

South Street Early Learning Center



Student and Parent Handbook 2024-2025

376 South Street – Fitchburg, MA 01420 - Telephone 978-348-2300 - Fax 978-345-3292

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JONATHAN THOMPSON
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Students, Parents, and Staff,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year at Fitchburg Public Schools! It is with great enthusiasm that I extend my warmest greetings to each of you as we embark on another year of learning, growth, and achievement.

At the Fitchburg Public Schools, we are dedicated to developing an environment where every student feels valued, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential. Our mission is to provide coordinated curricular and extracurricular experiences that inspire students to develop the academic, intellectual, creative, technological, and social skills necessary to work and to participate in our democratic society. This handbook serves as a comprehensive guide to our district's policies, procedures, and resources, and we hope it will be a valuable tool for you.

This handbook contains essential information about our district's expectations, guidelines, and services. It includes details on:

- District and School Information
- Health and Safety
- Academics
- Student Life
- Student Rights and Responsibilities

We encourage you to review this handbook carefully and discuss its contents with your children. Understanding and following these guidelines will help ensure a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment for everyone.

Our dedicated team of educators, administrators, and support staff are committed to providing a nurturing and challenging educational experience for every student. We are here to support you and your children throughout the school year and beyond. If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact your school's administration or the district office.

Thank you for being a part of the Fitchburg Public Schools community. Together, we can achieve great things and create a brighter future for our students.

Wishing you a successful and fulfilling school year!

Sincerely,

Jonathan Thompson
Superintendent
Fitchburg Public Schools

** This handbook has been translated into the major languages spoken by parents or guardians of District students. If parents'/guardians' or a student's primary language is not English, and the District has not already translated the student handbook(s) into their primary language, the school will translate a handbook and/or code of conduct into that language. The District will also make oral interpretation available for any parent or guardian with limited English skills, including parents or guardians who speak low-incidence languages. Title VI; EEOA 20 U.S.C. 1703(f); M. G. L. c. 76, section 5; 603 CMR 26.02(2); 603 CMR 26.03; 603 CMR 26.08*

FITCHBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar for 2024-2025

School Committee Approved on 4/22/24, Revised and Approved on 5/6/24

AUGUST (0)					SEPTEMBER (19)					OCTOBER (22)					NOVEMBER (17)				
M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
			1	2	N/S	W	4	5	6		1	2	3	4					1
5	6	7	8	9	9	10	11	12	13	7	8	E/R	10	11	4	W	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	20	N/S	15	16	17	18	N/S	12	13	14	15
19	OR	OR	22	23	23	24	25	26	27	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22
26	W	W	W	30	30					28	29	30	31		25	26	E/R	N/S	N/S

DECEMBER (15)					JANUARY (21)					FEBRUARY (15)					MARCH (20)				
M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	E/R	6			N/S	2	3						3	4	5	6	7
9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	E/R	7	10	11	12	13	14
16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	W
23	24	N/S	26	27	N/S	21	22	23	24	N/S	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28
30	31				27	28	E/R	30	31	24	25	26	27	28	31				

APRIL (17)					MAY (21)					JUNE (14)				
M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4				1	2	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	16	17	E/R	N/S	20
N/S	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30			N/S	27	28	29	30	30				

- August 20-21** New Teacher Orientation
- August 27-29** Teacher and Para Professional Development
- September 2** Labor Day - No School
- September 3** Teacher and Para Professional Development
- September 4** Classes begin for students Gr.1-12
- September 9** Classes begin for students PK and K
- October 9** Staff Professional Development - Early Release
- October 14** Indigenous Peoples' Day - No School
- November 5** Teacher and Para Professional Development - No School
- November 11** Veteran's Day - No School
- November 27** Early Release
- November 28-29** Thanksgiving Recess - No School
- December 5** Parent/Guardian Teacher Conferences PK-12 - Early Release
- Dec. 23 - Jan. 1** No School - December Vacation
- January 2** School Re-opens from December Vacation
- January 20** Martin Luther King Jr. Day - No School
- January 29** Staff Professional Development - Early Release
- February 6** Parent/Guardian Teacher Conferences PK-12 - Early Release
- February 17-21** No School - Winter Vacation
- March 21** Teacher Professional Development - No School
- April 21-25** No School - Spring Vacation
- May 26** Memorial Day - No School
- June 5** Goodrich Academy Graduation
- June 6** Fitchburg High School Graduation
- June 18** Last day of school -180th day- Early Release (if no snow days)
- June 19** Juneteenth - No School
- June 20-26** Make-Up for Weather Cancellations

- First day of school
9/4 Gr. 1-12 and 9/9 PK and K
- N/S Holiday
- E/R Early Release - 11/27 Holiday,
6/18 Last day of School
- E/R Early Release 10/9, 1/29
Staff Professional Development (PD)
- E/R Early Release - 12/5, 2/6
Parent/Guardian Teacher Conferences
- OR New Teacher Orientation
8/20 and 8/21
- W Teacher PD - No School
8/27, 8/28, 8/29, 9/3, 11/5, 3/21
0.5 Asynchronous on 8/26
- W Para PD - No School
8/27 (0.5), 9/3, 11/5
0.5 Asynchronous on 8/26

Students will be in attendance 180 days - Teachers 186.5 days
The last day of school will be Early Release for all students

Calendar subject to change due to negotiations

ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS DE FITCHBURG

Calendario escolar 2024-2025

Comité escolar aprobado el 4/22/24, revisado y aprobado el 5/6/24

AGOSTO (0)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	OR	OR	22	23
26	W	W	W	30

SEPTIEMBRE (19)				
M	T	W	T	F
N/S	W	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

OCTUBRE (22)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	E/R	10	11
N/S	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

NOVIEMBRE (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	W	6	7	8
N/S	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	E/R	N/S	N/S

DICIEMBRE (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	E/R	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	N/S	26	27
30	31			

ENERO (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
		N/S	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
N/S	21	22	23	24
27	28	E/R	30	31

FEBRERO (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	E/R	7
10	11	12	13	14
N/S	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

MARZO (20)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	W
24	25	26	27	28
31				

ABRIL (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
N/S	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

MAYO (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
N/S	27	28	29	30

JUNIO (14)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	E/R	N/S	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

W Primer día de escuela
9/4 Gr. 1-12 y 9/9 Preescolar y Kinder

N/S Festivo

E/R Salida Temprana - 11/27 Festivo,
6/18 Último día de clase

E/R Salida Temprana 10/9, 1/29
Desarrollo profesional del personal

E/R Salida Temprana - 12/5, 2/6
Conferencias de padres/representantes
y maestros

OR Orientación para nuevos maestros
8/20 and 8/21

W Desarrollo Profesional del
Profesorado - No hay escuela
8/27, 8/28, 8/29, 9/3, 11/5, 3/21
0.5 Asíncrono antes del 8/26

W Desarrollo Profesional de
Paraprofesional - No hay escuela
8/27 (0.5), 9/3, 11/5
0.5 Asíncrono antes del 8/26

- Agosto 20-21** Orientación para nuevos maestros
- Agosto 27-29** Desarrollo profesional de profesores y paraprofesionales
- Septiembre 2** Día del Trabajador - No hay clases
- Septiembre 3** Desarrollo profesional de profesores y paraprofesionales
- Septiembre 4** Comienzan las clases para los grados 1-12
- Septiembre 9** Comienzan las clases para Preescolar y Kinder
- Octubre 9** Desarrollo profesional del personal - Salida temprana
- Octubre 14** Día de los Pueblos Indígenas - No hay clases
- Noviembre 5** Desarrollo profesional de profesores y paraprofesionales - No hay clases
- Noviembre 11** Día de los Veteranos - No hay clases
- Noviembre 27** Salida temprana
- Noviembre 28-29** Vacaciones de Acción de Gracias - No hay clases
- Diciembre 5** Conferencias entre padres/representantes y maestros PK-12 - Salida temprana
- Dic. 23 - Ene 1** No hay clases - Vacaciones de Diciembre
- Enero 2** La escuela vuelve a abrir después de las vacaciones de Diciembre
- Enero 20** Día de Martin Luther King Jr. - No hay clases
- Enero 29** Desarrollo profesional del personal - Salida temprana
- Febrero 6** Conferencias entre padres/representantes y maestros PK-12 - Salida temprana
- Febrero 17-21** No hay clases - Vacaciones de invierno
- Marzo 21** Desarrollo profesional del profesorado - No hay clases
- Abril 21-25** No hay clases - Vacaciones de primavera
- Mayo 26** Día de los Caídos - No hay clases
- Junio 5** Graduación de Goodrich Academy
- Junio 6** Graduación de Fitchburg High School
- Junio 18** Último día de clases, día 180, Salida Temprana (sin días de nieve)
- Junio 19** Día del Juneteenth - No hay clases
- Junio 20-26** Compensación por anulaciones debidas a condiciones meteorológicas adversas

Los alumnos asistirán 180 días - Los maestros 186,5 días

El último día de clase habrá salida anticipada para todos los alumnos

Calendario sujeto a cambios por negociaciones

ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS DE FITCHBURG

Calendário Escolar 2024-2025

Comitê Escolar aprovado em 4/22/24, revisado e aprovado em 5/6/24

AGOSTO (0)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	OR	OR	22	23
26	W	W	W	30

SETEMBRO (19)				
M	T	W	T	F
N/S	W	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

OUTUBRO (22)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	E/R	10	11
N/S	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBRO (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	W	6	7	8
N/S	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	E/R	N/S	N/S

DEZEMBRO (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	E/R	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	N/S	26	27
30	31			

JANEIRO (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
N/S	21	22	23	24
27	28	E/R	30	31

FEVEREIRO (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	E/R	7
10	11	12	13	14
N/S	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

MARÇO (20)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	W
24	25	26	27	28
31				

ABRIL (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
N/S	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

MAIO (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
N/S	27	28	29	30

JUNHO (14)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	E/R	N/S	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

W Primeiro dia de aula
9/4 Gr. 1-12 e 9/9 PK e K

N/S Férias

E/R Liberação antecipada, 11/27 Férias
6/18 Último dia de aula

E/R Liberação Antecipada 10/9, 1/29
Desenvolvimento profissional da equipe

E/R Liberação Antecipada - 12/5, 2/6
Conferências de pais e responsáveis
com professores

OR Orientação para novos professores
8/20 and 8/21

W DP do professor - Sem aulas
8/27, 8/28, 8/29, 9/3, 11/5, 3/21

W Paraprofessores DP - Sem aulas
8/27 (0.5), 9/3, 11/5
0.5 assíncrono em 8/26

- Agosto 20-21** Orientação de novos professores
- Agosto 27-29** Desenvolvimento profissional de professores e paraprofessores
- Setembro 2** Dia do Trabalho - Sem aulas
- Setembro 3** Desenvolvimento profissional de professores e paraprofessores
- Setembro 4** Início das aulas para alunos do 1º ao 12º ano
- Setembro 9** Início das aulas para alunos PK e K
- Outubro 9** Desenvolvimento profissional da equipe - Liberação antecipada
- Outubro 14** Dia dos Povos Indígenas - Sem aulas
- Novembro 5** Desenvolvimento profissional de professores e paraprofessores - Sem aulas
- Novembro 11** Dia dos Veteranos - Sem aulas
- Novembro 27** Liberação antecipada
- Novembro 28-29** Férias de Ação de Graças - Sem aulas
- Dezembro 5** Conferências de pais/responsáveis com professores PK-12 - Liberação antecipada
- Dez. 23 - Jan. 1** Sem aulas - Férias de dezembro
- Janeiro 2** Reabertura da escola após as férias de dezembro
- Janeiro 20** Dia de Martin Luther King Jr. - Sem aulas
- Janeiro 29** Desenvolvimento profissional da equipe - Liberação antecipada
- Fevereiro 6** Conferências de pais/responsáveis com professores PK-12 - Liberação antecipada
- Fevereiro 17-21** Sem aulas - Férias de inverno
- Março 21** Desenvolvimento profissional do professor - Sem aulas
- Abril 21-25** Sem aulas - Férias de primavera
- Maio 26** Dia do Memorial - Sem aulas
- Junho 5** Formatura da Goodrich Academy
- Junho 6** Formatura da Escola de Ensino Médio de Fitchburg
- Junho 18** Último dia de aula, 180º dia, Liberação antecipada (se não houver dias de neve)
- Junho 19** Juneteenth - Sem aulas
- Junho 23-27** Reposição para cancelamentos devido ao clima

Os alunos estarão presentes 180 dias - os professores 186,5 dias

O último dia de aula será de liberação antecipada para todos os alunos

Calendário sujeito a alterações devido a negociações

LEKÒL PIBLIK FITCHBURG

Kalandriye lekòl la 2024-2025

Komite Lekòl la Apwouve sou 4/22/24, Revize ak Apwouve sou 5/6/24

OUT (0)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	OR	OR	22	23
26	W	W	W	30

SEPTANM (19)				
M	T	W	T	F
N/S	W	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

OKTÒB (22)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	E/R	10	11
N/S	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

NOVANM (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	W	6	7	8
N/S	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	E/R	N/S	N/S	

DESANM (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	E/R	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	N/S	26	27
30	31			

JANVYE (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
		N/S	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
N/S	21	22	23	24
27	28	E/R	30	31

FEVRIYE (15)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	E/R	7
10	11	12	13	14
N/S	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

MAS (20)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	W
24	25	26	27	28
31				

AVRIL (17)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
N/S	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

ME (21)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
N/S	27	28	29	30

JEN (14)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	E/R	N/S	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

W Premye jou lekòl
9/4 Gr. 1-12 ak 9/9 lekòl matènèl ak
kindergarten

N/S Vakans

E/R Mwatye Jou - 11/27 Fete,
6/18 Dènye jou lekòl

E/R Mwatye Jou 10/9, 1/29
Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo

E/R Mwatye Jou - 12/5, 2/6
Konferans paran-pwofesè lekòl
matènèl-12

OR Oryantasyon nouvo pwofesè yo
8/20 and 8/21

W Seminè pwofesè - pa gen lekòl
8/27, 8/28, 8/29, 9/3, 11/5, 3/21
0.5 Asynchrone 8/26

W Seminè parapwofesyonèl
pa gen lekòl
8/27 (0.5), 9/3, 11/5
0.5 Asynchrone 8/26

- Out 20-21** Oryantasyon nouvo pwofesè
- Out 27-29** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo
- Septanm 2** Jounen Travay - Pa gen lekòl
- Septanm 3** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo
- Septanm 4** Klas yo kòmanse pou elèv klas 1-12
- Septanm 9** Klas yo kòmanse pou Kindergarten ak lekòl matènèl
- Oktòb 9** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo - Mwatye Jou
- Oktòb 14** Jounen Pèp Endijèn yo - Pa gen lekòl
- Novanm 5** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo - Pa gen lekòl
- Novanm 11** Jou veteran yo - Pa gen lekòl
- Novanm 27** Mwatye Jou
- Novanm 28-29** Jou fèt Thanksgiving - Pa gen lekòl
- Desanm 5** Konferans paran-pwofesè PK-12 - Mwatye Jou
- Des. 23 - Jan. 1** Pa gen lekòl - vakans desanm
- Janvye 2** Lekòl la rekòmanse apre jou vakans desanm yo
- Janvye 20** Jou Martin Luther King Jr. - Pa gen lekòl
- Janvye 29** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo - Mwatye Jou
- Fevriye 6** Konferans paran-pwofesè PK-12 - Mwatye Jou
- Fevriye 17-21** Pa gen lekòl - Vakans ivè
- Mas 21** Devlopman pwofesyonèl anplwaye yo - Pa gen lekòl
- Avril 21-25** Pa gen lekòl - Vakans prentan
- Me 26** Jour de commémoration - Pa gen lekòl
- Jen 5** Goodrich Academy gradyasyon
- Jen 6** Fitchburg High School gradyasyon
- Jen 18** Dènye jou lekòl -180yèm jou- Mwatye jou (si pa gen jou nèj)
- Jen 19** Jou Juneteenth - Pa gen lekòl
- Jen 20-26** Jou ki rate akòz move tan anile

*Elèv yo pral prezan 180 jou - Pwofesè yo 186.5 jou
Dènye jou lekòl la se mwatye jou pou tout elèv yo*

Kalandriye ka chanje akòz negosyasyon yo

District Contact Information

Fitchburg Public Schools		
South Street Early Learning Center	376 South Street	978-348-2300
Crocker Elementary School	200 Bigelow Road	978-345-3290
McKay Elementary School	67 Rindge Road	978-665-3187
Reingold Elementary School	70 Reingold Avenue	978-345-3289
Arthur M Longsjo Middle School	98 Academy Street	978-343-2146
Memorial Middle School	615 Rollstone Street	978-345-3295
Fitchburg High School	140 Arn-How Road – Enrollment for GR. 9-12	978-345-3240
Goodrich Academy	111 Goodrich Street – Enrollment for GR. 9-12	978-345-3244
Central Office		
Superintendent	thompsonj@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27501
Assistant Superintendent	colong@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27503
Family & Community Engagement Coordinator	fernandezl@fitchburg.12.ma.us	978-956-3140
Enrollment Center (PK-8)	packardn@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27201
Special Education Services	berrospea@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27303
Transportation	hildrethd@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27517
Food Services	semenzad@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27431
21st Century Program	marderosianj@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27524
Mayor’s Office	718 Main Street	978-829-1801
Director of Nursing	riversp@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27506

Director of Technology	spinney@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27420
Director of English Language Arts	keefej@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27512
Director of English Language Learners	kellye@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27511
Director of Math	chandlert@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext.27525
Director of Science	stodulskij@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27513
Director of Social Studies	marderosianj@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27524
Director of Social Emotional Learning	keenanb@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27504
Director of Enrollment & Data	packardn@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27200
Director of English Language Arts	keefej@fitchburg.k12.ma.us	978-345-3200 ext. 27512
School Committee		
Mayor Samantha Squailia	Chairman	mayor@fitchburgma.gov
Mr. Peter Stephens	Vice Chairperson	stephensp@fitchburg.k12.ma.us
Dr. Martiza Knight	Committee Member	knightm@fitchburg.k12.ma.us
Mr. James Walsh	Committee Member	walshj@fitchburg.k12.ma.us
Mrs. Debra Jeffries	Committee Member	jeffriesd@fitchburg.k12.ma.us
Ms. Rosemary Reynolds	Committee Member	reynoldsr@fitchburg.k12.ma.us
Mrs. Lindsey Englund	Committee Member	englundl@fitchburg.k12.ma.us

SECTION I – DISTRICT INFORMATION

District Vision/Mission

Our Vision

Each Fitchburg Public School provides learning experiences that engage all students in achieving high academic standards while developing intellectual rigor, creative interest, and the social characteristics that prepare them for the challenges of living successfully and productively as citizens of this new century.

Our Mission

The Fitchburg Public Schools mission is to provide coordinated curricular and extracurricular experiences that inspire students to develop the academic, intellectual, creative, technological, and social skills necessary to work and to participate in our democratic society. Highly qualified educators who motivate and support students in achieving the high standards of literacy and numeracy as described in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks will staff our schools. Teachers, administrators, and parents will collaborate to ensure the effectiveness of learning experiences that are differentiated to meet a variety of student learning styles, needs, and interests. All members of the school community will focus on achieving academic excellence through curricula that promote inquiry and stimulate curiosity and the foundation for lifelong learning.

Valuing Diversity

The Fitchburg Public Schools value the cultural diversity of our students and staff. It is our belief that this diversity contributes to our creativity, enhances our productivity and increases our ability to live in a world community. We are striving to enlarge our understanding of, and our appreciation for, the many cultures represented in our student and staff population.

The atmosphere of our school plays a significant part in communicating this philosophy to our students, parents and teachers. Each member of the school community must contribute to making the school a place where every individual, regardless of race, ethnicity or cultural heritage, enjoys a sense of belonging, the feeling of being valued and treated fairly by all. Each staff or student member must help to counter those forces that set one group against another or that undermine learning and teaching. Good manners, common decency and a respect for the rules that strike a balance between personal freedoms and the common good are cornerstones to our public schools and to our society.

Therefore, we expect our students and staff to demonstrate a tolerance of individual differences and to promote an atmosphere where no one has the right to intimidate, harass or abuse another human being, physically or verbally, because of their religious, racial or ethnic heritage.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The School Committee's policy of nondiscrimination extends to students, employees, and the general public with whom it does business. The Fitchburg Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,

pregnancy or parenting status, religion, or disability in its educational and/or employment programs or activities. M.G.L. c. 76, § 5.

The Fitchburg Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs, activities, or employment policies as required by Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments. Inquiries regarding compliance with Title IX may be directed to the Fitchburg Public School's Title IX Coordinator, Glenda Colón at 376 South Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420, (978-345-3200, ext. 27502). Complaints may also be made to the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights., 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02109.

The Fitchburg Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its educational programs, activities or employment policies, as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and /or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Inquiries regarding compliance with Section 504 and/or the ADA, may be directed to the District's Section 504/ADA Coordinator, Pamela Rivers, at 376 South Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420, (978-345-3200, ext. 27506).

The Fitchburg Public Schools has adopted and implements grievance procedures to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of membership in any of the above protected classes. Those grievance procedures may be accessed through the Fitchburg Public School's website, the principal's office, and/or the office of the Superintendent of Schools.

Equal Educational Opportunity

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 76, 5, no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

Enrollment in Fitchburg Public Schools

Students up to grade 8:

Enrollment and Parent Information Center at 376 South Street.

Students entering grades 9 and above:

Fitchburg High School, 140 Arn-How Farm Road.

Goodrich Academy, 111 Goodrich Street.

Residency

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 76, 5, every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where they actually reside, subject to the following section. No school committee is required to enroll a person who does not actually reside in the town unless said enrollment is authorized by law or by the school committee. Any person who violates or assists in the violation of this provision may be required to remit full restitution to the town of the improperly-attended public schools.

Withdrawal from Fitchburg Public Schools

When withdrawing a student from Fitchburg Public Schools, the school office and your child's teacher(s) should be notified as soon as possible and at least two days in advance. A withdrawal form must be completed and accompany the student to his/her new school. In the process of withdrawing, the parent/guardian will sign a release of records, which allows school records to be forwarded to the new school. By law, school records must be sent directly from school to school.

SECTION II – SCHOOL INFORMATION

Dear South Street Early Learning Center Families,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! As the new academic year begins, we are thrilled to open our doors once again and greet each of you with excitement and anticipation.

