and school psychologists, including two certified Olweus Anti-Bullying Program<sup>1</sup> trainers on staff) was convened to make recommended changes to the existing policy (STU 80). These proposed changes were then reviewed on two occasions by the Policy Subcommittee of the School Committee, which included student and city government representatives. These sessions were aired on Pittsfield Community Television. Included in the review by the policy subcommittee was a request for input from the public in reviewing the proposed changes for feedback. The draft policy was posted on the district website ([www.pittsfield.net](http://www.pittsfield.net)) for several weeks with instructions on how to provide feedback. In addition, the proposed changes were presented to the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council for review and feedback. Primary changes to the plan included altering the definitions of bullying and other sections of the plan to be in compliance with the anti-bullying legislation as well as removing peer harassment and making it a separate policy from anti-bullying. These changes were made in consultation with a DESE staff member.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan: The draft plan was provided to multiple constituencies within the school system and in the community for review and input prior to submission to the School Committee for approval. This includes the following:

- posting it on the District website with opportunities for input;
- requesting that the local paper announce the presence of the draft plan on the website and posting a notice on local community television;
- providing a draft of the plan to the Superintendent's Parent and Teacher Advisory groups, the School Committee (including student members), members of individual school buildings Parent Advisory groups and representatives from the student councils at the middle and high schools.

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<sup>1</sup> The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a whole-school, systems-change program that has been proven to prevent or reduce bullying throughout a school setting. (<http://www.clemson.edu/olweus>)

## **B. Priority Statements**

It is the intent of the Pittsfield Public Schools to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, district staff has a significant interest in providing a safe, supportive, orderly and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The Pittsfield Public Schools regards the existence of positive school climate as central to its mission and values and, therefore, includes school climate as one of five critical domains within its ongoing improvement efforts. The 2010/11 District Improvement Plan identifies the following ongoing goal: “Students will learn in a physically and emotionally supportive environment conducive to student growth and achievement.” To this end, substantial district resources have been invested in supporting the continued development and maintenance of a positive, supportive learning environment that includes bullying prevention and intervention for all students including targets, aggressors and bystanders. Anti-bullying efforts in the Pittsfield Public schools are embedded within broader school-wide approaches that promote a positive, prosocial environment for all students and staff.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) documents a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying in the district that includes plans for preventing, intervening in and responding to reports of incidents of bullying or cyber-bullying. The BPIP was created with input from a wide variety of constituents, including staff with varying roles, parents, students, law enforcement personnel and other community stakeholders. The BPIP operates from a set of priority statements that drive our actions:

1. Bullying is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the schools to educate their students and disrupts the operations of the schools. Bullying negatively affects not only students who are targets but also the aggressors and those who participate in and witness such behavior.
2. Bullying prevention and intervention must be directly addressed, but also must be woven into a proactive fabric of climate enhancing activities and approaches in order to be most effective. This intention is supported in the district through the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports<sup>2</sup> and the systematic delivery of prosocial, violence prevention programming to enhance social competence in all our students.
3. Enhancing social skill development related to empathy development, anger management and conflict resolution in our students has a primary role in creating tolerance of differences and, as such, preventing instances of bullying. Increased tolerance is important for all students, but it is critical for vulnerable populations,

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<sup>2</sup> School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) is a framework that guides the selection, integration and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. Improving student academic and behavior outcomes is about ensuring all students have access to the most effective and accurately implemented instructional and behavioral practices and interventions possible. SWPBS provides an operational framework for achieving these outcomes. (pbis.org)

such as students with disabilities, homeless students and gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth.

4. The Pittsfield Public Schools is committed to providing evidence-based bullying prevention and intervention activities. The district takes a systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention. Beginning two years ago, with the support of the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Student grant, the district committed district staff and resources to begin the process of implementing the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. Since that date, the district has invested in educating two staff to be certified as trainers in the model and has created and trained Olweus teams in each building who have subsequently trained all district staff.
5. District leaders acknowledge their place in establishing expectations and offering guidance to school building staff as they work to improve school climate and address bullying issues. It is leadership's responsibility to provide resources, professional development, administrative supports, and common policies and procedures that will work toward elimination of bullying throughout the district. But leaders also recognize that much of the work to be done at the building level reflects the unique needs and culture of each school building. Therefore, it is an expectation of this BPIP that each school building will maintain a School Climate/Bullying Prevention Committee that will include administrators and staff representing various grade levels and departments. In keeping with the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program, parents, community members and students are all critical partners in these teams as well.

