



## **District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Plan**

**Adopted by the Belchertown School Committee: December 14, 2010**

**Approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: March 17, 2011**

Revisions approved by the Belchertown School Committee:

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May 16, 2023

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## Introduction

The establishment of the Belchertown Anti-Bullying Task Force was approved by the Belchertown School Committee at their August 17, 2010 meeting in response to An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools (2010). This task force of 30 members represented a broad cross-section of our community; including district administrators, teachers, and support staff, as well as parents and community members. Their charge was to take the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and apply it to our district.

The group worked diligently over the course of three months and the resulting policy and plan elements were approved by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on March 17, 2011. Consistent with the spirit of the law and to include updates to the statute, the Healthy and Safer Schools Committee has revised the original plan to the one contained herein.

The Department issued an update to reflect Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, amended G.L. c. 71, §37O, the anti-bullying statute, and was signed into law on April 24, 2014. G.L. c. 71, §37O, as amended, requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to “recognize” in their bullying prevention and intervention plans that certain enumerated categories of students may be more vulnerable to being targets of bullying based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics. Such districts and schools must also include in the plan the specific steps they will take to support these vulnerable students and provide all students the skills, knowledge and strategies they need to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. Under the new law, school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools must notify parents and guardians of targets of bullying of the availability of the Department's problem resolution system and assist these parents and guardians in understanding the problem resolution process. Chapter 86 also addresses the data reporting and collection obligations of school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, requiring them to collect and report the following data to the Department: 1) the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation; 2) the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation; 3) the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation, and 4) other information required by the Department. (The Department is required to analyze the data and to issue a report annually to the legislature which contains statewide aggregated data on the nature and frequency of bullying in schools.) Additionally, Chapter 86 requires school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools, to administer a Department-developed student survey at least once every four years to assess “school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools.” (The Department will use survey results to, among other things, assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention curricula and instruction and identify long-term trends and areas of improvement, and will make its findings available to school officials.) The law also authorizes school districts, charter schools, approved private day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to adopt an anti-bullying seal to represent its commitment to bullying prevention and intervention.

## **I. District Policy**

*including definitions, relationships to other laws, and prohibition against bullying and retaliation*

The Bullying Prevention Policy, presented in Appendix A, incorporates our district priority statement, as adopted by the Anti-Bullying Task Force in 2010. It also includes references to laws and regulations as required, defines terms related to bullying and harassment, and has specific language intended to address prohibitions against bullying and retaliation.

## **II. Leadership**

Leadership at all levels will play a critical role in the ongoing revision and implementation of this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“the Plan”) in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference.

Leadership should be defined by the district or school, depending on existing roles and responsibilities and locally identified priorities for this initiative. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. It is also the responsibility of leaders to involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan.

**Public involvement in developing the Plan:** As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan must be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation must include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted by the school committee or equivalent authority. Schools and districts may choose to involve representatives from each of these constituencies in other aspects of Plan development, including needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings. The Plan should identify the ways that each of the various constituencies will be involved.

**Assessing needs and resources:** The Plan is the school's or district's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, assess the adequacy of current programs; review current policies and procedures; review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This “mapping” process assists schools and districts in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, schools and districts will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, the district 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. This information will help 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. The Plan

describes the methods the school will use to conduct needs assessments, including timelines and leadership roles.

**Planning and oversight:** The Plan identifies the school or district leaders responsible for the following tasks under the Plan: 1) receiving reports on bullying; 2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; 7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct to, among other things, make clear that bullying of students by school staff or other students will not be tolerated; 9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and 10) reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently.

**Developing priority statements:** Priority statements can be used to communicate within the Plan the school's or district's vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies. The following are priority statements for this Plan:

- The school or district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.
- The school or district is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. 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.
- We recognize 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, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school or 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.
- A school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school or collaborative school may establish separate discrimination or harassment policies that include these or other categories of students. Nothing in this section shall alter the obligations of a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school or collaborative school to remediate any discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state or federal law
- We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff

development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged target. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

*Table 1.1. Leadership Plan Details.*

| Goals/Objectives                              | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                  | Persons Responsible                                                                                                                                   | Due                                   | Progress                  |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Public involvement in maintaining the plan | 1. Healthy and Safer Schools Committee reviews current plan and recommends changes to School Committee.                                                                                     | 1. Healthy and Safer Schools Committee (administrators, teachers, parent representative, School Committee representative, and student representative) | 1. Biennially                         | 1. Next review date: 2025 |
| B. Assessing needs and resources              | 1. Administer periodic needs assessments to students in grades K-12 to identify resource gaps and the most significant areas of need.                                                       | 1. Administrators & faculty                                                                                                                           | 1. Biennially                         | 1. Next review date: 2025 |
|                                               | 2. The district will administer the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) student survey to help assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. | 2. IT Department, Data Administrator, School Admin.                                                                                                   | 2. Annually in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 | 2. Ongoing                |