At South Street Early Learning Center, our mission is to foster a nurturing environment where our youngest learners can explore, grow, and thrive. This year promises to be filled with joyful moments of discovery and learning, and we can't wait to see the remarkable growth your children will make while having fun along the way.

Our dedicated team of educators is eager to support each child's unique journey and to create an engaging and enriching experience for them. We look forward to partnering with you in making this year a memorable and successful one for every member of our South Street family.

Thank you for entrusting us with your children's early learning experiences. Here's to a fantastic school year ahead!

**Warmest regards,
Hannah Tumber
Principal, South Street Early Learning Center**

South Street Early Learning Center Contact Information

(978) 348-2300		
Hannah Tumber	Principal	x 22400
Jackie Navedo	Asst. Principal	x 22410
Allison Nealy	SPSA	x 22473
Laura Douglas	Early Childhood Program Admin	x 22476
Jessie Divola	SIMS/Data Clerk	x 22445
Bernese Sowerbutts	Principal Secretary	x 22444
Christine Nogueira	Adjustment Counselor	x 22497
Roxanna Kurtz	Adjustment Counselor	x 22258
Ilanit Rodriguez	Home Liaison	x 22449
School Nurse's Office	Nurses	x 22430

South Street Early Learning Center Website: <https://sites.google.com/fitchburg.k12.ma.us/southstreet>

Fitchburg Public Schools Website: <http://www.fitchburg.k12.ma.us/>

School Philosophy and/or Mission Statement

South Street Early Learning Center believes in establishing a school community that promotes high social and academic goals. Every student will show growth in all curriculum areas as they move towards proficiency and above in a caring and safe school environment.

Family and Emergency Information Forms

Please complete this form and return it to the school immediately because it is the only means of reaching you or your designated emergency contact. All telephone numbers must be current; emergency contacts must live in Fitchburg or the immediate area. Please make sure your designated emergency contact is aware that you are providing their name and number to the school, and inform them as to what they need to do.

Parents/Guardians must notify the school of any changes that occur in your family, such as changes regarding child custody, restraining orders, names, medical status, addresses, home and work phone numbers, emergency contacts, etc., so that schools have current information.

Connect-Ed Messages

Either the School District or individual schools may send automated voice messages or text messages, called "Connect-Ed Messages," to the phone numbers provided by parents/guardians. These messages will include announcements regarding attendance, special school events, calendar reminders, school activities, schedule changes, school cancellation or closures, and other important updates. Please ensure that the school office has current phone numbers at all times so that you can receive these important messages.

Cancellation of School

No School or Delayed Opening

Announcements of school cancellation or delayed openings will be made as early as possible through the telephone Connect-Ed system. Announcements will also be broadcast over the following local radio stations: WPKZ (AM 1280), WBS (AM 1030) and WXLO (FM 104.5), and televised on Channels 4, 5 and 7 and posted on the District's website (fitchburgschools.org). Please check your phone messages and tune into the radio or television or check the District's website for these announcements so that it will not be necessary to call individual schools or the school department.

Unexpected Closing Once School is in Session

In the event that school is dismissed early because of storm conditions or for reasons of an emergency nature, children will take their usual means of transportation home.

Please ensure that the school office has the current name and contact information for an emergency contact in case you are not at home at the time of any such a dismissal.

School-Home Communication

Notices

School-home communication is very important! Parents/guardians should check with their child daily to ensure they receive notices regarding events, programs, concerns, calendar changes and other pertinent information, which is regularly sent home with your child. Please respond to any such notices as promptly as possible.

Phone Calls

School office staff will be pleased to help with any problem or answer any questions concerning school in general. Please be advised that only in emergencies will messages be relayed to students or will students be permitted to use the telephone. Please refrain from texting or calling your child's cell phone during school hours.

Contacting Teachers

Parents wishing to speak with a teacher directly should leave a message with the office staff. Parents may also use email to contact teachers. Teachers will reply to messages within a reasonable period of time.

Parent/Guardian Dismissals from School

Parents are urged to schedule doctor, dentist, or other similar appointments outside of school hours or during school holidays or vacations. Parents are urged to avoid taking family trips or vacations during school time.

Students will not be dismissed without written parent/guardian authorization provided to the school in advance. The written authorization must provide the reason, time of dismissal and the name of the person authorized to pick up the student. The parent/guardian or authorized individual must report to the office to provide identification (photo ID/license) as necessary and to sign the student out.

Please Note:

If your child has a change in transportation at the end of the day parents/guardians must write a note and send it to school with your child on the morning of the day that the change is to occur. Also, the office will only accept phone calls to change transportation **before 12:00**. We will not accept any phone calls **after 12:00** to switch the way in which your child is going home.

Homework

Homework is defined as written or non-written tasks that are assigned by teachers to be completed by students outside of the classroom.

The purposes of homework are to practice newly taught skills, review previously mastered skills, develop independent study habits, or to extend and enrich the curriculum.

Homework should be related to the curriculum of the school. The information for any homework assignment should be clear and specific so that the student can complete the assignment.

Homework should not be used as a behavior management tool or as a form of punishment.

Homework should not be done by parents.

Reading assignments are to be incorporated into homework time allotments at each grade level, but voluntary reading beyond homework guidelines is encouraged. Long-term projects should be assigned with enough time to complete the work.

Homework assignments should take into consideration individual differences of students such as health, ability, conditions at home, and educational resources at home.

Homework is a learning activity which should increase in complexity with the maturity of the student. With increased maturity, learning should become an independent activity. This should be established through consistent assignments which encourage students to investigate for themselves and to work independently as well as with others.

There are appropriate responsibilities regarding homework for students, parents, teachers and principals. Each school is directed by the Superintendent to publish their homework plan and list the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers and principals in their handbook. Each school will also publish the guidelines for the appropriate time limits that children at each grade level should devote to homework each night.

School Committee Policy #5207

School Visitors

ALL BUILDING ENTRY DOORS HAVE PROCEDURES POSTED FOR VISITORS ENTERING THE BUILDING. Following entry, all visitors must report to the school office upon entering the building to sign in and receive a visitor's pass. Before leaving the building visitors must report back to the office to sign out and return the visitor's pass.

Parents/guardians and adult school visitors are always welcome, but plans should be made in advance through the Principal's office. Parents/guardians and visitors must remain in the location for which they receive authorization. Visitors should not expect to confer with teachers while classes are in session. Parents/guardians and visitors must schedule conferences in advance, at times mutually convenient for both the teacher and parent.

Field Trips

Occasional field trips are provided as part of the school's curriculum. Students taking such trips must have two permission slips signed by a parent or guardian: one that gives permission for your child to attend that specific trip, and a second that details any existing medical conditions and appropriate prescribed medications.

Background Checks for Volunteers/Chaperones

Any parent/guardian or other community member who wishes to volunteer in schools or attend a field trip as a chaperone must submit to an appropriate CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) check. Such persons must come to school at least two weeks in advance, with appropriate identification, to fill out the necessary CORI paperwork.

Parent Involvement

The Fitchburg Public Schools will support and provide opportunities for parents to participate in and become involved with their child's/children's school related activities and events. The District will consult with parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these educational programs and activities. Individual schools will develop and implement specific procedures to involve parents in supporting the academic achievement of their children. The District and schools will comply with all state and federal requirements for involvement.

PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)

The School Committee recognizes the School-Parent Associations as private, non-profit adjuncts of the School Department under its auspices.

School Council

A School Council is a representative; school building-based committee composed of the principal, teachers, parents, community members and, at the secondary level, (middle school & high school) students, as required to be established pursuant to M.G.L. c.71, s.59C.

Sped PAC (Parent Advisory Council)

The School Committee of any city, town, or school district shall establish a Parent Advisory Council on Special Education. Membership shall be offered to all parents of children with disabilities and other interested parties. The parent advisory council duties shall include, but not be limited to: advising the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities; meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school committee's special education programs. The Parent Advisory Council shall establish by-laws regarding officers and operational procedures. In the course of its duties under this section, the parent advisory council shall receive assistance from the school committee without charge, upon reasonable notice, and subject to the availability of staff and resources.

Title I

In compliance with Title I Parent Involvement requirements mandated in Section 118 (b) (1) and (c) – (f) of No Child Left Behind, all schools have developed a written Parent Engagement Policy with input from parents by presenting the policy to parents during: School Council Meetings, Parent Teacher Organization Meetings and at various programs where parent input has been requested. Additional information about all of these groups may be obtained from the main school office.

Open Houses/Parents Nights

Open House is held in September. Parents/guardians have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher and discuss the educational philosophy and plans for the school year.

SECTION III – HEALTH & SAFETY

Safety

Student Dismissal

Students will not be allowed to leave school grounds or school-sponsored activities at any time other than general dismissal except with written permission from a parent/guardian. Students will not be released except in the care of a parent/guardian or other individual authorized by a parent/guardian. Parents/guardians are responsible for advising the school where the child attends of any restraining orders or court orders which affect parental rights with respect to students.

Parental Responsibility for Students Before and After School

Each school is responsible for the safety of students during the school day; supervision on school grounds begins fifteen (15) minutes before the start of school and ends fifteen (15) minutes after dismissal. The District is responsible for bus transportation for students based on certain age and mileage restrictions. For students who walk to and from school, the District provides crossing guards and initial supervision in the areas of the school building.

Parents are responsible for students who arrive more than fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of school, who leave school grounds after dismissal, or who remain on school grounds fifteen (15) minutes after dismissal (unless the student is authorized to remain on school grounds for school-related reasons).

Reporting to the Authorities – Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

School officials or employees must report any suspected child abuse or neglect required by MGL Ch. 119, S 51A to the Department of Children and Families.

Bus Transportation and Safety - Policy 5410.03 (May 1, 2023)

Eligibility for Bus Transportation

The following table sets forth the minimum distance from school that students must reside in order to be provided with transportation by the District:

GRADE LEVEL	DISTANCE Eligible for Busing Transportation
Kindergarten	Students attending the district’s kindergarten center will be eligible for transportation
1-5	Student must reside one (1) mile or more from school
6-8	Student must reside one and one-half (1.5) miles or more from school

9-12	Student must reside two (2) miles or more from school
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The above distances will be determined by an authorized vehicle driving from the school to the student’s residence over the shortest traveled distance or electronic/technological means, including mapping software or a similar internet-based program.

Students who choose to attend a school other than their regularly assigned school (due to extenuating circumstances) will not be provided with transportation.

Transportation of students with special needs will be determined by the student’s IEP (Individual Education Plan) or Section 504 Plan. Transportation services for these students will be coordinated by the Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services and delivered in accordance with state and federal law. Exceptions to this policy will be considered for students on the basis of unusual circumstances and bus availability. Exceptions will be determined by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Written requests for exceptions due to illness or disability must be accompanied by a doctor’s note. These requests should be processed through the school nurse, who will then forward the information to the Transportation Coordinator.

Kindergarten Bus Policy - Policy 5410.05 (September 19, 2011)

All Fitchburg Public School Kindergarten afternoon bus riders must have a responsible individual present at the afternoon bus stop. Any Kindergarten student not met by a responsible individual will be transported back to the student’s respective school by the designated transportation provider. School staff will contact the parent or guardian to pick up the student at the respective school. The bus driver shall submit a Bus Incident Report to the designated transportation provider, who shall immediately submit the Bus Incident Report to the School Department’s Transportation Coordinator. A copy of the Bus Incident Report shall be sent to the student’s school.

Bus Passes

Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (“MART”) passes may be purchased at MART Inter-Modal Center. MART passes are ONLY available for transportation to Reingold Elementary School and Memorial Middle School.

Transportation for school choice students shall be the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian unless transportation services are included in the student’s IEP.

Bus Safety

The safety and welfare of student riders will be the primary consideration in all matters pertaining to transportation. Safety precautions will include the following:

- Students will be instructed on proper procedure for boarding and exiting buses and proper conduct while on board.

- Emergency evacuation drills will be conducted periodically during the school year to acquaint students with procedures in emergency situations.
- Authorized bus stops will be located at convenient intervals where students may board and leave the vehicles, cross highways, and await arrival of buses with the utmost safety allowed by road conditions.
- Students should be aware that they may be under audio and videotaped surveillance while riding on District School buses.

Cameras may be used to monitor students' behavior on buses in order to promote the safe transportation of students. Videotapes of students riding on buses may be used to foster security, promote students' safety and monitor student misconduct.

Prior notice must be given to the Superintendent before any video is reviewed. The Superintendent or designee shall review any videotape if any misconduct is alleged.

- All school rules shall be in effect at school bus stops and on school transportation vehicles.

Parents are to review general safety rules with their children to help ensure a safe environment to and from school.

Every effort will be made to ensure that transportation services operate efficiently and buses are punctual. Bus routes will be structured so that the total time a student spends on the bus on any given day is minimized.

Student Conduct and School-Related Transportation

Riding is a privilege enjoyed by passengers who are safe and courteous. This privilege can be taken away from any student who is not courteous or who violates bus or school rules. Conduct that violates school and/or bus rules will be documented on a bus incident report, which will be forwarded to the appropriate school administrator and other members of the administration as necessary. School administrators will notify parents/guardians regarding incident reports as necessary and will determine the appropriate consequences for the student's conduct.

Student riders are expected to follow all bus rules and school rules as established in the student handbooks, including the following:

1. Students waiting for the bus must do so in an orderly manner. They should stay out of the street and not approach the bus until it has come to a complete stop.
2. Students riding the bus must comply with the requests and directives of the bus drivers and other adults assigned to ensure their safety.
3. Upon entering the bus, students must immediately sit in a seat facing forward with feet on the floor. Students may not change seats. Students may be assigned seats by the bus driver or school administration and must sit only in those seats.

4. Students may not: open windows, unless permission is granted by the bus driver; throw objects in the bus or out the windows; place their hands, arms or heads out of an open window; touch any safety equipment; shout and/or use obscene language.

Bus Procedures for Parents/Guardians

Students will only be picked up and dropped off at their scheduled/assigned bus stops. Students must ride the bus to which they are assigned. Any request to ride a different bus must be provided in writing by the parent/guardian and submitted to the school office for approval.

State law requires that all vehicles come to a full stop and remain so while a school bus with flashing lights is stopped to allow passengers to get on/off the bus. This includes school grounds. DO NOT PASS A BUS WITH FLASHING LIGHTS WHEN DROPPING OFF YOUR CHILD IN THE MORNING OR PICKING UP YOUR CHILD AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY.

Student Transportation in Private Vehicles

School buses will be used for the transportation of students participating in co-curricular or extracurricular activities.

Private vehicles may be used to transport students to or from school-related activities that fall within the academic day or extend beyond the school day, provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. The transportation has the approval of the school principal.
2. The owner of the vehicle being used in transporting students must file evidence with the Superintendent of personal liability insurance coverage on the vehicle in the amounts of \$100,000 - \$300,000 or more.
3. The parents of students to be transported in this manner will be fully informed as to this means of transportation and will sign a statement to this effect.

Motor Vehicle Idling On School Grounds

No motor vehicle operator shall cause or allow any motor vehicle operated by him/her on school grounds to idle unnecessarily, except for any of the following reasons:

- traffic conditions
- lining-up at a school for the purpose of picking up or discharging students
- turbo-charged diesel engine cool-down or warm-up
- maintenance of appropriate temperature for school buses or other motor vehicles when accepting or discharging passengers not to exceed three minutes in any fifteen minute period
- for circumstances involving safety or emergencies and for servicing or repairing motor vehicles
- and as these exceptions are more completely described in the below-referenced regulation.

The term “school grounds” shall mean in, on or within 100 feet of the real property of the school whether or not it is in session, and shall include any athletic field or facility and any playground used for school purposes or functions which is owned by the school district, regardless of proximity to a school building, as well as any parking lot appurtenant to such school athletic field, facility or playground. A motor vehicle operator shall not idle a motor within 100 feet of such an air intake system, unless Fitchburg has determined that alternative locations block traffic, impair student safety or are not cost effective.

Safety for Walkers

Parents/guardians of students who are “walkers” should periodically review the following safety rules throughout the school year.

- Be sure that your child knows his/her full name, address, telephone number and what to do if lost or confused.
- Show your child the most direct and safest route to and from school. Point out landmarks and potential hazards. Instruct them to walk on the shoulder of the road facing traffic if there are no sidewalks and not to walk in the road.
- Stress the importance of going directly home after school and coming straight to school in the morning.
- Stress safeguards such as police officers, crossing guards, traffic lights, crosswalks, etc.
- Warn against speaking to strangers or accepting rides, candy, money or anything else from them.
- Be sure to work out a plan of action with your child in the event that no one is at home when he/she arrives there after school.

Emergency Procedures

Every school has security, emergency medical and crisis procedures in place. Students will be instructed in proper procedures for evacuation and other responses in the event of an emergency and will participate in periodic drills.

Security at Entrances

The only accessible entrances for personnel & visitors during the school day are the main entrances. The doors to the schools are locked. Access to the schools is at the main entrance with a buzzer entry system in place.

Evacuation

The signal to evacuate the building will be a continuous sounding of the fire alarm. An evacuation plan is posted in each classroom. Evacuation will take place under the following circumstances: fire (conducted according to state mandates for fire), bomb threat, power outage, detection of unidentified odor. Students are not permitted to re-enter the building until safety personnel have approved re-admittance.

Lockdown

Each building has lockdown procedures in place and practices lockdown drills each year.

Medical Emergency

Each building has a medical emergency response plan (see below) and a practice drill takes place each year.

Security Cameras in Schools

The Fitchburg School Committee works to maintain a safe and secure environment for its students, staff, visitors, and facilities. Security means more than having locks and making certain that doors are locked at the proper times. Security also means minimizing fire hazards, reducing the possibility of faulty equipment, keeping records and valuables in a safe place, protection against vandalism and burglary, the prosecution of vandals, and developing crisis plans.

School facilities and their contents, constitute one of the greatest investments of the community. The Fitchburg School Committee believes it to be in the best interest of students and taxpayers for the district to exert every reasonable means to protect the investment adequately.

In pursuit of this objective, the Fitchburg School Committee authorizes the use of security cameras in school district buildings and on its property to ensure the health, welfare and safety of all students, staff and visitors, to deter theft, vandalism and other negative behavior, to safeguard district buildings, grounds and equipment, and to monitor unauthorized individuals in or on school property. Security cameras may be used in locations as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with school officials as well as local law enforcement and emergency response agencies. They may be used in any area, inside or outside of school buildings where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy.

The district shall notify students and staff through student and employee handbooks and appropriate signage that security cameras have been installed and may be used at any time. Students or staff identified on security cameras in violation of School Committee policies will be subject to disciplinary action.

The Superintendent shall ensure that proper procedures are in place and are followed regarding use, viewing, disclosure, retention, disposal and security of video recordings or photographs from security cameras in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. A video recording used for security purposes in school district buildings and/or on school property shall be the sole property of the school district. All video recordings will be stored in their original format and secured to avoid tampering and to ensure confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Access to video recordings from security cameras shall be limited to school administrators (Superintendent/designee, School Principal/designee). Law enforcement and emergency response officials shall be granted access to video recordings or the security system after giving prior notice to the School Superintendent/designee. Any other requests for access to video recordings shall be directed to the School Superintendent/designee, and will be considered in light of applicable federal and state law.

The Superintendent may, from time to time, issue further guidance that is consistent with current laws and this policy.

SOURCE: MASC

Student Searches

The School Committee, in cooperation with the Fitchburg Police Department, stands firmly on their belief that Fitchburg Public Schools must be free of illegal substances. We have been entrusted with the responsibility of providing a “safe and drug free” environment for all of our students. The search procedure will assist us with this mission and send a strong message to our students that we will not tolerate illegal drugs and/or other illegal substances in our schools.

In order to maintain a safe environment in its schools, Fitchburg Public Schools reserves the right to search all school property including, but not limited to lockers assigned to students, for weapons, contraband or controlled substances, or other violations of school rules, in accordance with state and federal laws.

- Searches of school property, including lockers, may be conducted on a periodic basis and may include the use of trained K-9 units whose specific mission is illegal drug or illegal substance detection.
- The police department designee and the appropriate building administrator and Superintendent of Schools will coordinate these searches in an effort to minimize disruption and maximize the security of the search.
- Students’ personal belongings may be searched by school officials if there are reasonable grounds to believe the student is in possession of weapons, contraband or illegal substances, or in connection with other violations of school rules.
- Searches of students’ personal effects, such as coats and pockets, purses, knapsacks, and/or other bags, will be reasonable at their inception and in their scope.
- Students who drive automobiles to school and park on school property are advised that by accepting the use of school drives and parking lots, they consent to a search of the vehicle consistent with state and federal laws.

Once notification has been given to parents and students through the inclusion of the policies in the student and/or parent handbook, and on school and district websites, the district will have met its obligation to advertise the searches. Each Principal will ensure this is completed.

Regulations

- Parents will be notified by the school administration immediately after a K9 search has been conducted.
- The focus of this policy is on grades (5-8) and secondary school grades (9-12).
- The K-9 will not come in direct contact with any students.

Health

Health/Wellness and Safety Advisory Committee

The Fitchburg Public Schools has a Health/Wellness and Safety Advisory Committee in accordance with state law, which meets quarterly and includes district personnel, parents, and community members. The Committee is charged with implementation and monitoring of the District's policy, which is as follows:

The District promotes a healthy school climate in grades pre-K-12 by supporting wellness, good nutrition and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. The District supports a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. Schools contribute to the basic health status of students by facilitating learning about good nutrition and positive personal habits, as well as about lifestyle choices in physical activity. Schools also contribute to students' healthy living by collaborating with parents and the community in this endeavor. *For more information refer to the full Health/Wellness and Safety Policy #5713 – approved by SC 5/1/23*

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 32A, the Fitchburg Public Schools will ensure that in adopting, implementing or maintaining curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality issues, it will follow all requirements as noted.

Sexual health instruction offered by the Fitchburg Public Schools shall begin no later than seventh grade, be medically and scientifically accurate, age appropriate, appropriate for students regardless of gender, race, disability status, gender identity, or sexual orientation and include information about abstinence and other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The life-threatening dangers of HIV and AIDS, its transmission and its prevention shall be taught as part of the sexual health education instruction. Abstinence will not be taught to the exclusion of other instruction on contraceptives and disease prevention.

Fitchburg Public Schools recognizes that the purpose of sexual health education instruction is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop healthy attitudes concerning adolescent growth and development, body image, gender roles, sexual orientation, dating, marriage, and family. Fitchburg Public Schools therefore desires to provide a well-planned sequence of instruction on comprehensive sexual health.