### **C. Planning and Oversight Responsibilities**

**Staff Responsibilities:** It is the position of Pittsfield Public Schools leadership that **all** staff members are responsible for preventing or intervening in instances of suspected or observed instances of bullying. All staff shares the responsibility to create a physically and emotionally safe school environment for all students, fellow staff, parents and other visiting community members. Responsibilities include responding to students who are involved in instances of bullying as they happen and reporting any instance of bullying to the building administrator or his/her designee for further review and/or investigation. Staff responsibilities also include active participation in professional development opportunities provided to assist staff to improve their skills in recognizing and responding appropriately to bullying. District leadership has further responsibilities in regard to bullying prevention and intervention in this plan. These are outlined below.

The District Superintendent and his/her designee(s) are responsible for the overall development and implementation of the District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) in collaboration with the central office administration, building principals and other key central office and building-based administrators, such as school adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, vice principals, and deans. This responsibility includes ensuring district-wide procedures for the following:

- consistent bullying and retaliation reporting procedures for students, parents and staff;
- maintenance of procedures for investigation, responding and documentation of bullying incidents;
- provision of supports and interventions for students who are targets or aggressors of bullying;
- identification and delivery of social and emotional learning curricula K-12, including necessary professional development in the implementation of these curricula with guidance from the DESE;
- annual professional development of staff and students in prevention, identification, reporting of and appropriate responses to bullying;
- regular reviews of and updates to bullying policies and procedures and the District Prevention and Intervention Plan annually; and
- data collection and analysis.

Additional specific responsibilities for key tasks are include in the following chart:

<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Responsible Party or Parties</b>
Receiving Reports on Bullying	Principal and his/her designee
Collecting and analyzing building/district data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes	Superintendent's Cabinet, Principal and his/her designee, Olweus Trainers, Unit Leader-Psych/SAC, Building Based School Climate/Bullying Prevention Committees
Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors	Superintendent's Cabinet, Technology Department, District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force on a district level; Principal and his/her designee regarding the process at the building level
Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law	Deputy Superintendent, Principal and his/her designee, Professional Development Committee
Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors	Superintendent's Cabinet, Principal and his/her designee, Guidance Counselors, School Adjustment Counselors, School Psychologists, Building Assistance Team Members
Choosing and Implementing the Curricula at the school and building level	Superintendent's Cabinet, Curriculum Department, Psych/SAC Unit Leader, Olweus Certified Trainers, Curriculum Subcommittee of the School Committee, Teachers, Assistant Teachers

Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the plan, including an internet safety plan and designation of key staff responsible for implementation	Superintendent's Cabinet and their Designees, Technology Department, Policy Subcommittee of the School Committee
Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct	Superintendent and his/her designees at the District level; Principals and his/her designees at the building level; School Councils
Leading the parent and family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials	The Superintendent and Principals and their designees, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force
Reviewing and updating the plan when needed or at least annually	The Superintendent and his/her designees, The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force

#### **D. Assessment of Needs and Resources**

The Pittsfield Public Schools (PPS) utilizes a variety of measures to assess school climate needs. District and individual school based data from the 2008/09 administration of the Olweus Anti-Bullying survey to grades 3-8 has been an important resource in helping schools to understand and intervene in bullying incidents within the schools. The survey will be again administered this year in December 2010 to grades 3-12. The district is expanding the administration of the surveys to the high schools in order to gain additional information and adapt to changing knowledge about the nature of bullying. Increased awareness that prior thinking that the peak of bullying behavior occurs at the middle school level and then dramatically drops off leads us to more carefully examine this behavior at the high school level. This has been found to be incorrect.

Further, the PPS conducts annual assessment of positive behavioral support implementation utilizing surveys, which include the *Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) Survey* and the *School Evaluation Tool (SET)*. The District has been utilizing this data at the building level for the past five years to measure Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) implementation.

Lastly, we have a district-developed survey that measures the level of classroom implementation of *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect*.<sup>3</sup> The District is invested in implementing these programs completely with ever increasing integrity.

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<sup>3</sup> Second Step is a violence prevention curriculum that is a universal prevention program that proactively teaches critical social and emotional skills to all children. Steps to Respect is a bullying prevention program that helps adults and students decrease bullying in their schools and establish a safe, caring, and respectful school climate. (www.cfchildren.org)

Some gaps in resources were identified in the creation of this plan that requires additional attention in the future. These include:

- 1) A need to expand the evidence-based social-emotional curricula for implementation at the secondary schools. The district expects to receive guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by June 2011.
- 2) A reduction in staff available to provide direct services and oversight of violence prevention efforts, including anti-bullying efforts. A part-time school adjustment counselor position had been funded through past Safe and Drug Free monies for this purpose, but this position was not funded as a result of reductions to this grant.
- 3) The need to develop an electronic tracking system for reporting, collecting, aggregating, and analyzing data. While a paper system will be used in 2010-11, it is expected that an electronic system will be in place for the start of the 2011-2012 school year.
- 4) The need for a district level climate team to better coordinate our work efforts between schools. By sharing building activities, it is expected that best practices are reviewed and replicated.

