

Lowell Community Charter Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber bullying, and is Lowell Community Charter Public School's commitment to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these essential members we have established this Bullying Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, intimidation, and retaliation. This consultation included the use of questionnaires, providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue and a public comment period for feedback from parents and the community. The Executive Director is responsible for the implementation and oversight the Plan.

An LCCPS fifth grade student expresses his opinion on bullying: "I would say that I just wish that people would get along. We are all a family and community and people should start realizing it."

I. Leadership and Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

The Leadership Team of Lowell Community Charter Public School affirms that the school is committed to providing all students with a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, retaliation, bullying or cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. LCCPS's student behavior policy plan echoes this commitment through the motto: Learning Together to Live Together, which is built upon three over-arching behavioral tenets:

Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.

LCCPS will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. This includes providing all students with a safe environment at bus stops, playgrounds, in the lunchroom, hallways and after-school activities as well as in the classrooms. Staff will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

LCCPS recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of the characteristics.

LCCPS will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, intimidation, 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. LCCPS 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 and paraprofessionals.

II. . Definitions: Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Retaliation

Bullying, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (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.

Cyber-bullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic communication through the use of 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 as well as the transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic, or photo-optical system including but not limited to electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.. Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying; as well as, the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying or cyber-bullying.

Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On school property immediately adjacent to school grounds;

- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds;
- At school bus stops;
- On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the LCCPS.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by LCCPS if the act or acts in question:

- Create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- Materially and substantially disrupt the educational process or orderly operation of the 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.

Aggressor is a student or member of a school staff including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

III. . Training and Professional Development

Annual Training--Annual staff training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the Executive Director 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.

Written notice to Staff—LCCPS will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school employee handbook and the LCCPS’s code of conduct.

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, 370, the content of school-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- (ii) developmentally 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 cyber-bullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Lowell Community Charter Public School has implemented age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention at each grade level. All teachers at LCCPS have been trained in the Responsive Classroom approach. This is a way of teaching that emphasizes social emotional and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. The guiding principles of the program are incorporated into daily classroom practices such as the creation of classroom rules/ specifically prohibiting bullying. We have worked together to create a sense of understanding the behavioral expectations of the school and to create a climate of respect and caring. This training will be offered to new teachers and will be reiterated each year as we begin the year.

The school is committed to developing a climate where students are encouraged and feel safe talking to adults; sharing concerns about meanness and bullying. We believe that conflict resolution education will help our students learn to state their needs, confront issues between students and help to empower students to confront issues that sometimes develop into bullying. We believe that building an environment which affirms each individual student's uniqueness and value, celebrating our differences and holding high expectations for everyone is the key to preventing bullying.

Our behavior specialists, social workers, psychologists are all trained to support the individual students, whether target, witness or aggressor to understand their role in the incident and how to help to remedy the situation.

IV. Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Reports of Bullying made by staff at LCCPS, students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or school staff members. The school will make available a reporting form on the school's website for use by any party. The Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians at the school.

Reporting by Staff: Any staff member (anyone employed by LCCPS) is required to report immediately to the Executive Director or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. The requirement to report to the Executive Director or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others: The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Executive Director 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. 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 Executive Director or designee.

V. Investigation and Responding to Reports

Prior to fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Executive Director 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 Executive Director or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Executive Director or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. The Executive Director or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved. During the investigation the Executive Director or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Executive Director or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Interviews maybe in consultation with the School Psychologist or school social workers, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, Executive Director or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Executive Director or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policy.

The Executive Director or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation, as needed.

VI. . Determinations

The Executive Director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Executive Director 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 Executive Director or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action are necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Executive Director 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.

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

VII. Obligations to Notify Others

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Executive Director 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 Executive Director or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

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 Head 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.

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 Executive Director 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.

VIII. Responses to Bullying.

Skill Building: Upon the Executive Director 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. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Executive Director or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- referring for evaluation.

Taking Disciplinary Action:

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

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

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

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others: The Executive Director or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. (One strategy that the Executive Director

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or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur).

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Executive Director 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 Executive Director or designee will work with the Assistant Principal, Behavior Specialists and teachers to implement an effective plan.

IX. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Instructional activities will focus on helping students develop healthy social relationships with adults and peers and on conflict resolution. Curricula used will be evidence-based and will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development. LCCPS will provide age-appropriate instructional activities incorporating the following:

- use of scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empower 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;
- help students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasize cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhance students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment

Teachers will be encouraged to incorporate the following general teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. Many of these approaches are already components of the Responsive Classroom.

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for 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;
- 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;
- teaching internet safety; and supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

Counseling and Referrals to outside services: will also be made available for students.

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.

X. Collaboration with Families

LCCPS will offer education 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 school. This will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the Parent Advisory Board, who represent parents with special education concerns as well as the parent group at large. Trainings and meetings will be held with translation available.

The school will work closely with parents both at times when they call us with a concern and when we identify a concern that needs to be addressed. We believe open communication and understanding of a child's needs, family situation and parental expectations will help us develop an anti-bullying environment. Parents are encouraged to speak with teachers, specialists, social workers, division directors and the Executive Director whenever they have a concern.

XI. At least once every four years, the school will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in the school. The school will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

XII. Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside the LCCPS 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 or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Executive Director's office.

XIII. . LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES ON BULLYING

<http://www.antibullying.net/>

<http://www.bullying.co.uk>

<http://www.bullying.org>

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>

<http://www.clemson.edu/olweus/>

<http://www.cutthebull.org/>

<http://www.kbpp.org/>

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk>

<http://lincoln.midcoast.com/~wps/against/bullying.html> .

<http://www.no-bully.com>

<http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/>