The district's curriculum shall respect the rights of parents/guardians to supervise their children's education on these subjects and to impart values regarding human sexuality to their children.

Parental/Guardian Notification and Material Review & Adoption Notice

A parent/guardian who wishes to have a student excused from planned instruction in sexual health education must file a written request with the school principal or his/her designee, at

least one full week prior to the planned instruction. Fitchburg Public Schools will make the appropriate opt-out form available. Excused students shall be provided with appropriate alternative educational opportunities. A student shall not be subject to disciplinary action, academic penalty, or other sanction if the student's parent/guardian declines to permit the student to receive the instruction.

One month prior to teaching a program in sexual health education, each school will provide written notice to parents/ guardians of the planned instruction.

Parents/guardians will be provided an opportunity to review the materials to be used and provided information on excluding their child from sexual health education instruction. The opportunity for inspection of materials will be provided at a time and place convenient for parent/guardian participation such as evenings or weekends.

Definitions

Sexual Health Education shall be defined as:

1. The physiological, psychological and sociological developmental processes experienced by an individual;
2. The development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to communicate respectfully and effectively to reduce health risks and choose healthy behaviors;
3. Health care and prevention resources
4. The development of meaningful relationships and avoidance of exploitive relationships; and
5. Understanding of the influences of family, peers, community and the media throughout life on healthy sexual relationships.

Medically and scientifically accurate shall be defined as information that is verified or supported by research in compliance with scientific methods and is recognized as accurate and objective by professional organizations and agencies with expertise in the field of sexual health including but not limited to, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This policy replaces: **Human Development Education Policy #5201.02*

Life-Threatening Allergy (LTA) Policy/Response Plan

FPS will provide life-threatening allergy (LTA) awareness education and Epi-Pen training for all employees based on the Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recommendations, including but not limited to:

- the significance of LTAs and a discussion on the most common food, stinging insect, latex, and medication allergies,
- how to create a safe environment for students with LTAs,
- the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis,
- what an Epi-Pen is and how to use it, and

- Procedures for activating the Emergency Response System (ERS), (i.e., nurse and 911 Emergency Medical Services (EMS)) to deal with an actual, suspected, or potential anaphylactic reaction.

At the elementary school level during the school day, all schools will require that any parties and celebrations be food free. The use of food for curriculum instruction or special luncheons during the school day will be restricted to only those with prior approval by the principal. The use of food as a reward in any classroom will be eliminated, except as required by students in specialized programs.

Each elementary school, as reasonably appropriate, will provide a peanut aware/tree-nut aware table in the cafeteria. Reasonable efforts will be made for such tables to become “aware” of other allergens as deemed needed for an individual student through documentation from the student’s primary care physician or board-certified allergist. At the middle and high schools’ appropriate accommodations will be made as needed.

The principal or designee in each school will implement a “No Food or Utensil Sharing” practice, with particular focus at the elementary school level.

The risk involved in allowing students of elementary and middle school age to make unsupervised food choices at bake sales is recognized; therefore, no bake sales will be permitted at elementary or middle schools during the school day.

At the elementary school level, when a student’s medical need to be in an LTA-*aware* environment is clearly documented by a board-certified allergist, and clear directions from the allergist are provided, FPS will make reasonable efforts to create LTA-aware classrooms for the student. FPS reserves the right to consult with a board-certified allergist of its choice to review the recommendation to determine if it will authorize its implementation.

Each school’s Crisis Management Plan will include how to respond to an anaphylactic reaction (life-threatening allergic reaction). This plan will be reviewed annually by each building principal and will be part of all LTA-awareness training.

Each school/nurse will develop and maintain an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for any student identified with a life-threatening allergy in collaboration with the student’s parent/guardian and primary care physician or board-certified allergist.

The FPS nursing staff will maintain records of any life-threatening allergic reaction, the use of an Epi-Pen, and the call for medical assistance by calling 911. FPS will report all such LTA reactions to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), according to department regulations and protocol.

Because of the confidentiality of medical records, a student’s parent/guardian has the responsibility for notifying school bus drivers directly of any life-threatening allergies of which the bus driver should be aware.

For any event outside of the regular school day which is neither sponsored by FPS nor part of the FPS curriculum, the sponsor of such event is responsible for ensuring that appropriate provisions concerning LTA’s of participants are in place. *Refer to policy 5701.03 updated 5/1/23.*

Medication Policy

All medications must be turned in to the office, or to the school nurse. In the event that medication must be given to a student by school personnel at school, parents/guardians must sign a medication permission form which must be on file in the school nurse's office. Medication will be distributed only when accompanied by written orders by the attending physician/Primary Care Provider (PCP) and only under the following conditions:

1. The medication must be in the original prescription container, which is clearly labeled with the following:
 - a) Name of the student;
 - b) Date of the prescription (duration to be given i.e. school year);
 - c) Name of the Medication and dosage;
 - d) Name of the prescribing physician/Primary Care Provider (PCP);
 - e) Times medication is to be given

2. Medication will be distributed according to the physician's/Primary Care Provider's (PCP's) orders. Any deviations from the original order will require a new physician/Primary Care Provider's (PCP's) order.

3. All medication orders must be renewed at the beginning of each school year.

Any student, who requires emergency medication for severe allergies (bee stings, etc.), asthmatic attacks, diabetic care/reactions, etc., must provide the school with emergency kits, inhalers, etc., in the original pharmacy container. A medication permission form must be on file (renewed at the beginning of each school year) and must be accompanied with written orders/instructions from the student's physician/Primary Care Provider (PCP). Non-prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications may only be given when approved in writing by a physician/Primary Care Provider (PCP) stating the dosage and times of administration. Medication must once again be in the original container and supplied by the parent/guardian. A child requiring medication on field trips will receive the medication as designated by the school nurse according to the medication policy. If there is any other medical history or existing condition which is under doctor/Primary Care Provider (PCP) supervision, the school must be made aware of this. Please contact the school nurse for more information regarding the distribution of medication if you have specific questions.

Teachers will be informed of health problems that may affect a student's educational progress or require special health monitoring services while in school. If the parent or guardian does not want pertinent medical information shared with the teaching staff, they must notify the school nurse in writing prior to the start of school or as soon as possible after a condition has been diagnosed. *Refer to School Committee Policy - Administration of Medications/Prescription Medications #5701.01.*

Over-the- Counter Medications (OTC)

The school physician for Fitchburg Public Schools, in compliance with Massachusetts Department of Public Health Regulations (105 CMR 210.00) has authorized the district's school

nurses to administer the following over-the counter medications during the school day – for students with signed permission forms from their parent/guardian:

- IBUPROFEN (Advil, Motrin)—for headaches, body aches or menstrual cramps (elevated temperatures following School Nurse assessment – as needed)
- ACETAMINOPHEN (Tylenol)—for headaches, body aches or menstrual cramps (elevated temperatures following School Nurse assessment – as needed)
- BENADRYL—for general allergy symptoms or mild insect stings
- TUMS —for upset stomach or indigestion
- EUCERIN - cream/lotion OR Aloe Vera Gel —for mild inflammation/dryness of skin

To assure safe administration of OTC medications to students during the school day, the school nurse will:

- Assess the student’s condition, current medication profile, history of allergies and evaluate the need for medication.
- Review the signed parent permission form, which is valid for one school year.
- Call the parent/guardian to confirm, when necessary, the time of the last dose given.
- Administer the correct dosage according to the physician’s written protocols.
- Document the medication administration in the health office visit log.
- Contact parent/guardians who have requested notification following OTC medication administration during the school

Health Habits

It is important that children learn to practice good health habits early in life.

1. Eat the basic four food groups (milk and milk products or enriched soy, grains, meat, fish, proteins, fruits, and vegetables). Avoid high fat and sugar foods. Begin each day with a good breakfast.
2. Go to bed regularly at an early hour to get enough sleep. Primary grade children need from 10 to 12 hours of sleep daily.
3. Cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
4. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating, after using the toilet and after using a tissue.
5. Bathe or shower regularly.
6. Brush and floss teeth nightly and brush teeth before coming to school.
7. Have hair shampooed often enough to keep it clean.
8. Check hair periodically for nits and head lice. Contact the school nurse if your child has head lice or if you need assistance.
9. Keep your child home if he/she shows signs of illness.
10. Stay physically active.

Fitchburg Public School District and Hazel Health

Physical Health at Home

Mental Health at Home

Fitchburg Public School District's partnership with Hazel Health means your student can get high-quality telehealth care at no cost to your family. **Students can get virtual medical care or teletherapy at home on any smartphone, tablet, or computer. All Hazel Health visits are safe and confidential.**

How telehealth with Hazel Health works

Telehealth is the use of technology to provide health care virtually. All Hazel visits are virtual visits.

You only need to complete the consent form one time for each student.

Virtual medical care

Our medical providers address student health needs through virtual medical visits.

To get started, **complete consent**.

Teletherapy

Our licensed therapists help students cope with their feelings through virtual mental health sessions.

Request therapy for your child by calling Hazel Health at **800-764-2935** or submit a referral through your account by selecting "**request teletherapy**."

Care coordination

If your student needs care beyond Hazel, we can provide recommendations for ongoing care.

Requirements to get started

The first step to connect your student to care is completing our consent form. When you fill out the consent form, we will ask for the following details:

- A brief medical history of your student
- Your student's insurance information (if they're insured)
- Your contact information

[Complete consent](#)

Immunizations

Massachusetts school immunization requirements are created under authority of [105 CMR 220.000 Immunization of Students Before Admission to School](#)

Requirements apply to all students including individuals from another country attending or visiting classes or educational programs as part of an academic visitation or exchange program. Requirements apply to all students, even if over 18 years of age.

Massachusetts State Law requires all students enrolled in school to have an up-to-date Certificate of Adequate Immunization before they attend classes. This form must be obtained from the student’s personal physician’s office. Mandatory immunizations required for school attendance include:

Enrollment Requirements for Pre-K

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Massachusetts State Law-states that no child shall be admitted to school except upon presentation of a physician or clinic’s certificate stating that the child has been immunized against:

Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2024-2025

Childcare/Preschool^{1†}

Attendees <2 years should be immunized for their age according to the [ACIP Recommended Immunization Schedule](#). Requirements listed in the table below apply to all attendees ≥2 years. These requirements also apply to children in preschool classes called K0 or K1.

Hib	1-4 doses; the number of doses is determined by vaccine product and age the series begins
DTaP	4 doses
Polio	3 doses
Hepatitis B	3 doses; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	1 dose; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	1 dose; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO SCHOOL WITHOUT PROOF OF THESE REQUIREMENTS

School Nurse to determine if documented immunizations meet entry requirements

Screenings:

* Lead Screening

* Vision screening, including stereopsis

Physical Exam is required for pre-school entry, administered by a primary care provider if possible. School physicians can administer a limited exam on your child in school that will meet

state requirements, but this is not a substitute for comprehensive, ongoing medical care provided by your child's own doctor.

Required Forms:

MA School Health Record Physical Exam form

Student Health History

Certificate of Immunization

Enrollment Requirements for Kindergarten

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Massachusetts State Law-states that no child shall be admitted to school except upon presentation of a physician or clinic’s certificate stating that the child has been immunized against:

Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2024-2025

Grades Kindergarten – 6 ^{1†}

In ungraded classrooms, Kindergarten requirements apply to all students ≥5 years.

DTaP / Tdap	5 doses; 4 doses are acceptable if the fourth dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday. DT is only acceptable with a letter stating a medical contraindication to DTap.
Polio	4 doses; fourth dose must be given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose, or a fifth dose is required. 3 doses are acceptable if the third dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose.
Hepatitis B	3 doses; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	2 doses; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday and the second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	2 doses; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday and second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

* A reliable history of chickenpox includes a diagnosis of chickenpox, or interpretation of parent/guardian description of chickenpox, by a physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant or designee.

§ Address questions about enforcement with your legal counsel.

Meningococcal vaccine requirements (see Grades 7-10 and 11-12) also apply to residential students in Grades Pre-K through 8 if the school combines these grades in the same school as students in Grades 9-12.

†Medical exemptions (statement from a physician stating that a vaccine is medically contraindicated for a student) must be renewed annually at the start of the school year and religious exemptions (statement from a student, or parent/guardian if the student is <18 years of age, stating that a vaccine is against sincerely held religious beliefs) should be renewed annually at the start of the school year.

YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO SCHOOL WITHOUT PROOF OF THESE REQUIREMENTS
School Nurse to determine if documented immunizations meet entry requirements

Screenings:

- * Lead Screening
- * Vision screening, including stereopsis

Physical Exam is required for Kindergarten entry, administered by a primary care provider if possible. School physicians can administer a limited exam on your child in school that will meet state requirements, but this is not a substitute for comprehensive, ongoing medical care provided by your child's own doctor.

Required Forms:

MA School Health Record Physical Exam form

Student Health History

Certificate of Immunization

§ Address questions about enforcement with your legal counsel.

†Medical exemptions (statement from a physician stating that a vaccine is medically contraindicated for a student) must be renewed annually at the start of the school year and religious exemptions (statement from a student, or parent/guardian if the student is <18 years of age, stating that a vaccine is against sincerely held religious beliefs) should be renewed annually at the start of the school year.

Exclusion of Children with Contagious Conditions

The following are common among school children and are considered to be communicable or contagious conditions. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Regulations requires that a student be excluded from school for the following:

Head Lice/Nits – Students with live head lice/nits may not return to school until hair has been treated. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to accompany students upon return to school, following treatment. Students will be checked by the school nurse.

Chicken Pox – Students must remain out of school for at least one week from the appearance of eruptions or until all lesions are scabbed over with no new eruptions.

Conjunctivitis – Students must remain out of school until there is no discharge from the eye(s). A doctor's/PCP note must be submitted upon the student's return stating that the student has received treatment.

Impetigo – Students must remain out of school until all lesions are dry. A doctor's/PCP note must be submitted upon the student's return stating that the student has received treatment.

Strep Throat – Students must remain out of school until the student is on medication for a full 24 hours.

Scabies – Students must remain out of school for 24 hours after medication has been used.

Unidentified Rashes – Students must be evaluated by a physician/PCP.

Fever over 100 – Students must be out of school until fever free for 24 hours, without fever reducing medication.

Health Exams/Screenings

Physical exams are required for students before beginning grades PK, K, 4, 7 and 11. Ideally, this is done by the family doctor who has knowledge of the child. The exam is recorded on forms provided by the school and returned to the school nurse where it becomes part of the student's health record. With signed permission, a school physician will examine students if they are not seen by their family doctor.

Dental exams are offered in school each year for all students with a signed parent permission form.

Vision and hearing screenings are conducted annually for students K-3 for hearing, and K-5 for vision. An additional vision and hearing screening will be conducted once in middle school and once in high school. Notices of any failures are sent to the parent by the school nurse for follow-up. Results of the follow-up are to be returned to the school nurse.

Scoliosis screenings for curvature of the spine are conducted annually for students' grades 5-9 who have not provided the school nurse with the results of a physical exam including such screening within the last twelve months. Parents will be provided with notice prior to the screening and of any recommendations for follow up after the screening. Results of the follow-up are to be returned to the school nurse.

Body Mass Index (BMI) screenings are conducted for students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 who have not provided the school nurse with the results of a physical exam including such screening within the last twelve months.

Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral for Treatment in Schools (SBIRT) screenings conducted for students in grades 7 & 9 - with parent/guardian notification.

* Please contact the school nurse with questions about any of these exams or screenings.

Refer to School Committee Policy – Health Policy & Student Physicals #5701

Model Medical and Behavioral Health Emergency Response Plan

Updated June 2023

Background

State law requires each school committee and Commonwealth charter school board of trustees to adopt an emergency medical response plan, update it as needed, and submit it to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) every three years. The law, [M.G.L. c. 69, § 8A](#), was enacted in 2012. The statute was amended in 2022 to specify that emergency response plans must address behavioral health medical emergencies as well as medical emergencies and must include protocols for informing parents/guardians and reporting to DESE when schools contact police, EMTs, or other non-behavioral health personnel to respond to a behavioral health crisis. For the text of [M.G.L. c. 69, § 8A](#), as most recently amended, see Appendix 3.

The law directs DESE, in consultation with the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to develop a cost-neutral model medical emergency response plan. Consistent with the 2022 amendment, DESE has updated this model plan to address both medical and behavioral health crisis response in order to promote best practices. DESE biennially reviews and updates the model plan and posts the plan on its [website](#).

Appendix 3: Medical and Behavioral Emergency Response Plans – State Law

Mass. General Laws Chapter 69, Section 8A, as amended by C. 177, § 28, of the Acts of 2022: An Act Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health

[M.G.L. c. 69, § 8A](#):

(a) Each school committee and commonwealth charter school board of trustees shall ensure that every school under its jurisdiction has a written emergency response plan that addresses both medical and behavioral health crises to reduce the incidence of life-threatening medical emergencies and behavioral health crises and to promote efficient and appropriate responses to such emergencies. The plan shall be in addition to the multi-hazard evacuation plan required under section 363 of chapter 159 of the acts of 2000.

(b) Each plan shall include:

(1) a method for establishing a rapid communication system linking all parts of the school campus, including outdoor facilities and practice fields, to the emergency medical or mobile behavioral health crisis response services and protocols to clarify when the emergency medical services or mobile behavioral health mobile crisis response services and other emergency contact people shall be called;

(2) a determination of medical or behavioral health emergency response time to any location on the school campus;

(3) a list of relevant contacts and telephone numbers with a protocol indicating when each person shall be called, including names of professionals to help with post-emergency support;

(4) a method to efficiently direct emergency medical services or behavioral health mobile crisis personnel to any location on campus, including to the location of available rescue equipment;

(5) protocols for informing parents and guardians and reporting to the department when police, emergency medical technicians or other non-behavioral health personnel are contacted to respond to a behavioral health crisis;

(6) safety precautions to prevent injuries in classrooms and facilities;

(7) a method of providing access to training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid for teachers, athletic coaches, trainers and other school staff, which may include training high school students in cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and

(8) the location of any automated external defibrillator device the school possesses, whether its location is fixed or portable and those personnel who are trained in its use.

(c) Each plan shall be developed in consultation with the school principal, school nurse, school mental health counselor or social worker, school athletic director, team physicians, coaches, trainers and local police, fire, behavioral health mobile crisis team and emergency personnel, as appropriate. Schools shall practice the response sequence at the beginning of each school year and periodically throughout the year and evaluate and modify the plan as necessary. School officials shall review the response sequence with local fire and police officials at least 1 time each year and shall conduct periodic walk-throughs of school campuses. Plans shall be submitted once every 3 years to the department, the local police department and the local fire department on or before September 1 of the third year. Plans shall be updated in the event of new construction or physical changes to the school campus as determined by the local police or fire department.

(d) Included in each initial and subsequent filing of a medical emergency response plan, each school district shall report on the availability of automated external defibrillators in each school within the district, including, the total amount available in each school, the location of each within the school, whether or not the device is in a fixed location or is portable, those personnel or volunteers who are trained in its use, those personnel with access to the device during regular school hours and after and the total estimated amount of automated external defibrillators necessary to ensure campus-wide access during school hours, after-school activities and public events.

(e) The department, in consultation with the department of public health and the department of mental health, shall develop a cost-neutral model emergency response plan that includes both medical and behavioral health crisis response in order to promote best practices, including clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of behavioral and other health professionals, including, but not limited to, school counselors and community intervention professionals and, where applicable, school resource officers or police officers on school campuses; provided, however, that such model plan shall be designed to limit referrals to law enforcement or arrests on school property to cases in which an imminent risk to the health and safety of individuals on school property necessitates such referral or arrest. The model plan shall be made available to school committees and commonwealth charter school boards. In developing the model plan, the department shall refer to research prepared by the American Heart Association, Inc., the American Academy of Pediatrics, MassHealth and other relevant organizations that identify the essential components of an emergency response plan. The department shall biennially review and update the model plan and publicly post the model plan on its website.

Drug, Inhalant and Alcohol Use by Students

In view of the fact that the use of drugs, alcohol and inhalants can endanger the health and safety of the user, and recognizing the deleterious effect the use of alcoholic beverages, drugs or inhalants can have on the maintenance of general order and discipline, the School Committee prohibits the use or consumption of any drug or alcoholic beverage on school property or at any school function.

Additionally, any student, regardless of age, who is under the influence of drugs, alcoholic beverages, or inhalants prior to attendance at, or participation in, a school-sponsored activity,

will be barred from that activity and subject to disciplinary action. *For more information refer to Teaching & Intervention: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs Policy # 5406 – approved by SC 10/17/16*

Tobacco Use

Smoking, chewing, vaping, or other use of tobacco products by staff, students, and members of the public shall be banned from all district buildings. All forms of tobacco use shall be prohibited on all district property. In addition, tobacco use by students is banned at all school-sponsored events, even though this use does not take place on school grounds.

Sports-related Head Injuries and Concussions Policy

Sports-related head injuries and concussions can have serious consequences for students, including long term health and educational issues if they are not properly managed. Early recognition of a concussion is essential to maximize safe management.

The Fitchburg Public Schools is committed to promoting the safety and well-being of our students. As part of this commitment, we fully support the Massachusetts General Law and the Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations regarding procedures pertaining to sports-related head injuries occurring in extracurricular athletic activities. All persons specified in DPH regulations shall be required to annually participate in a mandatory prevention and recognition of sports-related head injury training program approved by DPH. Requirements for athletes and parents/guardians, as stated in DPH regulations, must be met before athletes may participate in extracurricular athletic activities.

Copies of the District's policies and procedures are available from the Athletic Director and Nursing/Health Services Director, who are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Animals in School Policy

Service Animals, Guide or Assistance Dogs, Miniature Horses

The Fitchburg School Committee does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. The District will comply with Massachusetts law and federal law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance dogs and may permit such animals on school premises and on school transportation.

For purposes of this policy, a "service animal includes any dog that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability." A service animal does not include an emotional support animal. Further stated: "a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability."

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. The animal must be required and "individually trained" to do work or to assist the individual with a disability. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- Assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as “seeing eye dogs” or “guide dogs;”
- Alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- Pull wheelchairs or carry and pick up items for individuals with mobility impairments; and
- Assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance.

Special Provisions/Miniature Horses: Requests to permit a miniature horse to accompany a student or adult with a disability will be handled on a case-by-case basis, considering:

- A. The type, size and weight of the miniature horse and whether the facility can accommodate these features;
- B. Whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse;
- C. Whether the miniature horse is housebroken;
- D. Whether the miniature horse’s presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for operation of the facility.

