

**PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Pittsfield, Massachusetts**

ANTI-BULLYING

**POLICY (unbolded following 3 paragraphs)**

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 in 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

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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 or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that 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 or a member of a school staff 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.

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

**School Staff:** Includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

## 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.

#### H. Problem Resolution

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

District students and/or parents of students may contact the Superintendent or his/her designee as a result of a concern about resolution of a finding at the building level at 413-499-9512.

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

#### 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 Student)