*Table 1.2. Leadership Plan Details Continued.*

| Goals/Objectives                             | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                               | Persons Responsible                                                  | Due                                       | Progress   |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------|
| B. Assessing needs and resources (continued) | 3. The district will administer the Prevention Needs Assessment (PNAS) student survey to help assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. | 3. IT Department, Data Administrator, School Admin.                  | 3. Bi-Annually in grades 7, 9, and 11     | 3. Ongoing |
|                                              | 4. The district will report bullying incident data to the Department.                                                                                                                    |                                                                      |                                           |            |
|                                              | 5. Assess resources available to continue implementation of the plan                                                                                                                     | 4. Data Administrator, School Administrators                         | 4. Annually, starting in June/July 2017   | 4. Ongoing |
|                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                          | 5. Healthy and Safer Schools Committee and School Administrators     | 5. Annually as part of the budget process | 5. Ongoing |
| C. Planning and oversight                    | 1. See plan: oversee elements/implementation                                                                                                                                             | 1. See plan: oversight of all by Healthy and Safer Schools Committee | 1. Ongoing                                | 1. Ongoing |



### III. Training and Professional Development

The Plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O to provide ongoing professional development for all staff; including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals.

**Annual staff training on the Plan:** The Plan states the content and frequency of staff training and ongoing professional development as determined by the district's or individual school's needs, and lists other topics to be included in these staff programs. Additional areas of training will be based on needs and concerns identified by school and district staff. All school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-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.

**Ongoing professional development:** The specifics of Belchertown's process to craft a professional development plan may be found in Table 2, below. It addresses the annual staff training on the plan as well as ongoing professional development designed to address the following six areas of the DESE model plan: (1) age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying; (2) developmentally age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; (3) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, victim, and witnesses to the bullying; (4) 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; (5) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and (6) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying. Included in the plan are strategies to address the specific needs of students on Individualized Educational Plans.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc. and bullying behaviors

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

**Written notice to staff:** The Belchertown Public School District will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

*Table 2.1. Training and Professional Development Plan Details.*

| Goals/Objectives                     | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Persons Responsible                 | Due                                                      | Progress   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| D. Annual Staff Training on the Plan | 1. Annual online training in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan with all staff members including educators, administrators, service providers, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extra-curricular activities, paraprofessionals, and substitutes. New hires will complete training within 10 school days of hire. | 1. School Admin and Bus Contractors | 1. Annually                                              | 1. Ongoing |
|                                      | 2. Annual review of online training module to ensure compliance with any changes to statute or regulations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2. School Admin                     | 2. Annually, prior to the start of the school year.      | 2. Ongoing |
|                                      | 3. Volunteers, student teachers, and others who come into contact with students on a regular basis must review the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 3. School Admin                     | 3. Annually, within 10 school days of first interaction. | 3. Ongoing |

*Table 2.2. Training and Professional Development Plan Details Continued.*

| Goals/Objectives                    | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Persons Responsible                                       | Due                                                               | Progress   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| E. Ongoing Professional Development | <p>1. Professional Development, based on the role of each staff member, in the following areas as it relates to the Anti-Bullying curriculum, focusing on use of common language and common approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying.</li> <li>• Age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective intervention to stop bullying incidents.</li> <li>• Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, a victim, and witnesses to the bullying.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and</li> <li>• Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying</li> </ul> | 1. Instructional Leadership Team, District Administrators | 1. Annually, as needed to implement the Anti-Bullying curriculum. | 1. Ongoing |

Table 2.3. Training and Professional Development Plan Details Continued.

| Goals/Objectives                                   | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Persons Responsible | Due                                            | Progress   |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------|
| E. Ongoing Professional Development<br>(Continued) | 2. Overview of curriculum for substitute teachers, volunteers, student teachers, and others who come into contact with students on a regular basis so that all members of the community have a common understanding of the goals of the curriculum, key concepts, and common language. | 2. Building Admin   | 2. Within 10 school days of first interaction. | 2. Ongoing |
| F. Written Notice to Staff                         | 1. Provide staff and those who come into regular contact with students with annual notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.                             | 1. District Admin   | 1. Annually                                    | 1. Ongoing |

## IV. Access to Resources and Services

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed.

**Identifying resources:** The Plan describes the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the district's or individual school's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services should reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors. The Plan includes a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

**Counseling and other services:** The Plan identifies the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district. If resources need to be developed, the Plan identifies linkages with community-based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, the Plan identifies staff and service providers who assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. Schools may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

**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.

**Referral to outside services:** Schools and districts have a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies. Current local referral protocols are evaluated to assess their relevance to the Plan, and revised as needed.