The District shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner or person having custody and control of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc.

The Fitchburg Public Schools is not responsible for providing a staff member to walk the service animal or to provide any other care or assistance to the animal.

Students with service animals are expected to care and supervise their animal. In the case of a young child or student with disabilities who is unable to care for or supervise his service animal, the parent/guardian is responsible for providing care and supervision of the animal. Issues related to the care and supervision of service animals will be addressed on a case-by-case basis within the discretion of the school Principal.

If, in the opinion of the school Principal or authorized designee, any service animal is not in the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school or if the animal’s presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity. The parent or guardian of the student having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from District premises immediately. Owners of service animals are liable for any harm or injury caused by the animal to students, staff, visitors, and/or property.

If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by the school Principal or designee and an alternative plan will be developed with appropriate District staff. Such a plan could include the reassignment of the person having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with

appropriate school, District, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other District facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent or guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of an assistance animal in District facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

Other Animals

No animal shall be brought to school without prior written permission of the Superintendent of Schools, and required documentation of vaccinations. All written requests must be delivered to the Superintendent of Schools at least 30 business days prior to bringing the (service) animal to school or a school function.

The Fitchburg Public School District is committed to providing a high-quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building and/or the District, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools shall be final.

Educational Program

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the Superintendent of Schools provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

Student Health

The health and well-being of students is the District's highest priority. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have his/her health impaired and each student shall have full access to available educational opportunities.

Animals Prohibited from School

Rabies is a growing problem and any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based on the Massachusetts Departments of Health and Education recommendations, the following animals are prohibited from schools within the Fitchburg Public School District.

Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals – Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores, these animals should not be permitted in school buildings under any circumstances (including dead animals).

Fur-Bearing Animals (pet dogs, * cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.) - These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and injuries.

Bats – Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

Poisonous Animals – Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

***Exception:** Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs or Law Enforcement Dogs – These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

Exceptions may be made with the prior written approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

SECTION IV - ACADEMICS

Homework/Make-up Work

1. **Teacher Responsibility:**

- To provide assignments relevant to previously taught skills.
- To provide assignments as extensions or enrichments of the curriculum.
- To give ample explanation of assigned tasks.
- To allow time in school for student's questions regarding assignments.
- To post homework daily in the classroom.
- To coordinate with grade level teachers to prevent overlapping of long-range assignments.
- To provide a timeline for long-range assignments.
- To account and arrange for assessment of student homework.

2. **Student Responsibility:**

- To bring necessary papers and books to do assignments.
- To complete work neatly and submit to the instructor when due.
- To complete provided make-up work within a given deadline.

3. **Parent Responsibility:**

- To provide a quiet study space at home.
- To provide the necessary tools, for example, paper, pencil, pen, eraser, notebook, recreational reading, books, lighting, desk or table, etc. to complete homework and to practice skills being taught at school.
- To set and supervise a daily study hour on Monday through Thursday.
- To supervise student's assignments and assist when necessary.
- To coordinate planning for long-range assignments when necessary.
- To encourage daily journal writing and recreational reading.
- To see that your child gets adequate sleep nightly.
- To proactively communicate with teachers about homework concerns and questions.

4. **Grade Level Expectations:**

PRESCHOOL: Read for 20 minutes a day

KINDERGARTEN: Read for 20 minutes a day

In addition to assigned homework, students should engage in reading and practicing their math facts each night.

Make-Up Work

If a student is absent for 3 or more days, the parent or guardian should call the school to make arrangements for any missed work that can be completed at home. The assignments can be picked up by 3:30 if the request for missed work is given before 9:00 a.m. on that day.

Students who are absent from school for any reason are responsible for making arrangements to complete any make-up work. Students will have one day beyond the number of days they

were absent to complete make-up work in order to receive credit. Should a parent choose to keep a student out of school for reasons other than illness or extenuating family circumstances, teachers will provide the normal range of assistance upon the student's return to school. However, it is the student's responsibility for identifying and making up missed work. No advance assignments will be provided to students. The school will not assume responsibility for providing individual tutoring or extensive individual help for the student when he/she returns.

Extra Help

If extra help is needed the parent/guardian should contact the classroom teacher.

Grading System

Fitchburg Public Elementary Schools use a standards-based reporting system. A standards-based reporting system is designed to inform parents about their child's progress towards meeting learning standards. The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core have established expectations for all students. They describe what students should know and be able to do, and serve as the basis for the Fitchburg Public Schools standards-based report cards (SBRCs). SBRCs tell parents which skills their children have mastered or whether they are working at grade level. SBRCs help align the consistency of expectations from teacher-to-teacher. Teachers and parents know exactly what the child has learned because teachers assess student performance against clear expectations.

Report Cards

Kindergarten – 4 report cards are given out in December, March and June. Report cards are to be signed and returned to the teacher showing that parents have seen it and are aware of student progress.

FIRST REPORT: Marks close on Dec. 6, 2024, and the report cards will be issued on Dec 20, 2024

SECOND REPORT: Marks close on Mar. 14, 2025 and the report cards will be issued Mar. 28, 2025

THIRD REPORT: Marks close on May 30, 2024 and the final report cards will be issued on June 18, 2025

Parent Conferences

Parent – teacher conferences concerning a student's academic performance and conduct are encouraged. A home-school partnership is critical to the academic and social development of your child. If a teacher, or a member of the administration, thinks a conference is in the best interest of your child, the parent or guardian will be notified. If a parent wishes to arrange a conference, the parent/guardian should call the school to arrange an appointment in advance. Parents/guardians are encouraged to make appointments with their child's teacher to share student's academic and social/emotional growth. These conferences are most valuable if they can be held before any serious problems develop.

Standardized Testing

Assessments are performed periodically throughout the school year to measure student learning and growth. Assessments that are standardized provide us with feedback that is reliable and valid. Standardized tests are administered in the areas of oral reading fluency, reading comprehension and numeracy. The results of these tests are shared with parents and guardians. Additionally, standardized assessments are administered to determine the development and growth of reading, writing, speaking and listening for our students who are learning English. MCAS is a state assessment administered to students in grades 3 and 4. This test measures the areas of reading, writing and math.

Home/Hospital Tutoring

The Fitchburg Public Schools will provide home or hospital tutoring consistent with 603 CMR 28.03(3)(c) and 28.04(4). To qualify for home/hospital tutoring, the student or his or her parent or guardian must obtain a written order from a treating physician verifying that a student enrolled in Fitchburg must remain at home or in a hospital, or any combination of both, for medical reasons and for a period of not less than 14 school days in any school year.

The Physician's Affirmation, known as Department of Elementary and Secondary Education form 28R/3, must address the following:

1. The date that the student was confined to a hospital or home;
2. The reason why the student's medical condition prevents the student from leaving his/her home to attend school;
3. The expected duration of the student's confinement to the home/hospital, including a specific return date;
4. Any medical needs of the student, which should be considered in planning the home/hospital services.

If the District receives a completed Physician's Affirmation which complies with the aforementioned criteria, the principal will arrange for tutoring services, in the home or hospital, with sufficient frequency to allow the student to continue his or her educational program, as long as the services do not interfere with the medical needs of the student. Tutoring will be offered in basic elementary and secondary subjects that do not require laboratories and/or special equipment. Tutoring services will be provided within the student's home with appropriate adult supervision. In those instances when appropriate adult supervision is not available, tutoring may be provided at an alternative location to be determined by the District. Tutoring services will not be considered special education unless the student has been determined eligible for such services and those services are included on the student's Individualized Educational Plan.

SECTION V – STUDENT LIFE

Attendance, Tardiness and Truancy

One of the keys to academic achievement is good attendance. Consistent participation in school and school-based activities is important for making a successful transition from youth to adulthood. Parents and guardians, as well as students themselves, have the legal responsibility to ensure that attendance at school is regular and timely. If a school identifies a student who is exhibiting an attendance problem, which includes tardiness, the school is required by law to address that problem. This could be as simple as notifying the parent or guardian and working together to improve that student's attendance. In extreme instances, however, it may require the school to solicit assistance from the Court or the Department of Children and Families (“DCF”).

Legal Information Regarding Truancy and Attendance

School Attendance

M.G.L. c. 76, 1 states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. A school district may excuse up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any period of six months. In addition to this law, each school may have its own attendance policy with which parents/guardians should be familiar.

Notification and Contact Information

M.G.L. c. 76, 1A states that parents/guardians must be provided each year with the instructions for calling a designated phone number at a designated time to inform the school of the absence of a student and the reason for the absence. In addition, parents/guardians must provide the school with a home, work or other emergency telephone number so that they may be contacted during the school day so the school may call and inquire about said absence.

Supervisor of Attendance

M.G.L. c. 76, 19 states that each school committee must employ a supervisor of attendance. A supervisor of attendance has the power to apprehend and take to school any child who is truant or absent, found wandering in the streets or public places, and is required to investigate all cases where a child in the district fails to attend school.

Child Requiring Assistance (“CRA”) Application

The Children in Need of Services (“CHINS”) law has been changed to Families and Children Engaged in Services (“FACES”). This modification impacts schools with regard to the filing of FACES applications. A “CRA” (Child Requiring Assistance) application may be filed in court by a school district if a school-aged child who is “habitually truant,” that is, who willfully fails to attend school for more than eight school days in a quarter, or who repeatedly fails to obey the lawful and reasonable regulations of his or her school. The Court’s authority pursuant to a CRA petition includes the power to place the child in the custody of DCF.

Mandated Reporting

A 51A is a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that is filed with the DCF. A report can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of eighteen for educational neglect if a child is not attending school on a regular basis.

Parental Responsibility

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school daily. It is a crime for a responsible parent or guardian not to cause such a child to attend school. If a child fails to attend school for seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions within any six month period, the supervisor of attendance may file a criminal complaint in court against the responsible parent/guardian.

Inducing Absences

It is a crime to induce or attempt to induce a minor to miss school, or unlawfully to employ or to harbor a minor who should be in school.

Appointments, Vacations

Parents should schedule doctor, dentist, and other appointments outside of school hours. Likewise, vacations or other family trips should be taken during school vacation times and not during school hours. Parents are advised that, as set forth above, the law requires that children attend school and also limits the number of days absent that the district can excuse.

School Procedures for Tardiness and Absence

In light of the State and Federal No Child Left Behind Regulations, all schools are expected to uphold high attendance standards. All schools are expected to maintain an average daily attendance rate of 95%. Regular attendance and on-time arrival are essential to sequential learning and necessary for satisfactory student progress. Students improve academic performance with improved attendance. It is important that students are punctual and attend school each day.

Tardiness

If a student is tardy, he/she **must** report to the office. A student who is tardy **must** bring a note to school explaining the reason why. Students who are habitually tardy may be considered truant.

Absences

When an absence is unavoidable due to illness, bereavement, or other family emergency, the **parent is expected to inform the school by phone, the day of the absence.** If parents are unable to make contact with the school, a written note must be brought to school on the first day of the student's return to school. It is the student's responsibility to make up all assignments, projects and tests missed during the absence.

Students who are habitually tardy or absent without an adequate excuse are considered truant. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education defines truancy as: "an absence that is not excused by school district policy". Under M.G.L. c.76, §2, the school district may take action with the juvenile court for any child between the ages of 6 and up to 16 who has more than seven unexcused absences within a six month period.

Student Lockers and Desks

Fitchburg Public Schools provides lockers and desks to students to store their school supplies and personal belongings. Lockers and desks remain the property of the school district and it maintains the right to search lockers and desks and conduct announced and unannounced inspections. School staff have the right to search any personal items kept inside a locker or desk. Any illegal, prohibited, or potentially dangerous items, or evidence of a crime found during a search will be confiscated, and may result in referral to the school resource officer. The school district is not responsible for the loss of property from lockers or desks.

Electronic Devices

Students may not use electronic devices during class time unless it is for educational purposes and they have express permission from the teacher. At all other times, electronic devices must be put away. Unauthorized audio/video recording is prohibited.

Improper use of electronic devices will result in disciplinary action and may result in the device being confiscated from a student. If an electronic device is confiscated, parents may be required to pick them up from the main office.

All electronic devices brought to school will be at the owner's own risk; FPS assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen student electronic devices.

Personal Appearance Policy

Students are expected to dress and groom in a manner that conforms to reasonable standards of health, safety, and cleanliness and that will not cause disruption of the educational process. The responsibility for the dress and appearance of the students will rest with individual students and parents. The administration is authorized to take action in instances where individual dress does not meet the stated requirements. This does not mean that student, faculty, or parent groups may not recommend appropriate dress for school or special occasions, such as banquets and proms. It means that students will not be prevented from attending school or a school function, or otherwise be discriminated against, so long as their dress and appearance meet the requirements set forth above.

Students are expected to meet the following standards:

Feet must be covered (shod) at all times, meaning no bare feet, no flip flops, beach or shower style sandals or slippers allowed. Clothes must be clean, in good repair, and not disruptive. Chains (wallet, belt, large neck chains, etc.) and spiked accessories (collars, belts, bracelets) are not permitted. Hats, headbands, bandanas and any other head covering are not permitted to be worn during school, (except for religious reasons) and for designated approved and authorized school activities.

Students may not wear clothing or accessories that:

- Have slogans, comments or designs that are obscene, lewd, or vulgar, or reference or promote topics of sex, pornography, drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, gang activity, weapons, violence, etc.;
- Are directed towards, imply, or depict hate speech/imagery targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, disability, national origin, or any other protected class; and/or

Clothing will be deemed inappropriate if it:

- is overly revealing (low cut or see-through tops, spaghetti straps, tube tops, tank tops for boys and girls, etc.)
- is intended to serve as an undergarment
- reveals undergarments (low slung pants); pants must be worn at the waist and be able to stay up without the use of a belt; and belts must be the correct length
- is sunglasses/shades worn in the school building without permission from the administration

Students whose dress or appearance is not suitable for school will be asked to change their dress or appearance. Other disciplinary consequences may be imposed in accordance with the applicable student handbook for repeated failure to meet these standards.

Breakfast and Lunch Program

Fitchburg Public Schools (“FPS”) is participating in the Community Eligibility Program (“CEP”) through the United States Department of Agriculture. As part of FPS’ participation in CEP, there will be no charge to all FPS students for breakfast and lunch. FPS participation in the CEP is subject to change.

All Monthly menus are posted on the Fitchburg Public Schools website under Nutrition Services Department

Menus are posted in each school cafeteria and paper copies are provided upon request. Children who prefer to bring lunch from home may do so. Milk is available to anyone for \$0.50.

Scope of Responsibility:

Parents/Guardians: There shall be no charge for a reimbursable breakfast, lunch or dinner (where available) to any student attending FPS. If a student receives a second lunch, the student shall be charged accordingly.

Guidance and Counseling Program

The role of the school counselor is an important link between parents, teachers, and students. The school counselor works to meet student needs through individual or small group meetings. The school counselor also provides social, academic and emotional support to all students.

Technology Services

Acceptable Use of Network/Technology and Internet Safety Policy

The Fitchburg Public Schools shall provide access for employees and students to the District's electronic local area network (LAN) and access to external networks including the Internet and web-based applications and systems, for educational purposes. Educational purposes shall be described as, but not limited to classroom activities, career and professional development, lesson planning, electronic communication, data collection and reporting, assessment, web-page development, on-line forums including virtual communities and social networking, on-line/hybrid courses, and high quality self-discovery activities of an educational nature. The purpose of the system/network is to assist in preparing students for success in life and work by providing access to a wide range of information and the ability to communicate with others. The system/network will be used to increase communication (staff/parents/student), enhance productivity, and assist staff in upgrading existing skills and acquiring new skills through a broader exchange of information. The system/network will also be utilized to provide information to the community including parents, governmental agencies, and businesses.

The use of the Internet and web-based systems has had a profound influence on education, including unprecedented access to resources, interactive opportunities of communication and collaboration across geographic, educational, social, age-driven and temporal barriers, and engagement in global and virtual communities. Students may adopt new technologies quickly but may not have the experience, judgment or knowledge to understand potential risks. On-line and virtual social networking applications present ever-changing ways to engage people in diverse social groupings. Parents, educators and community members must encourage students to take advantage of learning opportunities while assisting them to understand how to reduce associated risks. The Fitchburg Public Schools proactively promotes the Internet's instructional benefits integrated into the district's comprehensive instructional program while also providing orientation to and education about Internet safety.

This Acceptable Use Policy is in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The School Committee has directed the Superintendent to describe through both policy and regulation:

- Student and staff members' responsible use of the electronic system/network and Internet and web-based resources
- Information pertaining to cyber-bullying
- Appropriate confidentiality and safety procedures and expectations for supervision of students using the network/system
- Technological safety features (such as filters and other Internet safety-blocking systems) that limit students' access to inappropriate materials.

Availability

The Superintendent or designee shall implement, monitor, and evaluate the District's system/network for instructional and administrative purposes.

Access to the system/network, including Internet and web-based systems, shall be made available to employees and students for instructional and administrative purposes and in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures. Access to the system/network is a privilege, not a right. All users shall be required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of all administrative regulations and procedures governing use of the system and shall agree in

writing to comply with such regulations and procedures. Noncompliance with applicable regulations and procedures may result in suspension or termination of user privileges and other disciplinary actions consistent with the policies of the Fitchburg Public Schools, student or employee handbooks, staff members' contracts or law, up to and including suspension from school (for students), termination of employment and/or prosecution.

Acceptable Use

The Superintendent or Designee shall develop and implement administrative regulations, procedures and user agreements consistent with the purposes and mission of the FPS as well as with law, policy governing copyright, CIPA, and MGL.

Monitored Use

Electronic mail (e-mail) transmissions and other use of electronic resources by students or staff members shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure safe and appropriate use for instructional and administrative purposes. The system/network shall utilize appropriate network security and filtering measures so as to remain CIPA compliant.

Liability

The FPS shall not be liable for users' inappropriate use of electronic resources or media or violations of copyright restrictions, users' mistakes, users' negligence, or costs incurred by users. The FPS shall not be responsible for ensuring the accuracy or usability of any information found on external networks, the Internet or other web-based resources.

Student Google Accounts

The Fitchburg Public Schools uses student Google Apps for Education accounts. These accounts give students access to valuable educational tools. The suite of Google Apps for Education includes:

- Docs, which allows students to work collaboratively with teachers and other students on assignments
- Drive, which allows students to save work and access it from any computer or device with an internet connection
- Gmail: which allows students to communicate with teachers to ask questions and receive feedback

In addition, Google accounts will be used to access online tools such as Khan Academy, a self-paced learning tool that provides feedback to both the student and their teachers as to their academic progress.

These accounts will be hosted by the school district and will remain under the control of the district. District officials will be able to monitor and access data on these accounts in the event that there is concern about their use. The use of these accounts is subject to the Acceptable Use Policy as put forth in this Student Handbook. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your child's school.

In order to benefit fully in classroom activities, it is crucial that all students have access to these tools. Please return the permission form (in the form section) so that we can establish a Google account (at no cost) to be used by your child.

Interscholastic/ Intramural Sports

Every year the city of Fitchburg hosts an intramural city-wide relay race. South Street boys and girls in grade 4 undertake the challenge of racing against elementary-aged students from the other elementary schools. This event takes place at Crocker Field during the last week in May.

School Council

A School Council is a representative; school building-based committee composed of the principal, teachers, parents, community members and, at the secondary level, (middle school & high school) students, required to be established pursuant to M.G.L. c.71, s.59C.

SECTION VI – STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Student Records

Access to Student Records

Under Massachusetts law, a parent of any student, or a student who has entered ninth grade or who is at least 14 years old, has the right, upon request, to inspect the student's record. The parent or eligible student should have access to the student record no later than ten days after the request, and may ask to have the record interpreted by a qualified professional or amended by the principal. Electronic communications relative to an individual student that are not printed and placed in the student's record or deliberately saved to an electronic file with the student's name or other personal identifier are not maintained by the district and are not student records.

Non-custodial Parents Right of Access to Student Records

In order to obtain access, the non-custodial parent must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal. Upon receipt of the request the school must immediately notify the custodial parent by certified and first class mail, in English and the primary language of the custodial parent, that it will provide the non-custodial parent with access after 21 days, unless the custodial parent provides the principal with documentation that the non-custodial parent is not eligible to obtain access as set forth in 603 CMR 23.07 (5)(a). The school must delete all electronic and postal address and telephone number information relating to either work or home locations of the custodial parent from student records provided to non-custodial parents. In addition, such records must be marked to indicate that they shall not be used to enroll the student in another school. Upon receipt of a court order that prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to G.L. c. 71, §34H, the school shall notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

Release of Information to Military Recruiters, Prospective Employers, Colleges and Universities

A provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a federal law, requires secondary schools, upon receipt of a request, to release the names, addresses and telephone numbers of students attending the high school to United States military recruiters, colleges, universities and other educational institutions and prospective employers. Secondary school students and their parents/guardians have the option of requesting that secondary schools not release their basic information when such requests are received. If, however, secondary school students and/or their parents/guardians do not take this affirmative step to block the release of the information, the law requires that the contact information be released when a request is received. If you do not want this information released without your consent, you must notify the principal of your school in writing by September 15 of each school year or within 10 days of enrollment.

Notification of Rights under FERPA

Under federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the School principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend a record should write to the School principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Committee; a person or company with whom the School has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the School also discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. (FERPA requires a school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.)

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Notice for Directory Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that the District, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, the District may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the District to the contrary in accordance with District procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the District to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.
- School Photos

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings and publish yearbooks, yearly school companies. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information -names, addresses and telephone listings - unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.¹

If you do not want the District to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the District in writing by September 15th or within 10 days of enrollment. Fitchburg Public Schools has designated the following information as directory information:

• Student's name	• Address	• Telephone listing
• Email address	• Photograph	• Grade level
• Homeroom	• Dates of attendance	• Major field of study
• Date and Place of birth	• Degrees, honors and awards received	• Weight and height of members of athletic teams
• Participation in officially recognized	• The most recent educational agency or	• Student ID number, user ID, or other

¹ These Laws are: Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).

activities and sports	institution attended	unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems that cannot be used to access education records without a PIN, password, etc. (A student's SSN, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)
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If you do not want this information released without your consent, you must notify the principal or your school in writing by September 15 of each school year or within 10 days of enrollment.