## **VII. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

### **A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others and may be in oral or written form. Reports made by a staff member must be submitted in writing by the person making the report. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members can be written on the same reporting form or may be made anonymously. Oral or anonymous reports made by a parent and/or student shall be scribed by a staff member in circumstances where a written report was not submitted. Also, a web based system will allow users to file anonymous reports electronically.

Use of a “Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form” (see Appendix B) is required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

- 1) Include a copy of the Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians.
- 2) Make forms available in the schools’ main offices, counseling offices, school nurses’ offices, and other locations determined by the principal or designee.
- 3) Post it on the school’s website. The Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination 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 administrators, educators and other staff, students and parents or guardians with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation as parts of district and school handbooks. A description of the reporting procedures and

resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be included in these handbooks, on the school and district website, and in information made available to parents or guardians.

### **B. Reporting by Staff**

Every school or district staff member, including but not limited to, central office administrators, building principals and administrators, school adjustment counselors and school psychologists, teachers and related service providers, paraprofessional staff, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, bus drivers, athletic coaches and extracurricular advisors is required to follow the Olweus Intervention Model. The staff member will report to the principal or designee any conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The staff member shall not share the report with any person other than the designated administrator(s). The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority and the responsibility of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline and the practices of the Olweus Anti-Bullying Approach adopted by the District.

### **C. 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. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Anonymous reports can be made from a link on the district website. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report or may report orally. 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. A student who knowingly makes a false allegation of bullying or retaliation shall also be subject to disciplinary action.

### **D. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation**

**1. Safety First:** Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, the staff member, 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 staff member, principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting the following persons from bullying or retaliation: a student/staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student/staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

## **2. Notification Requirements**

a. Notice to Parents or Guardians: Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor and will review response protocols. 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 aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and in compliance with school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

## **3. Investigation**

The following provides general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. Note that the guidelines should be modified as necessary to respond appropriately to the complaint.

a. Pre-Investigation: Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, school personnel will consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to support

the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. If the initial report is to or by a staff member, the staff member will complete an initial review of the situation and intervene as necessary. The staff member will make a referral to the principal or designee if further administrative investigation is needed.

b. Investigation: The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gather information from the complainant, including such matters as what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred and where the events occurred.

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 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.

The principal or designee, other staff members (including but not limited to school counselors) as determined by the principal or designee may conduct interviews. To the extent practical, 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 other investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

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

#### **4. Responses to Bullying**

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

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee will decide upon 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 Olweus curriculum;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students in consultation with guidance and/or school adjustment 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;
- Developing individual behavioral plans to include a focus on specific social skill development; and
- Making a referral for counseling or other mental health services for targets, aggressors and family members.

#### **5. Taking Disciplinary Action**

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of information gathered through investigation 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 BPIP and with the district and school's code of conduct. Discipline up to and including suspension and expulsion may be applied by the school principal. All suspensions or expulsions are subject to review by the Superintendent and his/her designee with the student and parents afforded full due process rights. Suspensions between three and nine days will be served at the Juvenile Resource Center, run in collaboration with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state laws regarding student discipline. A manifest determination will be completed to determine the connection between a student's behavior and his/her disability. As necessary, a special education team will be reconvened to review the student's IEP.

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.

## **A. 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.

Supportive services will be offered to the target. These services may include safety planning, school adjustment counselor services and mental health referral.

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.

## **VIII. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

**A. Identifying Resources:** The Pittsfield Public Schools has a multi-tiered approach to providing support services to students, including bullying prevention and intervention. This approach includes universal interventions for all students, targeted group interventions for students exhibiting similar difficulties, and individualized interventions when appropriate.

