

# **Anti-Bullying Policy for the Greenfield Center School**

## **I. Introduction**

At Greenfield Center School, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with courtesy and respect. It is our policy to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

The Greenfield Center School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the recently enacted Massachusetts law and amendments thereto against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote learning and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process. Our Plan articulates Greenfield Center School's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

This Plan is consistent with broader protections at Greenfield Center School against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that make up the daily interactions among students, faculty, and staff and which appear in our *Handbook* and *Employee Personnel Policies*.

It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the Greenfield Center School community. The Head of School or her/his designee is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to her.

This plan applies to students, and members of school staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessionals and volunteers.

The development of this policy shall be in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, students, parents and guardians. The policy will be distributed to all families who have a child attending the school. There is a 60 day comment period for all interested persons to comment on the amended plan.

The plan shall be reviewed and if necessary updated, biennially.

## **II. Policy Against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation**

The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation are prohibited on school grounds and at school-sponsored events, activities, functions, and programs. Bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation are also prohibited on school buses or vans and on other

vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school, and through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school.

In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted individual; infringes on the rights of a targeted individual at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the 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 prohibited.

False accusations of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

### **III. Definitions**

**“Aggressor”** is a student or any school personnel who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

**“Bullying”** is the repeated use by one or more students or one or more school personnel of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a targeted individual that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process, orderly operation of a school, or the working environment at school.

**“Cyber-bullying”** is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, 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 (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identify of another person or (ii) 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 the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

**“Hostile Environment”** is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is

sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the targeted individual's education or working environment.

**“Retaliation”** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a targeted individual who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying or cooperates in an investigation in any way.

**“Target”** is a student or any school personnel against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated, a “victim”.

### **Legal Definitions and School Policy**

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under the Greenfield Center School's policies in order to prevent verbal or physical misconduct before a student or school personnel have been subject to bullying as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as “repeated use” of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, the School reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in the case of a single expression, act, or gesture, if the School determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under the law.

Greenfield Center School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, development or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Vulnerable students shall be supported by teaching in each session on anti-bullying respect for diversity and providing regular check-ins with these students on their experience while at the Greenfield Center School.

## **IV. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-Bullying**

From the earliest grades at the Greenfield Center School, students learn that as members of our community, they have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect and owe courtesy and respect to all others in the school community. Our curriculum and work place practices emphasize respect for differences, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. When necessary, parents are notified and asked to reinforce standards for behavior within our school community.

From the first day of employment, school personnel are to understand that as a member of our community they have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect and owe courtesy and respect to all others in the school community.

Families receive the *Handbook* and are asked to read and review it each summer. This *Handbook* includes explicit policies around harassment, anti-hazing, and acceptable use of technology at the Greenfield Center School.

Morning Meetings are utilized to make sure that students are well informed about what is expected of them and to reinforce positive conduct. Age appropriate discussions addressing prevention, reporting and identifying bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation will be the subject of Morning Meetings early in each school year. These subjects shall be raised at Morning Meeting or on other occasions throughout the year as the need arises.

School personnel shall be trained in the prevention, reporting and identifying bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

## **V. Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Prevention Plan**

Any Greenfield Center School employee shall **immediately** report any instance of bullying or retaliation the employee has witnessed or become aware of to the Head of School or her/his designee.

Any student, parent, guardian or other interested person may report any bullying or suspected bullying to the Head of School or her/his designee as soon as reasonably possible. The Head of School or her/his designee will complete the Bullying Incident Report Form.

If an instance of bullying is reported to an employee other than the Head of School, the employee shall immediately inform the Head of School or her/his designee.

Reports may be made anonymously, however, no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The School urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation very seriously. Also, while the School cannot promise strict confidentiality because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation only on a legitimate need-to-know basis.

### **Investigation**

When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Head or her/his designee, an investigation will be commenced

within 24 to 48 hours of receipt if at all possible. An assessment will be made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of the student and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation.

The Head of School or her/his designee should keep accurate documentation of all complaints received, including:

- A. The name of the complainant
- B. The status of the complainant (i.e. student, school personnel, third party)
- C. The name of the alleged bully
- D. The date the complaint was received
- E. How the complaint was received (i.e., written, verbally)
- F. The nature of the complaint (i.e. facts of the complaint)
- G. The names of the witnesses who will be interviewed

The Head of School or her/his designee should ask appropriate questions of the complainant to gather all facts and to determine the level of support or protection needed by the targeted individual:

- A. Who, what, when, where, how?
- B. Is there any physical evidence (documents, texts, voicemail)?
- C. What will restore the complainant's sense of safety?
- D. Does the complainant need protection? If so, what form should the protection take?
- E. What professional services are appropriate to recommend or require?
- F. Is notification to local law enforcement required?

It is the policy of the School to notify the parents of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made. All witnesses and the alleged bully should be reminded that retaliation is also a violation of school policy.

The alleged bully will be fairly warned that the misconduct will, if appropriate, be reported to local law enforcement or other appropriate governmental agencies.

### **Resolution, Notification, and Follow-Up**

Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as the School deems appropriate, the Head of School or her/his designee will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this Plan

has been violated, the Head of School or her/his designee will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented. It will also be determined what steps are necessary to make the targeted individual feel safe and protected in the school environment.

Depending on the circumstances of the case, if it is determined that bullying has occurred the Head of School or his/her designee may discipline the offending party by ordering:

- a. counseling;
- b. schedule or class change;
- c. stay away order;
- d. an educational component;
- e. a verbal warning;
- f. a written warning;
- g. suspension;
- h. expulsion, or;
- i. any other remedy deemed appropriate by the Head of School or his/her designee;
- j. any discipline should be viewed in light of balancing accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

If the incident involves students from more than one school, the school first informed of the bullying, or retaliation shall consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school or schools.

The goal of an investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible, to take such steps as can be taken to prevent a repetition of the incident, and to prevent the targets and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or when a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Section 51A of the Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified. Upon completion of the investigation, the Head of School, or his/her designee who conducted the investigation will meet individually with the target(s) of the alleged incident and the student (s) and their parents or school personnel against whom the complaint was made to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, to inform the parties of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student or employee records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents or any further need for protected measures.

## **Bullying Prevention Plan – Educational and Professional Development Components**

1. This bullying prevention plan shall be developed and updated biennially. There shall be notice of the plan updates to each family of a student attending the school and a public comment period.
2. Parents and guardians shall be informed about the bullying prevention curriculum of the school, specifically:
  - a. how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school and school plan;
  - b. dynamics of bullying; and,
  - c. online safety and cyber-bullying.
3. The school shall provide to students and parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in the languages, which are most prevalent among the students, parents, or guardians, annual written notice of the student related sections of the plan.
4. The school shall provide annual written notice of the plan to all staff.
5. All staff shall be trained and provision for faculty and staff duties shall be included in the school employee handbook.
6. The Plan shall be posted on the website for each school.

The Head of School or his/her designee shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan

## **VI. Conclusion**

This Plan is intended (1) to prevent bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation among individuals in our school community, (2) to encourage students and their parents and employees to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student or employee is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are warranted.