Notification of Rights under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The PPRA affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas (“protected information survey”) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education –

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
- Sex behavior or attitudes;
- Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
- Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of –

- Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
- Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Inspect, upon request and before administration or use –

- Protected information surveys of students;
- Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
- Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

The District will develop and adopt policies, in consultation with parents, regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. The District will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. The District will also directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation in the specific activity or survey. The District will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys. Following is a list of the specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution.
- Administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by ED.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents who believe their rights under the PPRA have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

These Laws are: Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).

Student Complaints and Grievances - Policy 5402.01 (August 19, 2014)

The School Committee recognizes that there may be conditions in the school system that are in need of improvement and that students should have some means by which their concerns may be effectively expressed, considered, and dealt with fairly. Such means, if well-conceived and understood in advance, can do much to maintain harmonious relationships among the schools and the students and community.

The traditional "open door" policy in the public school system will be continued. Students--and their parents and/or guardians--who believe that a student has received unfair treatment may bring forward their grievance. Appeals of individual disciplinary cases will be required to follow the district's policy on student discipline. Any applicable provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws or federal law will be followed by school officials in conducting hearings and reviews of student grievances. In general, procedures will begin with the authority imposing the penalty (for example, Principal or teacher) and may ultimately be referred to the Superintendent and on to the School Committee if a policy needs to be approved or changed.

Every attempt will be made to seek a satisfactory solution to any legitimate grievance in a friendly and informal manner.

SOURCE: MASC

CROSS REF: JIC Student Discipline

Special Education Services

The Fitchburg Public Schools will provide special education programs and services to every eligible student with one or more disabilities who qualifies for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and the Massachusetts Special Education Laws (M.G.L. 71B). In accordance with state requirements, the District will provide specially designed instruction and/or related services to all children with such disabilities from the ages of three (3) through twenty-one (21), meaning up until an individual's 22nd birthday, who have not attained a high school diploma or its equivalent.

In the event of a question, disagreement concerning diagnosis, individualized education plans (IEP), or placement, the parents/guardians will be accorded the right of due process by the District. Please contact your child's teacher, guidance counselor or Principal.

Students with Disabilities Requiring 504 Plans

It is the practice of the Fitchburg Public Schools to provide reasonable accommodations to known physical and mental impairment of students. Requests for Section 504 accommodations for students can be made directly to the principal or 504 Coordinator at the student's school. A copy of the District's 504 Handbook is available in your school's office. It includes procedures, safeguards and complaint procedures. Please contact your Principal to review a copy.

Section 504 protects qualified individuals with disabilities. Under this law, individuals with disabilities are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. People who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning.

Section 504 requires an evaluation process and written accommodation plan subject to proper notice requirements describing placement and services. Decisions must be based on information drawn from a variety of sources and all information must be documented, and must be made by a group of persons knowledgeable about the child, about the meaning of the

evaluation data, and about the placement/service options. A student who is eligible under Section 504 would also have a periodic review of his/her plan.

Additionally, school districts are responsible for providing programs and activities that are accessible to students with disabilities, and must ensure that students with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to participate in all aspects of school on an equal basis with students without disabilities.

English Language Learners

The School District will identify students whose dominant language may not be English through home language surveys that identify a primary home language other than English, observations, intake assessments, and recommendations of parents/guardians, teachers and other persons. Identified students will be assessed annually to determine their level of proficiency in the English language.

In accordance with Federal law, State law, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations and guidance, the Fitchburg Public Schools will provide an instructional program for all identified English language learners (ELL) in grades kindergarten through 12 that is designed specifically to assist them in learning English and in learning subject matter content.

Married and/or Pregnant Students

Pregnant students will be encouraged to continue to attend school. Every effort will be made to see that the educational program of the student is disrupted as little as possible, that return to school after delivery is encouraged, and that every opportunity to complete high school is provided. In accordance with Federal law and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations and guidance, a student who is pregnant in the Fitchburg Public Schools is permitted to remain in regular classes and participate in extracurricular activities throughout her pregnancy. After giving birth, a student is permitted to return to the academic program in which she was enrolled and is permitted to participate in extracurricular programs. The District does not require that a pregnant student obtain certification from a physician that she is physically and emotionally able to continue in school unless certification is required for all students with other physical or emotional conditions requiring the attention of a physician. Students and Staff are also entitled to protections under Title IX as it relates to pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, and should consult with the Title IX Coordinator as to those protections.

McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Act (Homeless Students)

The Fitchburg Public Schools complies with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and intends that homeless children have equal access to all educational programs and services offered by the District. To the extent practical and as required by law, the District will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services.

The Superintendent, with the approval of the School Committee, will develop protocols ensuring that enrollment and transportation are provided to homeless students in a manner required by law. The Superintendent will also designate an appropriate staff person to be the District's liaison for homeless students and their families. A parent/guardian or representative of a student who has a question regarding the enrollment or transportation of a homeless student may request a meeting with the liaison. If the issues are not resolved at this level, a meeting with the Superintendent may be requested.

Definition of Homelessness: Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds, due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth, a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Homeless students and their families have the following rights:

- To attend school no matter where they live. They must be given access to public education and pre-school as provided to all other children.
- To remain in their original or last school even if they move to another school district. Homeless students have the right to stay in the school they attended prior to their loss of housing, or to remain in the school they were last enrolled in, (school of origin) unless the parent or unaccompanied youth chooses otherwise.
- To get transportation to their original school. School districts must arrange transportation for students in homeless situations so that students can stay at their school of origin, even if students move to a different town/city or school district. Call Fitchburg Public Schools Transportation Department, 978-345-3200, ext. 312.
- To immediately enroll in a new school. Homeless students who move and need to enroll in a new school where they reside while homeless may do so immediately, without proof of residency, immunizations, school records or other papers.
- To automatically receive free breakfast and lunch. Based on verification, Food Services must provide these meals.
- To receive Title I services.
- To receive all available educational and supplemental services that all other children are receiving.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the District's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The District's liaison will

carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

The Fitchburg School Committee is committed to the regulations set forth by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as it applies to the use of physical restraint on students at publicly funded elementary and secondary schools. This policy and regulations applies to all students including regular education students, and students with disabilities.

Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support Policy and Procedures

*(Based on 603 C.M.R. 46.00, effective January 1, 2016, and
DESE Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2016-1, July 31, 2015)*

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I. OVERVIEW

The Fitchburg Public Schools (“the District”) seeks to ensure that every student is free from the use of physical restraint that is inconsistent with the requirements of 603 C.M.R. 46.00. Physical restraint is an emergency measure of last resort. It may be administered only when necessary to protect a student and/or school community member from assault or imminent, serious physical harm. When, based on this standard, physical restraint is necessary, staff will strive to prevent or minimize any harm to the

student as a result of the use of physical restraint. The District will annually review its Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support Policy and Procedures, provide it to all District staff, and make it available to parents of enrolled students.

II. DEFINITIONS

Mechanical Restraint: the use of any device or equipment to restrict a student's freedom of movement. The term does not include devices implemented by trained school personnel, or utilized by a student that have been prescribed by an appropriate medical or related services professional, and are used for the specific and approved positioning or protective purposes for which such devices were designed. Examples of such devices include: adaptive devices or mechanical supports used to achieve proper body position, balance, or alignment to allow greater freedom of mobility than would be possible without the use of such devices or mechanical supports; vehicle safety restraints when used as intended during the transport of a student in a moving vehicle; restraints for medical immobilization; or orthopedically prescribed devices that permit a student to participate in activities without risk of harm.

Medication Restraint: the administration of medication for the purpose of temporarily controlling behavior. Medication prescribed by a licensed physician and authorized by the parent for administration in the school setting is not medication restraint.

Physical Escort: a temporary touching or holding, without the use of force, of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is agitated to walk to a safe location.

Physical Restraint: direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts a student's freedom of movement. Physical restraint does not include: brief physical contact to promote student safety, providing physical guidance or prompting when teaching a skill, redirecting attention, providing comfort, or a physical escort.

Principal: instructional leader of a public school education program or his or her designee.

Prone Restraint: a physical restraint in which a student is placed face down on the floor or another surface, and physical pressure is applied to the student's body to keep the student in the face-down position.

Seclusion: involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving. Seclusion does not include a time-out as defined below.

Time-Out: a behavioral support strategy, developed pursuant to 603 CMR 46.04(1), in which a student temporarily separates from the learning activity or the classroom, either by choice or by direction from staff, for the purpose of calming. During time-out, a student must be continuously observed by a staff member. Staff shall be with the student or immediately available to the student at all times. The space used for time-out must be clean, safe, sanitary, and appropriate for the purpose of calming. Time-out shall cease as soon as the student has calmed.

DESE's *Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2016-1*, issued on July 31, 2015, provides the following additional definitions pertaining to time-out:

Inclusionary time-out: when the student is removed from positive reinforcement or full participation in classroom activities while remaining in the classroom.

Exclusionary time-out: the separation of the student from the rest of the class either through complete visual separation or from actual physical separation.

III. PROHIBITIONS

Mechanical restraint, medication restraint and seclusion are prohibited in all public school education programs.

IV. SPECIFIC RIGHTS

Neither 603 C.M.R. 46.00 nor this policy prohibits: (1) any teacher, employee or agent of the District from using reasonable force to protect students, others or themselves from imminent, serious, physical harm; (2) any individual from reporting to appropriate authorities a crime committed by a student or other individual; (3) law enforcement, judicial authorities or school security personnel from exercising their responsibilities, including the physical detainment of a student or person alleged to have committed a crime or posing a security risk; or (4) an individual from reporting neglect or abuse to the appropriate state agency, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 119 § 51A.

V. DESE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON USE OF TIME-OUT

DESE's *Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2016-1*, issued on July 31, 2015, explains the differences between "inclusionary time-out" and "exclusionary time-out" as follows:

"Inclusionary time-out": when the student is removed from positive reinforcement or full participation in classroom activities while remaining in the classroom.

The use of "inclusionary time-out" functions well as a behavior support strategy while allowing the student to remain fully aware of the learning activities of the classroom. "Inclusionary time-out" includes practices used by teachers as part of their classroom behavior support tools, such as "planned ignoring," asking students to put their heads down, or placing a student in a different location within the classroom. These strategies, used to reduce external stimuli in the student's environment while keeping the student physically present and involved in learning, have proven to be useful tools for classroom management.

If the student is not "separated from the learning activity" or the classroom, the student will be in "inclusionary time-out" and the requirements that accompany the use of "exclusionary time-out," listed below, do not apply. A student is not "separated from the learning activity" if the student is physically present in the classroom and remains fully aware of the learning activities.

"Inclusionary time-out" does not include walled off "time-out" rooms located within the classroom; use of those is considered to be "exclusionary time-out."

“Exclusionary time-out”: the separation of the student from the rest of the class either through complete visual separation or from actual physical separation.

The following requirements apply to the use of “exclusionary time-out”:

- “Exclusionary time-out” may be used only for the purpose of calming;
- During “exclusionary time-out,” the student must be continuously observed by a staff member;
- The staff member will either be with the student or immediately available to the student at all times;
- The space used for “exclusionary time-out” must be clean, safe, sanitary and appropriate for calming;
- *Unless it poses a safety risk, a staff member must be physically present with the student who is in an exclusionary time-out setting;*
- If it is not safe for the staff member to be present with the student, the student may be left in the time-out setting with the door closed. However, in order to ensure that the student is receiving appropriate support, a school counselor or other behavioral support professional must be immediately available outside of the time-out setting where the individual can continuously observe and communicate with the student as appropriate to determine when the student has calmed;
- *Students must never be locked in a room;*
- For students displaying self-injurious behavior, a staff member must be physically present in the same setting with the student;
- An “exclusionary time-out” must be terminated as soon as the student has calmed; and
- An “exclusionary time-out” may not extend beyond thirty (30) minutes without the approval of the Principal. A Principal may grant an extension beyond thirty (30) minutes based only on the individual student’s continuing agitation.

VI. REQUIREMENTS FOR USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Legal Standard for Use

Physical restraint is considered an emergency procedure of last resort. This means that it may be used only when the student’s behavior poses a threat of assault or imminent, serious, physical harm to self

and/or others; *and* the student is not responsive to verbal directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances.

Physical restraint may never be used for punishment. Physical restraint may not be used as a response to a student's property damage, disruption of school order, refusal to comply with rules/directions, or verbal threats, unless the above harm standard is also met.

Brief physical contact to promote safety is not considered a restraint. DESE's *Question and Answer Guide to Implementation of 603 CMR 46.00, The Regulations for the Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if Used*, issued on July 31, 2015, states that "brief physical contact to promote safety refers to measures taken by school personnel consisting of physical contact with a student for a short period of time solely to prevent imminent harm to a student, for example, physically redirecting a student about to wander on to a busy road, grabbing a student who is about to fall, or breaking up a fight between students."

Physical restraint may not be used as a standard response for any student. No IEP or written behavioral plan may include physical restraint as a standard response to any behavior.

Safety

To ensure student safety, staff will review and consider a student's medical and psychological limitations, known or suspected trauma history, and/or behavior intervention plans. Physical restraint will not be used when it is medically contraindicated for reasons including, but not limited to, communication-related disorders, asthma, seizures, cardiac condition, obesity, bronchitis, or risk of vomiting.

During a physical restraint, staff will continuously monitor the student's physical status, including skin temperature, color and respiration, and make certain that the student is able to breathe and to speak. Staff will use the safest physical restraint method available and appropriate for the situation, and will use only the amount of force necessary to protect the student or others from physical injury or harm. Whenever possible, another adult who is not a participant in the restraint will witness the administration of the restraint.

Duration

A physical restraint must be terminated as soon as the student is no longer an immediate danger to himself or others, or the student demonstrates or expresses significant physical distress (e.g., difficulty breathing, sustained or prolonged crying, sustained or prolonged coughing). If a student demonstrates or expresses significant physical distress, staff will release the restraint and seek medical assistance immediately. For any student to be restrained for more than twenty (20) minutes, staff must obtain the Principal's approval. This approval must be based on the student's continued agitation justifying the need for continued restraint.

Follow-up

Follow-up procedures will be implemented after the release of the student from physical restraint. These will include reviewing the incident with the student to address the precipitating behavior, reviewing the incident with staff who administered the restraint to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed, and considering whether any follow-up is appropriate for students who witnessed the incident.

Prone and Floor Restraints

Prone restraints are prohibited, except on an individual basis and when all of the following conditions, which require specific documentation, are met: (1) the student has a documented history of repeatedly causing serious self-injuries and/or injuries to other students or staff; (2) all other forms of physical restraint have failed to ensure the safety of the student and/or others; (3) there are no medical contraindications, as documented by a licensed physician; (4) there is psychological or behavioral justification for the use of prone restraint and no psychological or behavioral contraindications, as documented by a licensed mental health professional; (5) the program has obtained consent to use prone restraint in an emergency as set out in 603 CMR 46.03(1)(b), and the use of prone restraint is approved in writing by the Principal; and (6) the program has documented all of the above before using prone restraint and maintains the documentation. The only staff authorized to administer a prone restraint are staff who have received in-depth restraint training in accordance with 603 C.M.R. 46.04(3).

Floor restraints are prohibited unless the staff administering the restraint have received in-depth training in accordance with 603 C.M.R. 46.04(3), and these trained staff members determine that such method of restraint is required to provide safety for the student or others present.

VII. REPORTING PHYSICAL RESTRAINT USE

All physical restraints, regardless of duration, will be reported.

Reporting within School and to Parents

The reporting process within the school and to the student's parents is as follows: The staff will verbally inform the Principal as soon as possible, and the Principal will make reasonable efforts to verbally inform the student's parents within 24 hours of the restraint. The staff will file a detailed written report no later than the next school working day, and the Principal will e-mail or mail the written report to the parents within three (3) school working days of the restraint. There are no individual waivers permitted for these reporting requirements.

Report Contents

The report will include: name of student, names and job titles of those involved, including observers; date and time the restraint began and ended; the name of the Principal or designee who was verbally informed; the name of the Principal or designee who approved extending the restraint beyond twenty (20) minutes, when such approval was obtained; a description of the activity in which the restrained student and other students and staff in the same room or vicinity were engaged immediately preceding the use of physical restraint; the behavior that prompted the restraint; the efforts staff used to prevent escalation of the student's behavior, including the specific de-escalation strategies that the staff used;

the alternatives to restraint that staff attempted; the justification for initiating the restraint; a description of the administration of the restraint including the holds used and why they were necessary; a description of the student's behavior and reactions during the restraint; how the restraint ended; documentation of injury to the student and / or staff, if any during the restraint; and any medical care provided. Additionally, information regarding any further actions the school has taken or may take, including any consequences that may be imposed on the student; and information regarding opportunities for the student's parents to discuss with school officials the administration of the restraint, any consequences that may be imposed on the student, and any other related matter.

Reporting to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The reporting process to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is as follows: The District will report to DESE all restraints that resulted in any injury to either a student or a staff member within three (3) school working days of the restraint. The District will also send to DESE a copy of the record of physical restraints maintained by the Principal pursuant to 603 CMR 46.06(2) for the 30-day period prior to the date of the reported restraint. Additionally, the District will provide DESE with an annual report of its physical restraint use.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT USE

Two types of administrative reviews will be conducted in regards to the use of physical restraint. The Principal will conduct a Weekly Individual Student Review and a Monthly School-Wide Review.

Weekly Individual Student Review

A Weekly Individual Student Review will be conducted in regards to any student who has been restrained multiple times during the week. The Principal will convene one or more review teams as the Principal deems appropriate to assess the progress and needs of any such student, with the goal of reducing or eliminating future restraint. This team will review and discuss the written restraint reports and any comments provided by the student and parent about such reports and the use of the restraints, analyze the circumstances that led to the restraint, including factors such as time of day, day of the week, antecedent events, and individuals involved; consider the factors that may have contributed to the escalation of the student's behavior; consideration of alternatives to restraint, including de-escalation techniques and possible interventions, and such other strategies and decisions as appropriate, and develop a written action plan.

Monthly School-Wide Review

A Monthly School-Wide Review will also be conducted by the Principal. In this review, the Principal will consider patterns of use of restraints by similarities in the time of day, day of the week, or individuals involved; number of restraints, duration of restraints school-wide and for individual students; and the number and type of injuries, if any, caused by restraints. The Principal will assess whether it is necessary or appropriate for the restraint prevention and management policy to be modified and/or whether there is a need for additional staff training on restraint reduction and restraint prevention strategies, such as

training on positive behavioral interventions and supports, or take such further action as necessary or appropriate to reduce or eliminate restraints.

IX. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

General Training

The Principal or their designee will ensure that all staff receive training on the District's Restraint Prevention and Behavior Support Policy and Procedures and the requirements for the use of restraint. This training will comply with the requirements of 603 C.M.R. 46.04(2).

In-Depth Training

The Principal will identify and authorize certain staff to serve as a school-wide resource to assist in ensuring the proper administration of physical restraint. These identified staff will participate in an in-depth training that complies with the requirements of 603 C.M.R. 46.04(3) and 603 C.M.R. 46.04(4).

X. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

The Superintendent or his/her designee will develop procedures identifying:

- Appropriate responses to student behavior that may require immediate intervention
- Training and methods for preventing student violence, self-injurious behavior, and suicide including individual crisis planning and de-escalation of potentially dangerous behaviors occurring among groups of students or with an individual student.
- Descriptions and explanations of alternatives to physical restraint as well as the school's method of physical restraint for use in emergency situations.
- Methods to engage parents in discussions about restraint prevention and the use of restraint solely as an emergency procedure.
- A statement prohibiting: medication restraint, mechanical restraint, prone restraint unless permitted by 603 CMR 46.03(1)(b), seclusion, and the use of physical restraint in a manner inconsistent with 603 CMR 46.00
- A description of the program's training requirements, reporting requirements, and follow-up procedures.
- A procedure for receiving and investigating complaints regarding restraint practices.
- A procedure for conducting periodic review of data and documentation regarding the use of physical restraints as described in 603 CMR 46.06(5) and (6).
- A procedure for implementing the reporting requirements as described in 603 CMR 46.06.

- A procedure for making reasonable efforts to orally notify a parent of the use of restraint on a student within 24 hours of the restraint, and for sending written notification to the parent within three school working days following the use of restraint to an email address provided by the parent for the purpose of communicating about the student, or by regular mail to the parent postmarked within three school working days of the restraint; and
- If the District uses time-out as a behavioral support strategy, a procedure for the use of time-out that includes a process for obtaining Principal approval for time out exceeding 30 minutes based on the individual student's continuing agitation.

Restraint Complaint Procedure

Any individual who wishes to file a complaint regarding physical restraint practices, should immediately report their concern promptly to the school principal or designee. If the school principal receives the report, he or she will notify the Superintendent or his/her designee of the complaint. The Superintendent or his/her designee will promptly investigate the complaint and provide the complainant notification of the outcome of the complaint within a reasonable time period of receipt of the complaint.

Legal Authority:

603 C.M.R. § 46.00

DESE Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2016-1, July 31, 2015

Effective 1/1/16

Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment and Grievance Procedures

The Fitchburg Public Schools (the "District") is committed to maintaining and promoting an educational environment free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. Discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, genetic information or testing, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability (hereinafter "membership in a protected class") will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any student or other individual who has complained of discrimination, including harassment, or individuals, who have cooperated with an investigation of such a complaint, is also unlawful and will not be tolerated. The District will promptly investigate, remedy any harm, seek to prevent recurrence of such conduct, and will also develop procedures to accomplish this end.

This policy applies to conduct directed toward students by all other persons associated with the educational community including, but not limited to, students, District employees, School Committee members, school volunteers, vendors and independent contractors.

I. What Is Discrimination, including Harassment?

A. Discrimination: Treating persons differently, or interfering with or preventing them from enjoying the advantages or privileges afforded to others because of their membership in a protected class.

B. Harassment: Oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct relating to a person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit that person's ability to participate in the District's programs or activities by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment.

Harassing conduct based on protected status may include, but is not limited to:

- Degrading, demeaning, insulting, or abusive verbal or written statements;
- Taking personal belongings, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors;
- Drawing or writing graffiti, slogans, visual displays, or symbols on school or another's property;
- Telling degrading or offensive jokes;
- Unwanted physical contact of any kind;
- Physical violence, threats of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or stalking;
- Threatening letters, emails, instant messages, or postings to websites that come within the scope of the District's disciplinary authority;
- Defacing, damaging, or destroying school or another's property.

II. Sample Conduct Which May Constitute Specific Types of Harassment

The following is not intended as an all-inclusive list of conduct that may violate this policy.