### **1. Universals:**

- a) Each school has a school climate/positive behavioral support team that has developed a positive behavior support plan outlining school climate activities, including plans for teaching of expectations, boosters for re-teaching expectations, recognition systems for exhibited desired behavior and a response for rule-violating behavior. In addition, each school has an Olweus Anti-Bullying Team. These teams include parents and community partners as members. The Olweus Anti-Bullying approach is the evidence-based anti-bullying program adopted by the district.<sup>4</sup> The Olweus approach is implemented at the school and in the classroom utilizing classroom meetings. These efforts are designed to improve peer relationships and make the school a safer and more positive place for students to learn and develop.
- b) In addition, the district has adopted additional universal curricula to promote the development of social competence among its students. Teachers in Pre-K through Grade 5 implement the *Committee for Children, Second Step* program to work towards the creation of empathy, impulse control, emotion regulation and increased

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<sup>4</sup> Core components of the Olweus program are implemented at the school, classroom, and individual levels. School level components include formation of a Bullying Prevention Committee; distribution of an anonymous questionnaire; training for staff and students; development of a coordinated system of supervision; adoption of school-wide rules against bullying; development of appropriate positive and negative consequences for students behavior; and parent involvement. Classroom level components include reinforcement of school-wide rules, holding regular classroom meetings to increase knowledge and empathy. Individual level components include interventions with children who bully and are bullied, including informational meetings for parents.

anger management and conflict resolution skills. In Grades 3-5, the teachers also implement *Steps to Respect*, an additional evidence-based bullying prevention curriculum. *Steps to Respect* teaches students to recognize, refuse, and report bullying, to be assertive and to build friendships.

2. Targeted Level: Several supports exist to meet the needs of groups of students who have been identified as being at risk.

- a) School Adjustment Counselors are available in all district schools to work with both regular and special education students determined to be at risk and in need of targeted social skill groups. The social-emotional programming that is available district-wide to at-risk students K-12 include the following: *The Tough Kids Social Skills Program* at the elementary level; *Skill Streaming* for Pre-K, elementary and secondary students; *Aggression Replacement Therapy*, the *PREPARE* curriculum and *Project Success for secondary students*.
- b) Some schools have piloted the implementation of *Behavioral Education Programs* (BEP) for students who have had difficulty complying with expectations without additional staff support. The plan is to expand this program throughout the District.
- c) Various mentor programs exist across grade levels to support students by providing positive role models.
- d) Programs exist for target student populations:
  - i. The *Step Ahead Program* provides services to anxious and socially withdrawn youth during the transition to middle school.
  - ii. *Camp Connect* provides services to emotionally/behavioral-disordered youth during the transition from elementary to middle school.
  - iii. At high school, there are established *Gay/Straight Alliance* groups to provide supports to GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) youth who are at increased risk for bullying
  - iv. *Peers Making Peace* Club Advisors also support students to solve social conflicts in age-appropriate ways within the secondary level. They provide training and monitoring for peer mediation and tolerance-enhancing activities.

3. Individual Supports for Students: In keeping with a tiered system of support, individualized supports exist for students that need them. These include:

- a) School-wide problem solving teams known as Student Support or Building Assistance Teams provide intervention planning for identified students utilizing an RtI (Response to Intervention) model.
- b) Behavioral assessment, planning and monitoring is conducted to address individual student needs.
- c) School adjustment counselor and school psychologist services, including risk assessment and safety planning, are available at all schools.
- d) Assessment of the social functioning of students with disabilities to done to ensure that, when necessary, a student's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) addresses the development of the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying.

**Counseling and other Services:** The Pittsfield Public Schools provides staff and programming to address the social and emotional needs of its students. This staff is available to work with aggressors, targets and families and participate in universal prevention efforts. All counseling staff is certified by the DESE and, if applicable, also possess other required state licensure in social work or mental health counseling. Current numbers of staff dedicated to providing student supports K—12 include the following:

- Five School Psychologists (including one Clinical Psychologist)
- 15.6 FTE School Adjustment Counselors (SAC), including the Psych/SAC Unit Leader (3.6 of these positions provide specialized substance use prevention and intervention services to Pittsfield’s high schools under a federal grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse.)

Pittsfield Public Schools provides access to school adjustment counseling services for all students, both general and special education. SACs work with students, parents, administrators and faculty, as well as community service providers to assist students in improving their school performance. The range of direct services provided to students can include crisis intervention and threat of harm assessment; observation; evaluation; individualized and classroom behavioral intervention planning and monitoring; multimodality intervention services to individual students, groups and classrooms; services to parents and families; consultation regarding classroom management strategies; and coordination with and referral to community resources.

District school psychologists play an integral role in evaluation for special education eligibility and assessing students at risk, including the target of bullying or an aggressor. Their services include psychological testing and evaluation, observation, risk assessments, consultation to staff and administrators on individual students and classroom management strategies, data analysis and recommendations for academic and behavioral modifications.

SACs and school psychologists work collaboratively and are integral members of building-based problem solving and intervention teams alongside teachers, administrators and other staff. Both SACs and school psychologists are key facilitators of school-wide activities to support student safety and positive school climate and are leaders of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support (SWPBS) efforts district wide.