Disability Harassment: Unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a person based on his/her disability or perceived disability, including damaging or interfering with use of necessary equipment, imitating manner of movement, using disability-related slurs, or invading personal space to intimidate.

National Origin Harassment: Unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a person based on his/her national origin, ancestry, or ethnic background such as negative comments about surnames, customs, language, accents, immigration status or manner of speaking.

Racial Harassment: Unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a person based on his/her race or color, including racial slurs or insults based on characteristics of a person's race or color, racial graffiti or symbols, hostile acts based on race, nicknames based on racial stereotypes, negative comments about appearance, imitating mannerisms, taunting, or invading personal space to intimidate.

Religious Harassment: Unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a person based on his/her religion, including derogatory comments about religious beliefs, traditions, practices (includes non-belief), or religious clothing.

Sexual Orientation Harassment: Unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct, directed at a person based on his/her actual or perceived sexual orientation, such as anti-gay slurs or insults, imitating mannerisms, taunting, or invading personal space to intimidate.

Sexual Harassment: Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when a person in a supervisory position explicitly or implicitly conditions participation in a program or activity or bases a decision concerning another on the other person's submission to unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, whether or not the other person submits to the conduct. Quid pro quo sexual harassment, occurs, for example when a school employee causes a student to believe s(he) must submit to sexual advances to receive a better grade than deserved, or is threatened with a loss of a promised college application recommendation unless the student dates the employee.

Hostile environment sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature by a student, a school employee, or third party on school property or at a school related activities is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the District's programs or activities by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment. A victim may also be someone affected by conduct directed toward another individual.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal forms of sexual harassment, including repeated unwanted requests for dates, sexual rumors, sexually explicit jokes, howling, whistles, catcalls, soliciting conversation regarding sexual activity and experiences, making unwanted gender-based references to a person's physical characteristics;
- Written forms of sexual harassment, including offensive gestures following or stalking another, cornering or blocking a person, leering, pressuring for sexual activities;
- Nonverbal forms of sexual harassment, including offensive gestures, following or stalking another, concerning or blocking a person, leering, pressuring for sexual activities;
- Visual forms of sexual harassment, including displaying sexually suggestive or sexually provocative photographs, pictures, objects, cartoons, or posters; or
- Unwelcome physical touching, including grabbing, groping, squeezing, sexual fondling, kissing, brushing against another's body, body hugs, and other unwelcome contact.

Hate Crime: A hate crime is a crime motivated by hatred or bias or where the victim is targeted or selected for the crime at least in part because the person is a different race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation from the perpetrator or because the targeted person has a disability. A hate crime may involve a physical attack, threat of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or damage to another's property.

Indicators that a crime may constitute a hate crime include:

- Use of racial, ethnicity, religion or anti-gay slurs;
- Use of symbols of hate, such as a swastika or burning cross;

- Similar behavior toward others who are members of the same protected class;
- The perpetrator's protected class is different from the victim's;
- The incident occurs while the victim was promoting a racial, religious, ethnic/national origin, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation group, such as attending an advocacy group meeting, or participating in a students' gay-straight alliance, or a disability rights demonstration.

III. Responsibilities of all Persons Associated with Educational Community

Each member of the educational community is personally responsible for ensuring that his/her conduct does not in any way harass or discriminate against any other person that he/she has contact with in the performance of his/her duties or studies or while acting as a member of the school community. In addition, to the extent permitted by federal and/or state law, each member of the educational community is required to fully cooperate in any investigation of alleged discrimination, including harassment. Further, District employees are obligated to intervene and stop any discrimination, including harassment they witness and to immediately report to the appropriate party instances of discrimination, including harassment that are reported to them or of which they otherwise learn.

The District is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination and hate crimes. The District will not tolerate unlawful or disruptive behaviors at school or school-related events. The District will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes and will take prompt, effective action to end such behaviors including, when appropriate, referral to law enforcement agencies.

The District prohibits all forms of harassment, discrimination and hate crimes related or unrelated to race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or disability. M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. The District will not tolerate retaliation against those taking action consistent with this Policy.

Threats or acts of retaliation, regardless of how they are expressed, are serious offenses that will subject the violator to significant disciplinary or other corrective actions.

IV. Designated Officials for Addressing Discrimination and Harassment Complaints

In each school building, the Principal is ultimately responsible for receiving reports and complaints of violations of this Policy at the school level. A student can report any claims of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or hate crimes to any adult in the school, who is then responsible to inform the Principal or his/her designee. Individuals may also directly file a report or complaint of discrimination, including harassment, with the Principal. If the complaint involves allegations of discrimination based on disability, the person filing the complaint also has the option to file his/her complaint with the school building 504 coordinator. If the complaint involves allegations of sexual discrimination or harassment, the person filing the complaint also has the option to file his/her complaint with the Title IX Coordinator. (A report or complaint of a violation involving the Principal should be filed with the Superintendent.)

V. Procedure for Discrimination and Harassment

The District has adopted and implemented grievance procedures to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of discrimination and harassment on the basis of membership in any of the above protected classes. Those grievance procedures may be accessed through the District website, the Principal's office, and/or the District's Civil Rights Coordinator. To make a report or to file a complaint of discrimination, including discriminatory harassment, please contact the District's Civil Rights Coordinator's office. The District's Civil Rights Grievance Procedures may be accessed at the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/fitchburg.k12.ma.us/human-resources/fps-grievance-procedures>

VII. Consequences of Violating Policy - Discipline & Discharge

Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the contractual provisions governing his/her employment. In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

Any student who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which may range from detention, suspension from schools, or expulsion from school. (Note: students with disabilities will be subject to the applicable disciplinary procedures under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973.) In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

VIII. Confidentiality

Investigations of discrimination, including harassment complaints shall be conducted in such a manner as to disclose information only to those with a need to know or those who may have information pertinent to the investigation. Please note, some level of disclosure may be necessary in the course of conducting interviews in connection with investigation of any complaint under this policy. The Fitchburg Public Schools shall endeavor to keep such information as confidential as it can without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

IX. State and Federal Authorities

In addition to the process described above, the complainant may, at any time, file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or other appropriate federal or state agency charged with enforcement of state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, including harassment based on membership in a protected class.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights
John W. McCormack Building
Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109
Telephone: (617) 289-0111

<http://www.ed.gov>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Problem Resolution System Office
135 Santilli Highway
Everett, MA 02149
Telephone: (781) 338-3000
<http://www.doe.mass.edu>

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ("MCAD")
Boston Office
One Ashburton Place, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 994-6000

Bullying Prevention & Intervention

The Fitchburg Public Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. Fitchburg Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic, status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The District will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. This policy applies to conduct directed toward students by other students or members of the 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. When bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of students and parents/families are expected.

Bullying, Cyber-bullying, and Retaliation: "Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the 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 him/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.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall 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 the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates 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 the 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.

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

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation: 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 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 district; or,
- through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the Fitchburg Public Schools.

Bullying is 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 the Fitchburg school district if the bullying:

- create 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.

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

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this policy requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Prevention and Intervention Plan: The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall develop, adhere to, and update a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which shall may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school.

Reporting: Anyone, including a student, parent or guardian, or school staff member, including but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional can report bullying or retaliation.

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

Parents or guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible.

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee as identified in the plan as responsible for receiving such reports, or both.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Investigation Procedures: The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a bullying or retaliation report, shall promptly conduct an investigation.

Using a Bullying/Cyber-bullying Report Form. The investigation may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged aggressor, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

School staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for safety and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student.

Confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying. Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

If the school principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred he/she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal shall consult with the school's resource officer and the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the local law enforcement agency shall be notified.

The investigation shall be completed promptly. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken. At a minimum the Principal or his/her designee shall contact the parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent.

DESE's Problem Resolution System: 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 seeking assistance or filing a claim, in the event that the principal or designee determined that bullying or retaliation occurred.

Student Assistance: The Fitchburg Public Schools shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, for both targets and aggressors, and for appropriate family members of such students.

Training and Assessment: Annual training shall be provided for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.

At least once every four years beginning with the 2015/16 school year, Fitchburg Public Schools will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess

school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

Publication and Notice: Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the Fitchburg Public Schools website.

REFERENCES: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

SOURCE: MASC August 2013

LEGAL REFS.: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended

Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

603 CMR 26.00; MGL 71:37O; MGL 265:43, 43A; MGL 268:13B; MGL 269:14A

Anti-Hazing Policy

Hazing is a violation of the Massachusetts Anti-Hazing law. (See full text of the statute in the Appendix.) Hazing is defined as any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization (such as a club or sports team) that endangers the physical or mental health of any person. Such conduct includes whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to affect the physical health or safety of any person or subject them to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Consent of the person being subjected to the conduct is not a defense to a charge of hazing. Any student determined by the Principal to have engaged in hazing activity will be subject to disciplinary action. Any student who is present at or observes what appears to them to be the activity of hazing another student should report such information to the Principal. Failure to do so may also result in disciplinary action.

Search, Seizures and Interrogation Policy

Searches by Staff

The right of inspection of students' school lockers is inherent in the authority granted school committees and administrators. This authority may be exercised as needed in the interest of safeguarding children, their own and school property.

Nevertheless, exercise of that authority by school officials places unusual demands upon their judgment so as to protect each child's constitutional rights to personal privacy and protection from coercion and to act in the best interest of all students and the schools.

Searches by school officials of students' automobiles or the student will be conducted in a way that protects the students' rights consistent with the responsibility of the school system to provide an atmosphere conducive to the educational process.

Interrogations by Police

The schools have legal custody of students during the school day and during hours of approved extracurricular activities. It is the responsibility of the school administration to make an effort to protect each student's rights with respect to interrogations by law enforcement officials.

Therefore:

1. When law enforcement officials find it necessary to question students during the school day or periods of extracurricular activities, the school Principal or his/her designee will be present when possible. An effort will be made to contact the student's parent or guardian so that the responsible individual may be notified of the situation.
2. If custody and/or arrest are involved, the Principal will request that all procedural safeguards, as prescribed by law, be observed by the law enforcement officials.

Gang Activity/Secret Societies

The goal of the School Committee is to keep District schools and students free from the threats or harmful influence of any gang. For purposes of this policy, a gang is defined as any group, secret society, organization or association that advocates drug use, violence, ethnic intimidation, or illegal behavior. The Principal or his/her designee shall maintain supervision of school premises to deter intimidation of students and confrontations between members of different gangs. Fraternities, sororities and/or secret societies shall not receive District or building recognition in any manner.

The Superintendent shall establish open lines of communication with local law enforcement agencies so as to share information and provide mutual support in this effort within appropriate legal guidelines.

The Superintendent shall provide in-service training to help staff members identify gangs and gang symbols, recognize early manifestations of disruptive activities, and respond appropriately. Staff members shall be informed about conflict management techniques and alerted to intervention measures and community resources that may help students.

Symbols

The School Committee finds that gang symbols are inherently disruptive to the educational process, and therefore prohibits the presence of any insignia, apparel, jewelry, accessory, notebook or other school supply, or manner of grooming which by virtue of its color, arrangement, trademark, or any other attribute denotes membership in gangs. The School Committee further prohibits any demonstration of gang membership through the use of hand gestures, graffiti, or printed materials. This policy shall be applied by the Principal or his/her designee as the need for it arises at individual school sites.

Prevention Education

The School Committee realizes that students may become involved in gangs without understanding the consequences of such membership. Early intervention is a key component of efforts to break the cycle of such memberships. Therefore, gang violence prevention information shall be made available in the elementary, middle, and high schools as appropriate. A student may be disciplined for failure to comply with the provisions of this policy.

Vandalism

The School Committee recognizes that acts of vandalism committed against public and private property are costly and require positive action through educational programs. Consequently, the Committee will support various programs aimed at reducing the amount of vandalism. In addition, students who engage in any act of vandalism in connection with a school-related activity, whether on or off school grounds, will be subject to discipline as set forth in the student handbook. Every citizen of the town, staff members, students, and members of the police department are urged by the School Committee to cooperate in reporting any incidents of vandalism to property under control of the school department, and providing the name(s) of the person or persons believed to be responsible. Each employee will report to the Principal of the school every incident of vandalism known to him/her and, if known, the names of those responsible.

The Superintendent or his/her designee, is authorized to sign a criminal complaint and to press charges against perpetrators of vandalism against school property, and is further authorized to delegate, as he/she sees fit, authority to sign such complaints and to press charges.

Parents and students will be made aware of the legal implications involved. Reimbursement will be sought for all or part of any damages.

Relations with the Police Authorities (S.C. Policy #1401 approved 6/18/18)

Cooperation with law enforcement agencies is essential for the protection of students, for maintaining a safe environment in the District schools, and for safeguarding all school property. For this purpose, the School Committee shall enter into a "Memorandum of Understanding" on an annual basis.

Relationships between the schools and officials of law enforcement agencies in investigative matters concerning pupils will take into consideration the respective roles of the schools and law enforcement agencies in assisting and protecting the interests of the community, and ensuring the rights of all concerned.

The School Committee also recognizes the potential enrichment that law enforcement agencies can make in the educational program. In that vein, the School Committee supports the use of community resource officers.

Efforts should be made to develop and maintain a healthy attitude toward law enforcement agencies and personnel to promote better understanding and communication.

Student Conduct & Discipline

Student Discipline

The School Committee believes that all students deserve every opportunity to achieve academic success in a safe, secure learning environment. Good citizenship in schools is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in a way that the rights and privileges of others are not violated. They will be required to respect constituted authority, to conform to school rules and to those provisions of law that apply to their conduct.

The implementation of the general rules of conduct is the responsibility of the Principal and the professional staff of the building. In order to do this, each school staff in the District shall develop specific rules not inconsistent with the law nor in conflict with School Committee policy. These building rules shall be an extension of the District policies by being more specific as they relate to the individual schools. Any such rules or codes shall be approved by the Superintendent or a designated district official and will be made available to students and their parents/guardians in a manner consistent with this Policy.

Principals and staff shall not use academic punishment of any form as a consequence to inappropriate behaviors/actions by students.

The Principal may, as a disciplinary measure, remove a student from privileges, such as extracurricular activities and attendance at school-sponsored events, based on the student's misconduct. Such a removal is not subject to the remainder of this policy, law, or regulation.

General Principles

The goal of student discipline is to teach students to behave in ways that contribute to academic achievement and school success, and to support a school environment where students and staff are responsible and respectful. When disciplinary action is necessary, it shall be administered with fairness and shall relate to the individual needs and the individual circumstances.

Successful school discipline is guided by the following principles:

- Effective and engaging instruction and classroom management are the foundation of effective discipline.
- School discipline is best accomplished by preventing misbehavior before it occurs, and using effective interventions after it occurs.
- School safety and academic success are formed and strengthened when all school staff and personnel build positive relationships with students.
- School staff should promote high standards of behavior by teaching, modeling, and monitoring behavior, and by fairly and consistently correcting misbehavior as necessary.
- School discipline that is paired with meaningful instruction and guidance offers students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and contribute to the school community, and is more likely to result in getting the student re-engaged in learning.

- Effective school discipline maximizes the amount of time students spend learning and minimizes the amount of time students are removed from their classrooms due to misbehavior.
- If a situation should arise in which there is no applicable written policy or rule, School staff shall be expected to exercise reasonable and professional judgment.

Strategies In Using Interventions

Teachers and administrators should consider utilizing different types of strategies, or multiple strategies simultaneously, to deal with misbehavior, especially for 2nd or 3rd instances of the same misbehavior.

Reasonable Consequences

Students violating any of the policies on student conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The degree, frequency, and circumstances surrounding each incident shall determine the method used in enforcing these policies. In all instances, school discipline should be reasonable, timely, fair, age-appropriate, and should match the severity of the student's misbehavior.

School staff will make reasonable efforts to correct student misbehavior through school-based resources at the lowest possible level, and to support students in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school environment and avoid misbehavior. Most of the situations which require disciplinary action can be resolved within the confines of the classroom or as they occur by reasonable but firm reprimand, and/or by teacher conferences with the student and/or parents or guardians.

Use Of Out-of-School Suspensions Should Be Minimized

All students have a right to a high quality education. Punitive measures that result in the loss of valuable instructional time should be reserved for infractions that cannot be appropriately addressed through other interventions and disciplinary responses.

Relevant Factors In Making Discipline Decisions

When choosing consequences for students' misbehavior, teachers, administrators, and staff must consider the following factors:

- Age, health, and disability or special education status of the student;
- Student's academic program;
- Student's prior conduct and record of behavior;
- Student's willingness to repair the harm and accept responsibility
- Seriousness of the offense and the degree of harm caused; and
- Impact of the incident on the overall school community.

1. DUE-PROCESS RIGHTS FOR STUDENTS CHARGED WITH POSSESSION OF A DANGEROUS WEAPON, POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE, OR ASSAULT OF SCHOOL STAFF AND/OR FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH OR CONVICTED OF A FELONY (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H and , M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ½ - also referred to as “statutory offenses.”).

Interim Short Term Disciplinary Removal

In limited situations where a student is charged with a violation of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H or is subject to suspension in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2, and is determined by the principal to present an immediate threat to persons, property, or the orderly educational environment of the school, the student may be suspended from school by the principal on an interim short term basis of ten (10) school days or less pending a formal hearing to consider the student’s long-term suspension or expulsion. Prior to the imposition of any disciplinary sanction that might result in a student’s interim suspension from school for ten (10) consecutive school days or less pending a long-term suspension/expulsion hearing, the student will be given oral notice of the offense with which he/she is charged and an opportunity to respond. In the event that the principal determines that the student will be suspended from school on an interim, short-term basis pending a formal hearing to consider the student’s possible long-term suspension or expulsion, the student and the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified by telephone and in writing. Such interim, short-term removals shall not be subject to appeal.

Disciplinary Sanctions and Appeals

Prior to the imposition of any disciplinary sanction that might result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from school for possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or assault on school staff and/or due to a felony charge_for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or expulsion, the student and the parents/guardians will be given written notice in English and in the primary language of the student’s home of a principal’s hearing at which the student and parent/guardian have the right to be represented by an attorney (at private expense), to examine the evidence against the student, and to present witnesses and documentary evidence in the student’s defense. Following this hearing, a written decision will be issued. The student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will have the right to appeal any decision imposing a long-term suspension or expulsion from school to the Superintendent. Where the student is suspended on a long-term basis or expelled in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H, the student shall have ten (10) calendar days from the effective date of the exclusion to file a written appeal with the Superintendent. For exclusions imposed pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ½ , the student shall have five (5) calendar days from the effective date of the exclusion to file a written appeal with the superintendent. Pending the outcome of any such appeal, the disciplinary sanction imposed by the principal shall remain in effect. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ½.

NOTE: All proceedings conducted in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H ½ shall be conducted by the principal and may not be delegated to a designee. All appeals of suspensions or expulsions imposed by the principal in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H ½ shall be conducted by the Superintendent and may not be delegated to a designee.

DUE-PROCESS RIGHTS FOR STUDENTS CHARGED WITH OTHER VIOLATIONS (Non-Statutory Offenses - M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H ¾ and 603 CMR 53.00)

In-School Suspension

A principal or his/her designee may use in-school suspension as an alternative to short-term suspension for disciplinary offenses. Prior to imposing an in-school suspension, the principal or his/her designee shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense(s) of which the student is accused and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal or his/her designee determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal or his/her designee shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) school days cumulatively or consecutively in the school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal or his/her designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally as soon as possible of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal or his/her designee shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal or his/her designee is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.

The principal or his/her designee shall further send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth in 603 CMR 53.10 (4), if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal or his/her designee shall deliver such notice on the day on which the suspension is to be served by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or other method of delivery agreed to by the principal or his/her designee and the parent.

Out-of-School Suspension

(i) Notice and Principal's Hearing (603 CMR 53.08):

Prior to the imposition of a short-term out-of-school suspension or a long-term suspension under this section, the principal or his/her designee shall provide oral and written notice of the charges and potential disciplinary sanction and of the student's and parent's/guardian's right to participate in a hearing with the principal or his/her designee, to contest the charges against the student and to provide evidence, including mitigating facts, and witnesses in the student's defense.

The hearing may take place without the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) only if the principal or his/her designee has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent for emergency notification.

The purpose of the principal's hearing is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, to provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, to determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction.

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension may be imposed under this section, the principal or his/her designee will exercise discretion in deciding the consequence for the offense and, where appropriate, shall avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include, but are not limited to, the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and/or positive interventions and supports.

The principal or his/her designee shall determine the extent of the rights to be afforded the student at a disciplinary hearing based on the anticipated consequences for the disciplinary offense and in accordance with the requirements of 603 CMR 53.00.

Short-term Suspension Hearing

The principal or his/her designee shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student and the parents/guardians shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal or the principal's designee should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate. The principal or designee shall provide the parents/guardians, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the principal or designee should consider in determining consequences for the student. Students and parents do not have the right under applicable policies and regulations to be represented by an attorney at a short-term suspension hearing.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal or his/her designee shall determine whether there is a preponderance of evidence to support a determination that the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, the remedy or consequence to be imposed. In accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4, as amended through Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022, and 603 CMR 53.05, the principal or principal's designee shall, when acting as the decision-maker at a disciplinary hearing to consider a student's possible short-term or long-term out-of-school suspension for violations of school rules other than offenses involving drugs, weapons, assaults on school staff, and/or felony offenses, first consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process. The principal or designee shall not suspend the student from school on a short-term or long-term basis under such circumstances until alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies would be unsuitable or counter-productive, or unless the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm (physical and/or psychological) upon another person while in school. Alternative remedies for purposes of these requirements may include, but shall not be limited to: (i) mediation; (ii) conflict resolution; (iii) restorative justice; and (iv) collaborative problem solving.

The principal or his/her designee shall provide written notice to the student and parents/guardians of the principal's or designee's findings and determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of the suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other schoolwork as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice of hearing.

Long-term Suspension Hearing

In addition to the rights afforded a student in a short-term suspension hearing, the student and parents/guardians shall also have the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the school may rely at the disciplinary hearing; the right to be represented by an attorney or a lay person of the student's choice (at the student's/parent's/guardian's expense); the right to produce witnesses on the student's behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident and any mitigating evidence (although the student may not be compelled to do so); the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school; and the right to request that the hearing be recorded and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent requests an audio recording, the principal or designee shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio recording will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

Based on the preponderance of evidence presented at the hearing, the principal or designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension, the remedy or consequence to be imposed. The principal or designee shall send the written determination in English and the primary language spoken in the student's home to the student and parent/guardian by, certified first-class mail and by email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by any other method of delivery agreed to by the principal or designee and the parent/guardian.

If the student is suspended for more than ten (10) school days for a single infraction or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year, the notice will include written notification of the right to appeal to the Superintendent. Except as provided for under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and/or 37H1/2, no student may be suspended for more than ninety (90) school days for one or more violations of school rules ("non-statutory offenses") within a school year.

Emergency Removal for Non-Statutory Offenses (603 CMR 53.07)

The principal or designee may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a violation of school rules in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4, the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the principal's or designee's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption presented. The emergency removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal. In

the event of an emergency removal from school, the principal or designee will not release the student until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

In the event of an emergency removal, the principal or designee shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason(s) therefor. The principal or designee shall also provide written notice to the student and parents/guardians and provide the student an opportunity for a disciplinary hearing with the principal or designee, and the parent/guardian an opportunity to attend the hearing, to be conducted before the expiration of the two (2) school days following the Student's emergency removal, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal or designee, student, and parent/guardian.

The principal or designee shall render a decision orally on the same day as the disciplinary hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of 603 CMR 53.08.

Appeals (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4)

Students do not have the right to appeal an in-school or short-term out-of-school suspension imposed pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H3/4. Students and parents/guardians do, however, have the right to appeal a long-term suspension imposed by the principal or designee to the Superintendent. The student and/or the parent/guardian shall have five (5) calendar days following the effective date of the suspension to submit a written request for an appeal to the Superintendent but may be granted an extension of time of up to seven (7) calendar days upon written request. If the appeal is not timely filed, the superintendent may deny the appeal.,

The Superintendent or a Superintendent's designee will hold a hearing with the student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) within three (3) school days of the student's request for an appeal. The time may be extended by up to seven (7) calendar days if requested by the parent(s)/guardian(s). The Superintendent's hearing may proceed without the parent(s)/guardian(s) only if a good faith effort was made to include parent(s)/ guardian(s). The Superintendent or designee shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if the Superintendent or designee has made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and Superintendent or designee to participate. The Superintendent or designee shall send written notice to the parent/guardian of the date, time, and location of the hearing in both English and in the primary language of the student's home.

At the appeal hearing, the Superintendent or designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, the appropriate consequence therefor. The student shall have all of the rights afforded to students at the Principal's hearing for long-term suspension, including the right to be represented by an attorney at private expense. The Superintendent or designee will issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing. If the Superintendent or designee determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Superintendent or designee may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the Principal but may not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the Principal's decision.

In considering said student's appeal and the sanctions for the violation(s) of school rules found to have occurred, the Superintendent/designee shall not impose/uphold a suspension from school as a consequence until alternative remedies have been tried, except:

(1) where the Superintendent or designee documents specific reasons why alternative remedies are unsuitable or counterproductive; or

(2) where the Superintendent or designee determines that the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documented concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm to another person while in school.

The Superintendent's appeal decision shall constitute the final decision of the Fitchburg School District.

Academic Progress

Any student who is suspended or expelled shall have the opportunity to earn credits, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school. The Principal shall inform the student and parent of this opportunity in writing, in English and in the primary language of the home, when such suspension or expulsion is imposed. Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

The Principal shall develop a school-wide education service plan describing the education services that the school district will make available to students who are expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days. The plan shall include the process for notifying such students and their parents of the services and how to arrange such services. Education services shall be based on, and be provided in a manner consistent with, the academic standards and curriculum frameworks established for all students under the law.

The Principal shall notify the parent and student of the opportunity to receive education services at the time the student is expelled or placed on long-term suspension. Notice shall be provided in English and in the primary language spoken in the student's home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall include a list of the specific education services that are available to the student and contact information for a school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

For each student expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in-school or out-of-school, the school district shall document the student's enrollment in education services. For data reporting purposes, the school shall track and report attendance, academic progress, and such other data as directed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Reporting

The school district shall collect and annually report data to the DESE regarding in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, emergency removals, access to education services, and such other information as may be required by the DESE.

The Principal of each school shall periodically review discipline data by selected student populations, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and student with a disability status in accordance with law and regulation.

Non-Discrimination

School staff responsible for implementing this Policy shall do so without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

SOURCE: MASC

LEGAL REF: M.G.L. 71:37H; 71:37H ½; 71:37H3/4; 76:17; 603 CMR 53.00

Model School Discipline Policy, Advancement Project Inc., Washington DC, 2012

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Advisory Opinion on Student Discipline, January 27, 1994

Discipline for Students with Disabilities

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. In addition to those due process protections afforded to all students, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require that additional provisions be made for:

- Students who have been found eligible for special education services under the IDEA.
- Students who the school district knows or has reason to know might be eligible for special education services.

The school is deemed to have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability if before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred: (1) the student's parent/guardian expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel, or the student's teacher, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (2) the student's parent/guardian requested an evaluation of the child; or (3) the student's teacher, or other school personnel, expressed specific concerns directly to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student.

The school is not deemed to have knowledge of a disability if (1) the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation or has refused special education and related services, or (2) the child has been evaluated and determined not to be a child with a disability.

- Students who have been found to have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

These students are generally entitled to increased procedural protections prior to imposing discipline that will result in the student's removal for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or where there is a pattern of short-term removals that exceed ten (10) school days in a given year.

If a request is made for an evaluation of a student's eligibility for special education services during the time period in which the student is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation shall be conducted in an expedited manner. Until the evaluation is completed, the student shall remain in the educational placement determined by school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion without educational services beyond those that the student may be entitled to under M.G.L. c. 76, §21.

The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of students with disabilities:

- Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for ten (10) school days or less in the school year to the extent that such disciplinary sanctions would be applied to all students. Within ten (10) school days of any decision to exclude a student with a disability from his/her program for more than ten (10) consecutive days in a given school year or to impose a disciplinary sanction that would result in a disciplinary change in placement for a student with a disability, building administrators, the parents/guardians and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team will meet to determine the relationship between the student's disability and behavior (Manifestation Determination).
- If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the student's conduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student in accordance with the procedures and penalties applicable to all students but will continue to provide a free appropriate public education to those students with IEPs. The student's IEP Team will identify the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, review any existing behavior intervention plan or where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment. Eligible Section 504 students shall be entitled to receive alternative education services in accordance with the school's Education Services Plan during any suspension or expulsion in excess of ten (10) consecutive days.
- If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the conduct giving rise to disciplinary action was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will not be subjected to further removal or exclusion from the student's current education program for the incident of misconduct (except for conduct involving weapons, drugs, or resulting in serious bodily injury to others) until the IEP or 504 Team develops, and the parents/guardians consent to, a new placement, or unless the school obtains an order from a court or from the

Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) or a court authorizing a change in the student's placement. The student's Team shall also review, and modify as appropriate, any existing behavior intervention plan or arrange for a functional behavioral assessment.

- If a student with a disability possesses or uses illegal drugs, sells or solicits a controlled substance, possesses a weapon on school grounds, or causes serious bodily injury to another on school grounds or at a school function, the school may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days regardless of whether the conduct was a manifestation of the student's disability. A court or BSEA Hearing Officer may also order the placement of a student who presents a substantial likelihood of injury to self or others in an appropriate interim setting for up to forty-five (45) school days.

Student Conduct SC Policy # 5401 approved 8/19/2014

The Massachusetts General Laws require the School Committee to adopt written policies, rules and regulations not inconsistent with law, which may relate to study, discipline, conduct, safety and welfare of all students, or any classification thereof, enrolled in the public schools of the District.

The School Committee shall approve and the Superintendent shall publish the District's policies and rules pertaining to the conduct of students. These policies and rules shall apply to any student who is on school property, who is in attendance at school or at any school sponsored activity, or whose conduct at any time or any place interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school district or the safety or the welfare of students or employees.

The implementation of the general rules of conduct is the responsibility of the Principal and the professional staff of the building. In order to do this, each school staff in the District shall develop specific rules not inconsistent with the law nor in conflict with School Committee policy. These building rules shall be an extension of the District policies by being more specific as they relate to the individual schools.

The purpose of disciplinary action is to restore acceptable behavior. When disciplinary action is necessary, it shall be administered with fairness and shall relate to the individual needs and the individual circumstances.

Students violating any of the policies on student conduct and control will be subject to disciplinary action. The degree, frequency, and circumstances surrounding each incident shall determine the method used in enforcing these policies. Most of the situations which require disciplinary action can be resolved within the confines of the classroom or as they occur by reasonable but firm reprimand, and/or by teacher conferences with the student and/or parents or guardians.

If a situation should arise in which there is no applicable written policy, the staff member shall be expected to exercise reasonable and professional judgment.

SOURCE:

MASCLEGAL REF.: M.G.L. [71:37H](#); [71:37H1/2](#); [71:37H3/4](#); [71:37L](#); [76:16](#); [76:17](#); 603 CMR 53.00

Suspension or Expulsion for Weapons, Controlled Substances, Assaults on School Personnel, Felony Charges or Convictions

M.G.L. c. 37H and 37H1/2 provide that students may be subject to expulsion by the Principal for any of the following actions:

- Found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon or a controlled substance.
- Assault of a teacher, teacher's aide, administrator or other school staff member on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events including athletic games.
- Conviction of a felony or adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Any student charged with violation of above provisions shall be notified in writing of the charges and of his/her due process rights, including the right to appeal. When a student is expelled under these sections, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such student.

Students may also be subject to suspension or other disciplinary measures for violation of the other rules and regulations included in this handbook.

School-based Rules

South Street Elementary School uses the Responsive Classroom Approach to teaching and learning. This approach integrates academic and social learning in the context of the classroom and school.

We hope that every child's school experience will be positive and that they will develop the skills needed to function successfully in school and in life. One of the ways that teachers build community among class members is through the Morning Meeting. Building the classroom community helps to create a safe learning environment as students come to know and respect one another in a social context. Social skills are practiced in meaningful ways that foster an environment where learning and academic performance are the responsibility of all members.

As we strive for academic success with all, we want the children in our schools:

- To be able to learn with and be with others
- To respect oneself and the learning environment
- To show tolerance and understanding of individuals and a variety of learning styles
- To demonstrate strength in the social skills of cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control
- To become ethical and responsible decision makers.

We value shared decision-making about the rules that govern our behavior. Teachers and students together set goals, and discuss their hopes and dreams for their year in school. They create rules that will help them reach their goals. These rules are examined, modeled and

practiced, as children strengthen their abilities to learn and work together. Rules are viewed as guidelines, which allow positive things to happen rather than curtailing negative behavior.

When children forget the rules, logical consequences are used to help them restore their self-control. These consequences provide children with a strong message that the rules are important, and are meant to be followed. This message is conveyed in a firm and respectful manner. These consequences are intended to teach children their responsibility to fix their own mistakes. They are designed to be respectful, relevant and reasonable.

In determining the severity of the consequence, the principal or designee may consider all relevant factors including the student's previous disciplinary record and the level of disruption of the educational process. The degree of danger to self, others, and the school in general, may also be considered, as well as the degree to which the student is willing to change his/her inappropriate behavior.

The following constitutes the most common consequences for student violations of the Student Code of Conduct based on the nature of the infraction.

- Warning
- Communication with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Teacher detention
- Administrative detention
- Parent conference
- Out of school suspension up to 10 days
- Out of school suspension for more than 10 days
- At the discretion of the principal, a hearing may be scheduled to consider exclusion or expulsion
- Restitution or apologies of actions.
- Referral for counseling
- Referral (51A) to the Department of Social Services

APPENDIX

M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37H

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, all student handbooks shall contain the following provisions:

(a) Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(b) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(c) Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal.

After said hearing, a principal may, in his discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(d) Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(e) When a student is expelled under the provisions of this section, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37H ½

Notwithstanding the provisions of section eighty-four and sections sixteen and seventeen of chapter seventy-six:

(1) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the suspension.

(2) Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such

expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the expulsion.

Upon expulsion of such student, no school or school district shall be required to provide educational services to such student.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 37H $\frac{3}{4}$

- (a) This section shall govern the suspension and expulsion of students enrolled in a public school in the commonwealth who are not charged with a violation of subsections (a) or (b) of section 37H or with a felony under section 37H $\frac{1}{2}$.
- (b) Any principal, headmaster, superintendent or other person acting as a decision-maker at a student meeting or hearing, when deciding the consequences for the student, shall exercise discretion; consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process; and avoid using expulsion as a consequence until other remedies and consequences have been employed.
- (c) For any suspension or expulsion under this section, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled, or a designee, shall provide, to the student and to the parent or guardian of the student, notice of the charges and the reason for the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student. The student shall receive the written notification and shall have the opportunity to meet with the principal or headmaster, or a designee, to discuss the charges and reasons for the suspension or expulsion prior to the suspension or expulsion taking effect. The principal or headmaster, or a designee shall ensure that the parent or guardian of the student is included in the meeting, provided that such meeting may take place without the parent or guardian only if the principal or headmaster, or designee, can document reasonable efforts to include the parent or guardian in that meeting. The department shall promulgate rules and regulations that address a principal's duties under this subsection and procedures for including parents in student exclusion meetings, hearings or interviews under this subsection.
- (d) If a decision is made to suspend or expel the student after the meeting, the principal or headmaster, or a designee, shall update the notification for the suspension or expulsion to reflect the meeting with the student. If a student has been suspended or expelled for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year, the student and the parent or guardian of the student shall also receive, at the time of the suspension or expulsion decision, written notification of a right to appeal and the process for appealing the suspension or expulsion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student; provided, however, that the suspension or expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing. The principal or headmaster or a designee shall notify the superintendent in writing, including, but not limited to, by electronic means, of any out-of-school suspension imposed on a student enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 prior to such suspension taking effect. That notification shall describe the student's alleged misconduct and the reasons for suspending the student out-of-school. For the purposes of this section, the term "out-of-school suspension" shall mean a disciplinary action imposed by school officials to remove a student from participation in school activities for 1 day or more.
- (e) A student who has been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 school days for a single infraction or for more than 10 school days cumulatively for multiple infractions in any school year shall have the right to appeal the suspension or expulsion to the superintendent. The student or a parent or guardian of the student shall notify the superintendent in writing for a request for an appeal not later than 5 calendar days following the effective date of the suspension or expulsion; provided, that a student and a parent or guardian of the student may request, and if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days. The superintendent or a designee shall hold a hearing with the student and the parent or guardian of the student within 3 school days of the student's request for an appeal; provided that a student or a parent or guardian of the student may request and, if so requested, shall be granted an extension of up to 7 calendar days; provided further, that the superintendent or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, cross-examine witnesses and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal in writing within 5 calendar days of the hearing. That decision shall be the final decision of the school district with regard to the suspension or expulsion.

- (f) No student shall be suspended or expelled from a school or school district for a time period that exceeds 90 school days, beginning the first day the student is removed from an assigned school building.

See also the regulations issued under 603 CMR 53.00 regarding discipline pursuant to Mass General Laws chapter 71, section 37H ³/₄.

Massachusetts Anti-Hazing Law M. G. L. c. 269, sections 17-19

Section 17. Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term “hazing” as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

Section 18. Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Section 19. Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post-secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution’s compliance with this section’s requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution’s recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution’s policies to its students. The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

FITCHBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN
M. G.L. c. 71 §370**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Fitchburg Public Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying, where all school community members treat one another with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

The Fitchburg Public Schools will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in our school community. We will provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to identify, prevent, respond to and/or report bullying, harassment or teasing. We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, or retaliation towards any member of the school community who reports such actions. We will not tolerate this behavior in our school buildings, on school grounds, or within any school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation. We will take prompt action to end inappropriate behavior and restore the sense of safety so necessary for the learning process. We will support this commitment in all aspects of school life, including curricula, instructional programs, staff professional development, extra and co-curricular activities and programs, field trips, and through parental/guardian outreach.

The Fitchburg Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues. We are committed to working with students, families, staff, law enforcement and other community agencies, and the community at large to prevent issues of violence. We have developed this Plan in consultation with these varied stakeholders. While each school’s Principal and the building Administration team, is responsible for oversight and implementation of many aspects of this

Plan, it is the responsibility of each member of the school community to insure that bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation are addressed through preventative education and fair and just responses.

I. LEADERSHIP

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan.

As required by M.G.L. c.71, §370, the Fitchburg Public Schools bullying and prevention and Intervention Plan (the “Plan”) has been and will continue to be developed and reviewed in consultation with all interested constituencies, including representatives from the following groups:

- teachers (from primary and secondary education levels),
- school staff (elementary, middle and high school level adjustment counselors)
- professional support personnel (related service providers and paraprofessionals),
- school volunteers (after school programs),
- administrators (principals, assistant principals, nursing/health leadership, human resources administrator),
- community representatives (school committee member/s, church/religious leaders, LUK, Inc., local community and college/universities),
- local law enforcement agencies (school resource officer),
- students (representation from GLBTQ,NHS, student rep. Or any student that would like to participate.)
- parents, and guardians (from elementary, middle and high school levels).

Representatives of these constituencies have and will continue to be involved by meeting as an Bullying Prevention and Intervention Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) to review, shape, and inform the Plan. In addition, representatives of these constituencies will be involved in public meetings regarding the Plan as well as on-going task force meetings. Finally, the Health Advisory Council/Wellness and McKinney-Vento Homelessness Committees will be instrumental with planning and implementation during quarterly meetings held each school year to be coordinated by nurse/health leader.

B. Assessing needs and resources.

FPS school leaders, with input from families and school staff, will: review and assess the adequacy of programs, policies and procedures; review and assess data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and review and assess resources including curricula, training programs and behavioral health services. This information will be used to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

FPS will use the following methods to conduct this ongoing needs and resources assessment.

- The Committee has and will continue to review current policies and procedures including, the Harassment Policy, the Acceptable Use Policy and the current disciplinary procedures in place at each school and make recommendations for revision or additional policies to the FPS School Committee’s Policy Subcommittee as needed.
- At the beginning of each school year, Schools will review the previous years bullying data (State level data reports, internal documentation and reporting apps to establish baseline data on bullying/behavioral incidents to establish new practices and training that may be needed.
- Ongoing review of student discipline by the schools student support teams (STAT, START, ILT) to determine and mitigate bullying.

Data will be analyzed by each school administrator and final summaries will be presented to the Superintendent, School Committee, and community each year as part of the annual budget and school improvement presentation.

B. Planning and oversight.

In the Fitchburg Public Schools, the following parties will be responsible for the following aspects of the Plan:

- 1) School based Administration will continue to receive and will conduct the initial investigation of the bullying/behavioral incident reports, coordinate services with school resource officers, local law enforcement, or other agencies as applicable.
- 2) Data collection, reporting systems (apps) and interpretation will continue related to bullying/cyber-bullying reporting and follow-up intervention. The Principal and/or his/her designees, including but not limited to school-based Assistant Principals, Student Program Support Admin. (SPSA), ILT school teams and Director of Pupil Services and Director of Nursing . Prevention and intervention plan development and implementation, based on alignment with this data, will be on-going via school-based programming pertaining to improving school climate, teaching staff and students about aspects of the law and the district Plan, and providing educational experiences/curriculum that address skill-building in this area.

- 3) Recording and tracking bullying and cyber-bullying incidents will be through established behavior incident reporting activities for which building administration teams are responsible and properly recorded within the student data management system.
- 4) Ongoing professional development will be through staff training from site-based trainers, legal experts and specialty presenters with contemporary information annually, in areas as noted in the professional development plan section of the Plan. The Assistant Superintendent and/or the Director of Pupil Services will coordinate these activities.
- 5) Yearly, the Director of Pupil Services and/or his/her designee will
 - Use existing data (as cited above) to assess the behavioral health needs of FPS students at the elementary, middle and high school levels. This information will be used to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for planning purposes. Individual student support services recommendations will be a function of the existing Student Teacher Assistance Response Teams (START) and fall under the Tiered System of support. At each school, a Guidance Counselor, School Adjustment Counselor, Clinical Interventionist and/or BCBA will be available to assist administration and staff in interviewing and developing safety plans as a result of the team recommendations.
 - Assess Guidance Counselors, School Adjustment Counselors and Clinical Interventionists schedules for frequency and duration of time spent on bullying related issues and resulting impact on costs associated with behavioral health assessments at the school level for following year(s). This analysis will inform staffing and professional development decisions so as to support effectively addressing student needs.
- 6) Choosing and implementing curricula: The FPS district will align the existing prevention programs and specialized curriculum with additional prevention, skills-based curriculum as noted further in this Plan. The Assistant Superintendent will facilitate and coordinate curriculum alignment and review committees as needed.
- 7) New and revised policies, specifically for bullying and cyber-bullying prevention and internet safety, have been created and will continue to be reviewed in accordance with Fitchburg School Committee procedures. These policies will be disseminated (with concomitant training) by each school's Principal and by the Superintendent. They will also be available on the District website.
- 8) Each school's student/parent/guardian handbook and FPS staff handbook will include a summary of the law (Appendix A and B) and other information as required. All such handbooks will be reviewed and updated annually by a building administrator, the Director of Human Resources, Director of Pupil Services and the Director of Nursing.
- 9) School Administrator's will offer informative educational sessions for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula, the plan and any social competency curricula used by the schools. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council and during Open House Events. These programs will be sponsored by and/or presented by the school administration and his/her designee. Parent / family engagement will be enhanced through recruitment in committees via school newsletters, district website, postings, PTO and PAC meetings/trainings. Parent participants on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Planning Team and building-based parent liaisons will disseminate information through school-based venues.
- 10) Each year or at least bi-annually, the Assistant Superintendent, Director of Pupil Services and the District's legal counsel will review and update the Plan. This review and any updates will be shared with the entire staff, student body and their parents through revised student and staff handbooks and their dissemination during the opening days of school; via the District web-site; and through faculty meetings during the opening days of the school year. Additionally, quarterly meetings throughout the school year will be conducted by the district Nurse Administrator, or Superintendent's designee, to include reconvening the Bullying Prevention Advisory Council, for the purpose of reviewing any updates, changes, or other data-driven or legal requirements and advising on the revision of this Plan.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual staff training on the Plan.

Annual training will be provided for school employees who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying. It will include:

- an overview of the law;
- a description of staff duties and responsibilities under the Plan;
- an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, including forms and data collection specific to FPS; and
- an overview of the bullying prevention curricula and educational programming to be offered at all grades throughout

the district.