**D. Students with Disabilities:** As required 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 a 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.

School Adjustment Counselors and/or Special Education Staff will identify appropriate goals to be addressed within the IEP.

**E. Referral to Outside Services:** School Adjustment Counselors will assist students and families in accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the community. Referrals may be made to community mental health agencies to address individual mental health needs of students who are being identified as a target or aggressor and for their families. This might include individual and family counseling as well as crisis intervention services. In addition, the school district has a strong collaboration with community providers, including youth-serving agencies that provide after-school programming, athletics and positive social skills opportunities. The District fosters and maintains strong collaborative relations with a variety of private and public agencies providing services to children and families, including the Department of Children and Families; the Department of Mental Health; the Department of Youth Services; the Department of Developmental Services; Department of Transitional Assistance; and all other private contracted providers. In addition, the Pittsfield Public Schools (PPS) and their staff routinely coordinate on both individual and systemic levels with community and governmental agencies.

Existing collaborative partnerships that support students at risk include the school-sponsored Coalition for Change, which brings together students, PPS staff and community providers, and the Pittsfield Prevention Partnership, a coalition focused on reducing youth substance abuse. Furthermore, there is a strong alliance between the PPS and the Berkshire County District Attorney's Office to prevent and intervene in bullying and cyber-bullying.

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

**A. Specific bullying prevention approaches:** The Pittsfield Public Schools will be utilizing the Olweus Anti-Bullying Approach for implementation with students and staff at the school-wide, classroom and individual level. This is a well-known, highly-regarded research based approach to prevent and intervene in bullying and cyber-bullying. This program will be integrated into the district positive behavioral approach that emphasizes the direct teaching of expected behavior, recognition of students/staff for following expected behavioral guidelines and the use of data to drive interventions. These approaches will be taught and implemented at all grade levels, Pre K through grade 12. Activities include:

- using scripted lesson plans and role-plays to develop skills and teach expected behavior;
- implementing classroom meetings to build positive relationships among students and in the class in general;
- teaching students about the definition of bullying and cyber-bullying including the imbalance of power, the roles of aggressor, target and bystander and the negative impact of bullying on all parties;
- 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;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic

- communication technologies;
- enhancing students’ skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications by teaching prosocial skills related to conflict resolution, impulse control, emotional regulation and anger management and empathy;
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and
- clarifying the consequences of engaging in disrespectful, bullying behavior from both a disciplinary and human emotional perspective.

Students will be taught about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This will occur within the calendar developed each summer. The teaching of behavioral expectations will begin at the start of the school year, (within the first 30 days of school), with regular booster times throughout the school year.

**B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts:** The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing effective school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including populations of students at increased risk, such as students with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students; and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports such as increased rates of praise and recognition of positive behavior more frequently than negative statements and punishment;
- encouraging adults to develop positive, respectful relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and acknowledging pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health within instruction and other activities, 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 non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength, in order to enhance social development.

## **X. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The Pittsfield Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan requires initial and on-going professional development for all staff including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals.**

**A. Annual Staff Training on the Plan:** Annual training for all school staff regarding expectations of the BPIP will include the following areas: staff duties under the BPIP; reporting and responding procedures; an overview of the steps that the building administrator or designee will follow upon the 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 hired after the start of the school year will be required to participate in school-based training within thirty days from their date of hire.

**B. Ongoing Professional Development:** A minimum of three building-based staff professional development sessions per school year will be devoted to topics related to bullying prevention and safe school climate. 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 a 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, s. 37O, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying and create a safe school climate through the following programs: *Steps to Respect; Second Step; the Olweus Anti-Bullying Approach; School-wide Positive Behavior Supports*, etc.;
- developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and bystanders of the bullying;
- research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly vulnerable for bullying in the school environment;
- information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

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' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). This training will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose disability affects social skills development

Additional areas identified by the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering and understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavior interventions strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;

- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

Guidelines and structures for implementing these recommendations include:

- 1) The formulation of an ongoing district level School Climate Committee employed with the task of creating professional development opportunities among the schools using shorter, more frequent professional development workshops rather than longer, less frequent sessions
- 2) The coordination and implementation by each school level climate committee to provide professional development opportunities within their buildings
- 3) Utilization of various resources to provide training to including (but not be limited to) presentations by school and community members, (including law enforcement, district attorney, violence prevention agencies, etc.).
- 4) The use of examples of Pittsfield Public School employees' best practices to guide ongoing professional development.
- 5) Access to bullying resources.

**C. Written notice to staff:** The Pittsfield Public Schools will provide all employees with an annual electronic copy of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and will include pertinent sections of the BPIP in the District and School employee handbooks.