Each school and/or department will have trainers (trained by staff from the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center) from among that school's administrators and/or teaching staff who will be responsible for conducting staff training. Athletic coaches, under the supervision of the Athletic Director, must participate in such school-based training pertaining to the grade level of their coaching responsibilities. Specialized after-school program advisers will be trained by their program administrators. The Director of Human Resources will be responsible for training bus drivers, central office staff and administration and will consult with the Director of Food Services and the Director of Buildings and Maintenance for cafeteria worker and custodian training. The Director of Pupil Services and the Director of Special Education will ensure that all paraprofessionals are trained in conjunction with the staff in the schools to which they are assigned.

Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be required to participate in a web based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

B. Ongoing Professional Development

Ongoing professional development will be provided for all staff including but not limited to: educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to co/extra-curricular activities and paraprofessionals. The goal of professional development is to establish a common, foundational understanding of and skills in using the tools necessary for the staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civility, and respect for differences, so as to provide students with skills, knowledge, and strategies to identify, prevent, respond to and/or report bullying, harassment or teasing. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to identify, prevent, respond to and/or report bullying and cyber-bullying as well.

This on-going professional development will occur during District-wide professional development days and/or through school-based faculty meeting sessions. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-based and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- (i) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- (ii) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- (iii) Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- (iv) Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- (vi) 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 a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), including a particular focus on students with autism or other disabilities that impacts social skills development. The Director of Pupil Services/Special education or designee will be responsible for such professional development.

Additional areas identified by FPS for professional development for all levels of staff include:

- promoting and modeling social skills development as foundational for further bullying prevention skill-building, through the use of the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA K-12), Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), RULER- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and Responsive Classroom program;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health including collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, restorative practices, school-based counseling and other pro-social and behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors and students' developing steps to self-control;
- applying skills from the tiered system of support for social and emotional learning
- teaching students various skills including positive communication, anger management, violence prevention, and empathy for others through guidance groups, academic Health and Wellness instruction, the Responsive Classroom, RULER, DESSA, DECA and the Second Steps Violence Prevention program;

- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students

C. Written Notice to Staff

FPS will provide all staff with annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook/code of conduct.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. Identifying resources.

The Fitchburg Public Schools currently provides counseling and support to students through key staff members. Students often access these key staff members through their teachers, related service providers, nurses, or administrators. FPS determines the appropriateness of services based on individual need as assessed through the Tiered System of Support intervention model.

FPS currently provides all students with curricula on pro-social skills and behavior through such programs as RULER: Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, Second Steps (Step to Respect), and Devereux Student Strengths Assessment and curriculum, which are Tier 1 interventions. RULER is a systemic approach to SEL developed at the Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER aims to infuse the principles of emotional intelligence into the immune system of preK to 12 schools, informing how leaders lead, teachers teach, students learn, and families support students. RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence (recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, regulating). Devereux Student Strengths Assessment and curriculum is a suite of assessments and curriculum based on the CASEL standards that include self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills and self-awareness. Second Step (Steps to Respect) teaches students to identify, refuse, and report bullying and promotes the development of friendships at school.

The Principal will designate school personnel who will identify, and/or observe, and/or interview a student and/or review his or her cumulative file and key instructional staff members who work with this student once an allegation of bullying or cyber-bullying has been received.

For the student who is a target of bullying or cyber-bullying::

A parent and/or guardian will be contacted to discuss the allegations and bullying process to make certain the parent has the understanding that their child will be engaging in the following possible procedures:

- Will be interviewed
- May be observed
- May be screened using appropriate tools to determine the impact of the incident, the level of distress and the skill deficit that must be addressed

If the student presents with significant areas of distress as indicated above:

- A safety plan will be developed (as outlined elsewhere in the Plan)
- A referral will be made to the Student Teacher Assistance response Team (START) to begin the Response to Intervention (RTI) process
- For students who have an identified disability requiring 504 accommodations or special education services, a Team meeting will be scheduled to discuss the impact of the incident on the student's educational programming.

For the student who is identified as having displayed the bullying or cyber-bullying behavior, they:

- Will be interviewed
- May be disciplined in accordance with the student handbook/code of conduct (and their IEP if applicable)
- May be observed

- May be screened using appropriate tools to determine the impact of the incident, the level of distress and the skill deficit that must be addressed

If a student presents with significant areas of distress as outlined above:

- A safety plan will be developed (as outlined elsewhere in the Plan)
- A referral will be made to the Student Teacher Assistance response Team and engage in the Multidisciplinary Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- For students who have an identified disability requiring 504 accommodations or special education services, a Team meeting will be scheduled to discuss the impact of the incident on the student's educational programming.

The Committee has developed the following recommendations to consider in the implementation of the Plan:

- The Principal or his/her designee will serve as the Bullying Prevention Liaison at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to assist support staff and teachers to implement the Plan with a focus on prevention of bullying behavior. The role of the bullying prevention liaison should be filled by an individual with experience in and knowledge regarding bullying and cyber-bullying, its impact on targets, aggressors and bystanders, prevention models, and the protocol for reporting (including anonymous reporting) and response to bullying complaints.
- The Principal will develop and institute a student concern planning team for bullying in order to discuss the climate in the building in a proactive manner. As the Bullying Prevention Liaison, the Principal and/or his designee will be a member of this team. This team should meet regularly to review occurrences of bullying/cyber-bullying within the building, discuss progress with current interventions, and develop appropriate safety plans for students within the building who have become victims of bullying related incidents.

B. Counseling and other services.

FPS endeavors to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support to its students and families. FPS employs a Bilingual Liaison and FPS Family & Community Engagement Coordinator who is available to support Spanish speaking students and families with translation, attendance at meetings, and connecting with community supports. . FPS is conscious of the need for further culturally and linguistically appropriate support for families and works to reach out to all students and families and has connected with a translating company called Loinsbridge that is able to provide translation support to any staff member.

FPS is currently linked with a number of community based organizations and Community Service Agencies (CSA), including: LUK, Inc., Community Healthlink (CHL), Wachusett Counseling Associates, Communities of Care (COC), Families and Communities Together (FCT), the Mobile Crisis Team through the Child Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, Riverfront Counseling Associates, the Counseling and Assessment Clinic (CAC), Inc., Youth Opportunities Upheld (YOU) Inc, The Public Schools Stewards group (NewVue), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Montachusett Regional YMCA, and a number of other area organizations or agencies that provide students and their families with support outside of school.

Within schools, the Principals' designees are involved in the facilitation of groups, crisis intervention, development of safety plans, communication with outside service providers, law enforcement, and families, making referrals to appropriate resources, the development of behavior intervention plans, and the implementation of the Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) model. School-based administrators are involved in providing input and recommendations to students, their families, outside service providers, and law enforcement.

C. Students with disabilities.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. The Team will also discuss the specific accommodations, modifications, goals, and services required to meet the student's needs specific to the development and generalization of skills and include these in the student's IEP.

D. Referral to outside services

Parents/students will be provided with referrals to outside resources when needed (refer to page 8, Access to Resources and Services). Referral to outside agencies may also be recommended under (but not limited to) the following special circumstances:

- Student, parent or school personnel reports suicidal or homicidal ideation, abuse, neglect or other safety issues (for all reports of abuse and neglect, the school staff member is obligated to file a mandated report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) which is done without parental permission);
- Student demonstrates extreme behavior, psychological issues, or medical concerns (example: active hallucinations)
- Parent contacts the school to report serious concerns about their child

Outside counseling services and arrangements are made between the parent/guardian of a student and/or by the student directly for a student aged 18 or older with the outside agency. The district does not cover the cost of these services.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Specific bullying prevention approaches will include both developmentally appropriate student skill-building in the areas of foundational social competencies and as well as instruction using evidence-based, research-based bullying prevention curricular. The table below indicates such programs, curricular products, supporting programs and the anticipated grade levels where they will be implemented. Prior to implementing curriculum products, professional development will be provided to appropriate staff members.

GRADE	PROGRAM or CURRICULUM	BULLYING PREVENTION HIGHLIGHTS
Reingold - PreK-4 SSES - PreK-4 Crocker -PreK-4 Memorial 5-8 Longsjö 5-8	RULER - Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence	RULER is an approach to social and emotional learning (SEL) that teaches emotional intelligence to people of all ages, with the goal of creating a healthier, more equitable, innovative, and compassionate society. The RULER approach works on teaching emotions. Recognizing emotions in oneself and others, understanding the causes and consequences of emotions, labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, expressing emotions in accordance with cultural names and social context and resulting emotions with helpful strategies.
All Schools K-12	DESSA-Devereux Student Strengths Assessment	Devereux Student Strengths Assessment and curriculum is a suite of assessments and curriculum based on the CASEL standards that include self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills and self-awareness.
PreSchool	DECA- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment	Devereux Student Strengths Assessment and curriculum is a suite of assessments and curriculum based on the CASEL standards that include self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills and self-awareness at the preschool age level.
K-GRADE 8	SECOND STEP VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM	This curriculum helps students develop strong bonds to school, solve problems without anger, and treat others with compassion. Research-based, the SECOND STEP program includes scripted lessons, and DVDs leading to thought-provoking role plays, engrossing discussions, and positive results in the classroom. While this is not a specific bullying prevention or intervention program, it is helpful in laying a foundation.
GRADE 3/4 - 6	STEPS TO RESPECT BULLYING PREVENTION CURRICULUM	This curriculum aims to reduce bullying and improve school climate. STEPS TO RESPECT is research-based and teaches students to recognize, refuse, and report bullying, be assertive, and build friendships. A recent study found that the program led to a 31 percent decline in bullying and a 70 percent cut in destructive bystander behavior. STEPS TO RESPECT lessons can help students feel safe and supported by the adults around them so that they can build stronger bonds to school and focus on academics. The program supports staff as well, with schoolwide policies and training
McKay School (PreK-8)	RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM PROGRAM	Developing a safe classroom climate and social competencies, especially in grades K-2/3, in CARES: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control—key social skills children need to learn and practice if they are to succeed socially and academically. Opportunities for using the CARES words and living by those values arise naturally in the process of making classroom rules, learning to put these rules into action in the classroom, and practicing respectful behavior in the lunchroom and other common areas. These social competencies create a foundation for further bullying prevention skill development.
GRADE 3-12 *	Michigan Model for Health	.The Michigan Model for Health is a curriculum that involves improving or maintaining positive health behaviors and reducing health risk behaviors. The Michigan Model has merged the Social Cognitive Theory, Social Influence Theory, and Social Behavioral Theory into an adapted health belief model consisting of four factors that contribute to behavior change: knowledge, skills, self-efficacy and environmental support.

Grades 6-12	Ripple Effect	Ripple Effects for Teens (grades 6-12) is a comprehensive intervention that addresses both behavior challenges and the reasons behind them – from simple skill deficits to cultural alienation, from personal trauma to systemic injustice – with safeguards for student confidentiality built in. The 430 interlinking, personalized tutorials are engaging, culturally inclusive, learner-directed, and proven to work, especially with students who have multiple risk factors for school failure. Students can track their progress with a built-in Scorecard, and a Data Viewer makes it easy for educators to track individual and group student progress.
Grades 9-12 FHS	SEL Edgenuity	This curriculum is aligned to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies, Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The instructional topics include restorative practice/justice, bullying and cyberbullying, building healthy relationships, overcoming peer pressure and anger and temper management.
ALL GRADES	MARC BULLYING and CYBER-BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM	The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center provides free and low-cost programs, services, research and resources to schools, families, and professionals, in the United States and beyond. Our focus is on social and emotional adjustment in children, including bullying and cyberbullying, fighting, bias and diversity, peer relationships, and screen and social media usage. FPS has two trainers in the district to train staff on the usage of the MARC program.

All bullying prevention and intervention curricula will be informed by current research, which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students’ skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Teaching students about the student-related sections of the District Plan will occur through Morning Meetings (gr. K-8), All-School meetings (gr. K-8), small social skills groups and/or Advisory (high school) .

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.

See above table and list of teaching approaches that support bullying prevention practices.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING 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 oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a reporting app., and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school’s main office, the counseling office, the school nurse’s office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school’s website. The Incident Reporting 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, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Student, 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. A software program such as Aspen X2, Stop It app., or its equivalent will be available for anonymously reporting at the school level. The school administration to identify school-based processes for accessing a computer or translator to facilitate reporting. 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 principal or designee.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety 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 principal 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.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a. Notice to parents or guardians.

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations 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 Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

When to involve the police:

1. *If the behavior involves criminal activity, threats, or violence.*
2. *If the behavior involves electronic or physical stalking.*

C. Investigation.

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or

guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (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 may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor and/or school social worker as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations.

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

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 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.

E. Responses to Bullying.

This section enumerates the schools' or district's chosen strategies for building students' skills, and other individualized interventions that the school or district may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district 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 principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/districts' anti-bullying and social/emotional curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors and/or Clinical Interventionist and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial 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 and safety plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- participating in the START(Child Find) process/making a referral.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the 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 or district's code of conduct.

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

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

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal 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 principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent education and resources.

Principals will offer informative educational sessions for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula, the Plan and any social competency curricula used by the schools. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council and during Open House Events. These programs will be sponsored by and/or presented by the school administration and/or his/her designee.

B. Notification requirements.

The Fitchburg Public Schools will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula through the distribution of the Plan summary that will include information about anti-bullying curricula, the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The schools or district will provide all parents and guardians a written notice of the District's Internet Safety Policy upon enrollment or annually in student handbooks.

The Fitchburg Public School will include the Plan summary in each school's Handbook and the staff Handbook or code of conduct.

All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent amongst Fitchburg's parents or guardians. The school or district will post the plan and related information on its website. Additionally, any organization distributing their program information through the schools will receive a copy of the Bully Prevention / Intervention Plan (i.e., City of Fitchburg sponsored sports programs, etc.)

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

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

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

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

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

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

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

The school principal or designee will comply with all requirements of this Plan including reports to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or law enforcement as necessary. FPS will obtain parental consent prior to the sharing of school records or having open communication with outside agencies unless otherwise mandated by a court of law. Copies of parental consents will be kept with the student's record and may be revoked by a parent upon the parent's written request to the Principal.

APPENDIX A: MA DESE SUMMARY FOR STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

On May 3, 2010 Governor Patrick signed an *Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*. This new law prohibits bullying and retaliation in all public and private schools, and requires schools and school districts to take certain steps to address bullying incidents. Parts of the law (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O) that are important for students and parents or guardians to know are described below.

These requirements will be included in the school's or district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("the Plan"), which

must be finalized no later than December 31, 2010, The Plan will include the requirements of the new law, and also information about the policies and procedures that the school or school district will follow to prevent bullying and retaliation, or to respond to it when it occurs. In developing the Plan, schools and districts must consult with school and local community members, including parents and guardians.

Definitions

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying is 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: (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/herself or of damage to his/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. Bullying includes cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying 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.

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 student's education.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is directed.

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

Prohibition Against Bullying

Bullying is prohibited:

- on school grounds,
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
 - at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether it takes place on or off school grounds,
 - at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school,
 - through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by a school district or school (for example, on a school computer or over the Internet using a school computer),
 - at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic devices, 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.

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

Reporting Bullying

Anyone, including a parent or guardian, student, or school staff member, can report bullying or retaliation. Reports can be made in writing or orally to the principal or another staff member, or reports may be made anonymously. *[Amend to include local information about reporting procedures and resources here, and contact information for the principal or designee who receives reports.]*

School staff members must report immediately to the principal or his/her designee if they witness or become aware of bullying or retaliation. Staff members include, but are not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessionals.

When the school principal or his/her designee receives a report, he or she shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the school principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he or she shall (i) 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; (ii) notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor; (iii) take appropriate disciplinary action; and (iv) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Professional Development for School and District Staff

Schools and districts must provide ongoing professional development to increase the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying.

The content of such professional development is to include, but not be limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (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 cyberbullying; and (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Additional information about the school's or district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be made available when it is finalized.

APPENDIX B: MA DESE SUMMARY FOR STAFF HANDBOOK

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

On May 3, 2010 Governor Patrick signed an *Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*. This new law prohibits bullying and retaliation in all public and private schools, and requires schools and school districts to take certain steps to address bullying incidents. Relevant sections of the law (M.G.L. c. 71, § 370) are described below.

These requirements will be included in the school's or district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, which must be finalized no later than December 31, 2010. The Plan will include the requirements of the new law, and also information about the policies and procedures that the school or school district will follow to prevent bullying and retaliation, or to respond to it when it occurs. In developing the Plan, schools and districts must consult with school and local community members, including staff, and parents and guardians.

Definitions

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying is 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: (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/herself or of damage to his/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. Bullying includes cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying 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.

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 student's education.

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

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Prohibition Against Bullying

Bullying is prohibited: (i) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased, or used by a school district or school and (ii) 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 a school district or school, 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. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

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

Responsibility of Staff to Report Bullying

A member of a school staff is required to report immediately any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the principal or to the school official identified in the Plan as responsible for receiving such reports, or both. . *[Amend to include local information about reporting procedures and resources here, and contact information for the principal or designee who receives reports.]*

Staff includes, but is not limited to, an educator, administrator, counselor, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional.

Upon receipt of such a report, the school principal or his/her designee shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the school principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee shall (i) 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; (ii) notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor; (iii) take appropriate disciplinary action; and (iv) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Professional Development

Schools and districts must provide ongoing professional development to increase the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying.

The content of such professional development is to include, but not be limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (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 cyberbullying; and (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Additional information about the school's or district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be made available when it is finalized.

APPENDIX C: ASSESSING FOR A POWER IMBALANCE AND REPETITION

Assessing for a Power Imbalance & Repetition

The new law in Massachusetts specifies that faculty and staff must be trained in the role of power imbalances and repetition in the incidence of bullying and cyber bullying. Those who investigate alleged bullying and cyber bullying problems need to assess for these. This document is intended to assist investigators in that process.

Elements that should be assessed when considering the presence of a power imbalance between two students:

Different levels of popularity or social success between the students
Students who differ in their personal self-confidence, especially around peers
Students who differ in their athletic, academic, or other achievements
Students who belong to a group that is frequently targeted and is generally low-power (e.g., GLBT students; special education students; ELLs; etc.)
Students who differ in the degree to which adults like and admire them
(Sometimes) Students who differ markedly in personal appearance
(Sometimes) Students who differ markedly in physical size
Online behaviors that consistently target one student

Assessing for repetition:

Before this incident, what was your relationship to this “bully”?
Have you had any electronic contact online or through texting?
Any contact (electronic or in person) with his/her friends, teammates, etc.?
Do your families socialize together outside of school?
Do you see him/her in any extracurricular activities or places?
Have you had problems in the past with any of his friends?

Have you initiated any contact with him/her before these incidents?
Have you ever been in a fight with him/her?

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APPENDIX D: 7 ACTION STEPS

7 Action Steps

These actions could be taken *regardless* of the disruption to the school environment (or lack of it) caused by an incidence of bullying or cyber-bullying:

1. ***Have an educational discussion with the bully and with -bystanders.*** Ideally, this should take place in the Principal's Office. It may be important to point out that this discussion is *not* discipline; it is educational, about the dangers of bullying and the fact that everyone is now aware of the situation. If relevant, discuss future legal problems the child may incur if they continue with these behaviors. You can involve an SRO or other police officer in the discussion, and the child's parents, if possible.
2. ***Immediately inform the bullies and cyber-bystanders about the consequences for bullying or cyber bullying in school.*** If the bully or bystanders engage in any bullying or cyber bullying in school, follow through on consequences immediately.
3. ***Be sure that a target has a Safety & Comfort Plan.*** This should include a Safe Person in school – someone who the child likes and can go to, and the child's teachers must be told that this child has the freedom to go see their Safe Person at any time. Initially, do not be concerned if a target appears to exploit their Safe Person as a way to avoid schoolwork. Focus instead on the child's sense of safety and comfort. Eventually, when the situation appears to be resolved, you can address a child who exploits the situation (if necessary).
4. ***Inform all relevant adults*** – teachers, coaches, counselors, and bus drivers – about the situation between the two children. Ensure that they are aware of the potential for bullying and that they keep a very sharp eye open. Have a checklist of relevant people and check off each adult as they are informed.
5. ***Have a plan for less structured areas***, such as buses and lunchroom. The target should never be left to hope that they find a safe seat. A seat should be reserved in advance near friends.
6. ***Follow up with parents, especially parents of targets.*** Do not wait for them to call you; call them to let them know that the above actions are being taken. Many parents want to know what disciplinary actions are being taken against a bully and you may need to educate them about confidentiality laws. Be sure that they know you are not merely refusing to furnish information because you personally wish to protect a bully.
7. ***Consider creating a Response Team to implement all these responses.*** The Response Team should consist of counselors, SROs, administrators, and teachers. The Response Team can also handle communications with parents and document that all above steps have been taken. Response Teams are valuable for tracking children who are frequently involved as either bullies or targets.

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APPENDIX E: FPS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Forms may be pick up at your child's school in the main office

Forms

Acknowledgment Form

Parents/Guardians must complete this form and return it to the school office.

Student Name:

School:

Grade:

1.) Student Handbook Acknowledgment

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the handbook carefully with my child. I understand that the handbook has been prepared to ensure that each and every student in the Fitchburg Public Schools has a safe and enjoyable school experience. By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that we understand the rules and regulations set forth therein and agree to abide by them.

Student Handbooks are located on the FPS website: parents.fitchburg.k12.ma.us

I have read the student handbook carefully with child. Yes No

2.) User Agreement for Participation in the Fitchburg Public Schools Electronic Communications System – (Section 5 of the Student/Parent Handbook.)

I have read the FPS's District's Acceptable Use Policy and Administrative Procedures and reviewed them with my child. In consideration for the privilege of using the District's system/network, and in consideration for having access to the public networks, I, on behalf of myself and my child, hereby release the District, its operators, and institutions with which they are affiliated from any/all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use, the system/network, including, without limitation, the type of harm or damage identified in the FPS District Acceptable Use Policy and Administrative Procedures.

I have read the FPS's District's Acceptable Use Policy. Yes No

3.) Consent for Google Apps for Education Account

Note: consent is only required for students under the age of 13.

(Section 5 of the Student/Parent Handbook: any questions or concerns see your child's school administration or designee)

I consent for my child to have a Google Apps for Education account. Yes No

I consent for my child to participate in the FPS District's system/network. Yes No

Parent/Guardian Name (print): _____