#### **D. Implementation Timelines**

##### **2010-2011 School Year**

- 1) The district will continue to focus on implementation of the *Olweus Anti-Bullying* protocols.
- 2) Training will be provided in *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect*, with refreshers will be offered to previously trained staff.
- 3) All PPS employees will be presented with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy by January 30, 2011. It is the responsibility of each building administrator or designee to ensure all employees have signed off that they have received and reviewed the policy. This initial introduction should include a focus on sharing information about populations of students who are most at risk groups for being targets of bullying, including students with disabilities, GLBT youth, various ethnic, racial, religious sects and any student potentially isolated from his/her peers. In addition, staff will receive explicit direction on reporting protocols and expectations.
- 4) Analysis by District and building-based data on incidents of bullying and results of Olweus Survey will occur.
- 5) By February 18, 2011, the following Anti-Bullying expectations will be posted in classrooms and common areas:

We will not bully others.  
We will try to help students who are bullied.  
We will try to include students who are left out.  
If we know someone is being bullied, we will tell  
an adult at school and at home.

- 6) By February 18, 2011, staff will have received training on utilization of bullying reporting forms. Expectations for reporting will be clearly articulated.

#### **Professional Development Considerations for the 2011-2012 School Year**

- ongoing training that focuses on the most effective ways to identify and address bullying;
- continuing encouragement to share best practice within and between buildings throughout the city;
- ongoing promotion of best practices through the use of technology (video/PCTV/panel discussion) highlighting anti-bullying activities within the Pittsfield Public Schools;
- ongoing professional development activities connecting bullying prevention with core standards and building instructional focus, including available resources such as *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect*;
- ongoing presentations by law enforcement (District Attorney's office) to all staff on bullying prevention topics including Internet safety and cyber-bullying; and
- creation of an online warehouse/repository of school climate and bullying prevention professional development components for the district.

### **XI. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

Ongoing communication with parents, guardians, other caretakers and community stakeholders is critical for successful anti-bullying efforts at the schools. Some ways in which this ongoing collaboration will be made an integral part of the BPIP are:

- At the beginning of the school year, each school will provide information regarding district anti-bullying policies and procedures, including reporting procedures, possible disciplinary responses, and prevention and intervention activities and available resources. Suggestions for buildings include providing both written materials and discussion during their annual Back to School Nights or open houses.
- An information brochure for parents will be developed for distribution (see Appendix D).
- District leadership and schools will collaborate to offer annual Parent Education Nights, which will include information about the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including online safety. The following will be discussed at the Parent Education nights: the definition of bullying, the difference between bullying and normal peer conflict, strategies on how to respond to meet the needs of their children and the ways in which to partner with schools to ensure physical and emotional safety of children. In addition, anti-bullying, social competency and violence prevention

programming provided to their children will be explained, including the ways in which parents can reinforce these efforts at home.

- Staff will present prevention and intervention activities that are ongoing and specific to each school to School Councils and Parent Teacher Organizations minimally on an annual basis.
- Parents will have access to PPS bullying policy, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and reporting forms on the District website. All notices and information will be made available in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the languages most prevalent among parents or guardians.
- The District website will also provide additional resources and information to parents, as well as links to other websites of interest, including the Olweus Anti-Bullying Website, which is the anti-bullying approach utilized by the Pittsfield Public Schools.  
<http://www.usd320.k12.ks.us/Programs/OlweusBullying/default.aspx>

## **XII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

This plan affords all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

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

In addition, nothing in this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of a school or District to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71s. 37H or 37H1/2, other applicable laws, or school or district policies in response to violent, harmful or disruptive behavior.

# APPENDIX

**PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts**

ANTI-BULLYING

**POLICY**

**It is the intent of the Pittsfield Public Schools to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, the Pittsfield Public Schools has a significant interest in providing a safe, supportive, orderly and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Pittsfield Public Schools takes a systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention. Anti-bullying prevention in the Pittsfield Public schools is embedded within broader school-wide approaches that promote a positive, prosocial culture for all students and staff.**

**Bullying is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the schools to educate their students and disrupts the operations of the schools. Bullying negatively affects not only students who are targets but also the aggressors and those who participate and witness such behavior.**

**It is not the Pittsfield Public Schools' intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the Pittsfield Public Schools does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that creates a hostile environment and interferes with students' opportunity to learn.**

**REGULATIONS**

**A. Bullying Prohibited**

Bullying as defined in this policy, is not acceptable conduct in the Pittsfield Public Schools and is prohibited. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion in accordance with the student handbook. A student's bullying may also be addressed through other behavioral interventions.

Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. The Pittsfield Public Schools will endeavor to maintain learning and working environments free of bullying.

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

The School Committee expects administrators and supervisors to make clear to students and staff that bullying is prohibited. This prohibition includes the following areas:

- in the school building and on school grounds.
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds.

- at a bus stop, on the school bus or other school sanctioned transportation, such as another vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district.
- at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether it takes place on or off school grounds.
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school.
- At any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

## B. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will be used:

Bullying: The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. (Definition based on M.G.L. c.71, 37O)

Cyber-bullying: Bullying through the use of technology or any 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.

Aggressor: A student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.

Target: A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is directed.

Hostile Environment: 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 the student's education.

## C. Application of Policy

This policy applies to bullying that takes place at school or adjacent to or on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity or event, or while students are being transported to or from school or school-sponsored activities or events. It also applies to bullying that occurs at any location that creates a hostile environment and substantially disrupts the instructional program, operations of the school, or welfare of students.

Examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical contact or injury to another person or his/her property;
2. Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions, or to other individuals, whether transmitted verbally, in writing, or through electronic or other means;
3. Blackmail, extortion, demands for protection money, or involuntary loans or donations;
4. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations such as use of aggressive or menacing gestures;
5. Stalking;
6. Blocking access to school property or facilities;
7. Stealing or hiding books, backpacks, or other possessions;

8. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or demeaning humor;;9. Any form of cyber-bullying communicated through electronic means (e.g., text messaging, blogging, social networking, etc.) that are sent within the school day or beyond the school day and creates a disrupted or hostile school environment for one or more students

The determination whether particular conduct constitutes bullying - requires reasonable investigation and consideration of the circumstances, which include the frequency or repeated nature of the behavior at issue, the location in which the behavior occurs, the ages and maturity of the students involved, the activity or context in which the conduct occurs, and the nature and severity of the conduct. Determinations of bullying will be made utilizing the definition of bullying and cyber-bullying described above.

#### D. Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or his/her designee will be responsible for developing and implementing the District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in collaboration with building principals and his/her designees. This includes procedures for the following:

1. Student and parent reporting of bullying to staff and school administrators;
2. Staff reporting of bullying to school administrators;
3. Review of reports and investigation of bullying incidents;
4. Intervention with and/or discipline of students who engage in bullying;
5. Support and interventions for students who are targets or aggressors of bullying;
6. Delivery of social and emotional learning curriculums K-12. ;
7. Annual professional development of staff and students in identification, reporting, prevention and appropriate responses to bullying.
8. Periodic evaluation of bullying prevention, intervention, and training procedures and the District Prevention and Intervention Plan.

#### E. Reporting

Anyone, including a parent, guardian, student or school staff member, can report bullying or retaliation. Reports can be made in writing or orally. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. Persons other than school or district staff can make reports anonymously. Anonymous reports may limit further investigation if the parties involved cannot be identified. 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 who have been or parents of students who have been bullied -, or who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator.

Staff must immediately report bullying to the building principal if they either witness or become aware of bullying or retaliation in another manner. Staff members responsible for reporting acts of bullying include, but are not limited, to the following: educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessionals.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of bullying are prohibited. Any student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences in accordance with the student handbook.

#### F. Responding to Bullying

The District will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying. The Principal of each building or his/her designee(s) will be responsible for handling all complaints by students alleging bullying.

Any school staff that witnesses bullying should immediately intervene and stop the bullying.

When the school principal or his/her designee(s) receives a report of bullying, he or she shall promptly conduct an investigation. If there is a determination that bullying has occurred, he/she shall:

- Notify the parents or guardians of the target, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.
- Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor(s)
- Take appropriate disciplinary action.
- Notify the local law enforcement agency if there is reason to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. In making this determination, the administrator may consult with the School Resource Officer or other individuals deemed necessary.

During the course of an investigation, the school principal and/or his/her designee will assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents, including the possible completion of a personal safety plan.

In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying - behavior, school administrators should consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Responses can include positive behavioral interventions, teaching appropriate behavior through skill-building, disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion in accordance with the student handbook and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and/or reports to law enforcement officials.

Administrative guidelines and procedures for all forms of bullying will apply as outlined in the student handbook. The District will provide professional development to support the implementation of this policy, as well as implement curriculum to develop social and emotional learning for the aggressor, target, and the entire school community.

#### G. Dissemination of Policy

Notice of what constitutes bullying, the Pittsfield Public Schools' prohibition against bullying, and the consequences for students who bully shall be communicated to students and parents through the Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook and will be available on the District website. Staff will receive annual training on the identification, reporting, prevention and response to bullying.

#### REFERENCES

STU-3 (Equal Educational Opportunities); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students  
Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-34 (Hazing); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-24 (Student Rights and Responsibilities); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-31 (Student Conduct on Buses); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-38 (Secure School Environment); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-65 ((Student Safety); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

STU-28 (Student Conduct – Conduct/Discipline/Suspension/Expulsion); Policy Handbook for Parents and Students

**Appendix B**

**PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SUSPECTED BULLYING REPORTING AND DETERMINATION FORM**

**1. Name of Reporter:** \_\_\_\_\_

(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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**6. Information about the Incident**

**Name of Alleged Target (of behavior):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Alleged 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. Action Taken by Staff Member (if Staff Member is Reporter).**

Call Target's Parent Date: \_\_\_\_\_  Call Aggressor's Parent Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Intervention Plan - Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**10: Form Given to Administrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**II. ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATION**

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

2. Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Interviews:

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

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

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

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

4. 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

Summary of Investigation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

1. Bullying Determination:

YES – Bullying Did Occur

NO – Bullying Did NOT Occur

Bullying

Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_

Retaliation

Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

Target’s parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Aggressor’s parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SRO/Law Enforcement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken for Aggressor:

Loss of Privileges \_\_\_\_\_  Detention  ISS  Suspension  JRC Suspension

Mental Health Referral  Education  Parent Meeting/Phone Conference  Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Describe Safety Planning for Target:

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)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Guidelines for Parent/Staff Handbooks

A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, must be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school and district website and in information about the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) that is made available to parents or guardians.

The following italicized sections are to be included in District and School Parent and Staff handbooks under the Anti-bullying section:

*Anti-bullying in the Pittsfield Public Schools is embedded within broader school-wide approaches that promote a positive, pro-social culture for all students and staff, particularly the District School-wide Positive Behavior Support initiative, the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program and the implementation of school violence prevention curricula, Second Step and Steps to Respect.*

*Included are selected portions from the 2010-2011 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Please refer to the complete document on the website for further information.*

#### **Bullying Prohibited:**

*Bullying, including cyber-bullying, and retaliation is not acceptable conduct and is prohibited within the Pittsfield Public Schools. Pittsfield Public School leadership and other staff will endeavor to maintain learning and working environments free of bullying. Retaliation against a person that either reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information is further prohibited. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying or retaliation shall be subject to a range of disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion.*

*This prohibition includes the following:*

- *in the school building and on school grounds;*
- *on property immediately adjacent to school grounds;*
- *at a bus stop, on the school bus or other school sanctioned transportation, such as another vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school district;*
- *at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether it takes place on or off school grounds;*
- *through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school; and*
- *at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;*

#### **Definitions of Key Terms**

**A. Bullying:** *The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 370)*

**B. Cyber-bullying:** *Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any 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, including, but not limited to blogs, websites, and social networking. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 370)*

**C. Retaliation:** *Any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a student or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.*

**D. Aggressor:** *A student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. (The use of the term aggressor varies from the term "bully" in the Act to Prevent Bullying, yet is being used in the plan under the guidance of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.)*

**E. Target:** *A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is directed.*

**F. Hostile Environment:** *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 the student's education. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, 370)*

### **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. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Anonymous reports can be made from a link on the district website. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report or may report orally. 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. A student who knowingly makes a false allegation of bullying or retaliation shall also be subject to disciplinary action.*

### **Notification Requirements**

*Notice to Parents or Guardians: Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor and will review response protocols. 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 aggressor.*

*In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and in compliance with school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.*

### **Responses to Bullying**

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

*Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee will decide upon 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 Olweus curriculum;*
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students in consultation with guidance and/or school adjustment 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;*

- *Developing individual behavioral plans to include a focus on specific social skill development; and*
- *Making a referral for counseling or other mental health services for targets, aggressors and family members.*

### **5. Taking Disciplinary Action**

*If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of information gathered through investigation 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 BPIP and with the district and school's code of conduct. Discipline up to and including suspension and expulsion may be applied by the school principal. All suspensions or expulsions are subject to review by the Superintendent and his/her designee with the student and parents afforded full due process rights. Suspensions between three and nine days will be served at the Juvenile Resource Center, run in collaboration with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office.*

*Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state laws regarding student discipline. A manifest determination will be completed to determine the connection between a student's behavior and his/her disability. As necessary, a special education team will be reconvened to review the student's IEP.*

*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.*

#### **A. 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.*

*Supportive services will be offered to the target. These services may include safety planning, school adjustment counselor services and mental health referral.*

*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.*