The details of how we will provide supports and services to meet the needs of both targets of and aggressors responsible for bullying are found in Table 3, below. We have forged relationships with area providers, particularly with Valley Human Services in Ware, Massachusetts, and the Behavioral Health Network, in Springfield, Massachusetts, which will be beneficial in assisting us with meeting the goals and strategies of the plan. The Plan addresses the needs of students with disabilities as well as their non-disabled peers. A protocol for district Special Education Team leaders to use in creating an appropriate Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) can be found in Appendix B.

*Table 3.1. Access to Resources and Plan Details.*

| Goals/Objectives                 | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                | Persons Responsible                                                          | Due        | Progress   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| G. Identifying Resource          | 1. Review the process of identifying the district's capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families.                                                        | 1. Community Partners Network                                                | 1. Ongoing | 1. Ongoing |
|                                  | 2. Maintain a flow chart/directory of current resources within the district and community, including staff and programs that focus on early intervention and positive school climate.                     | 2. Community Partners Network and appropriate Student Support Services Staff | 2. Ongoing | 2. Ongoing |
|                                  | 3. Determine gaps/needs in staff and programs that remain to be filled and develop plan to fill gaps.                                                                                                     | 3. Community Partners Network                                                | 3. Ongoing | 3. Ongoing |
| H. Counseling and Other Services | 1. Identify culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the district and community.                                                                                                        | 1. Community Partners Network and appropriate Student Support Services Staff | 1. Ongoing | 1. Ongoing |
|                                  | 2. Identify linkages with community based organizations and/or agencies.                                                                                                                                  | 2. Community Partners Network                                                | 2. Ongoing | 2. Ongoing |
|                                  | 3. Identify providers to assist in developing safety plans for students who have been targets, programs/intervention plans for students who exhibit bullying behaviors, and bullying prevention programs. | 3. Community Partners Network and appropriate Student Support Services Staff | 3. Ongoing | 3. Ongoing |

Table 3.2. Access to Resources and Plan Details Continued.

| Goals/Objectives                | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Persons Responsible                                                                                                                                    | Due                                                                              | Progress                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I. Students with Disabilities   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate protocols to ensure the discussion of social skills development, targeting due to disability, and/or participation in bullying by a student with a disability at each Special Education Team meeting.</li> <li>2. Create a goal and corresponding objectives for each student identified above.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director of Student Support Services/Team Leaders</li> <li>2. Special Education Team</li> </ol>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> </ol> |
| J. Referral to Outside Services | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. D.1. Implement a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director of Student Support Services/<br/>Building Administrators/<br/>Community Partners Network</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> </ol>                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> </ol>                     |



## V. Academic and Non-Academic Activities

The law requires us to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

**Specific bullying prevention approaches:** Bullying prevention 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 or school staff 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 cybersafety, 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.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan includes specific information about how and when the school or district will review the Plan with students.

**General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts:** The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

The Belchertown Public Schools have a district curriculum review process, which the plan outlined in Table 4 (below) takes into consideration. A District Leadership Team comprised of administrators, department

chairs, and grade level leaders, meet monthly to address issues of curriculum, instruction, and professional development. New curricula are reviewed by them, using a set of established criteria (including efficacy based upon research) and recommended to the School Committee's Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee. The subcommittee also reviews the curricula presented and then forwards it on to the full School Committee for approval. The Plan addresses these steps in its process of reviewing and recommending age-appropriate curricula for final approval.

Table 4.1. Academic and Non-Academic Activities Plan Details.

| Goals/Objectives                                          | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Persons Responsible                  | Due        | Progress   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| K. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches                | 1. Evaluate current program to determine its effectiveness and continued use or replacement, using data from surveys and state discipline reports.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1. Administrators, Faculty and Staff | 1. Ongoing | 1. Ongoing |
| L. General Teaching that Support Bully Prevention Efforts | 1. Implement the following approaches which must co-exist in the success of bullying intervention and prevention initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;</li> <li>• creating safe school climate and environments for all students;</li> <li>• using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement;</li> <li>• using positive behavioral supports;</li> <li>• encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;</li> <li>• modeling, teaching, and recognizing pro-social, health, and respectful behaviors;</li> </ul> | 1. Administrators, Faculty and Staff | 1. Ongoing | 1. Ongoing |

Table 4.2. Academic and Non-Academic Activities Plan Details Continued.

| Goals/Objectives                                                      | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Persons Responsible | Due | Progress |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----|----------|
| L. General Teaching that Support Bully Prevention Efforts (Continued) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;</li> <li>• using the Internet safely; and</li> <li>• supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities.</li> </ul> |                     |     |          |

## **VI. Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation**

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the Belchertown Public Schools have put in place procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. The Plan details procedures for staff reporting of incidents, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee once a report is made.

Consistent with the DESE Model Plan (2010, pp. 7-10), the Belchertown Public Schools have adopted the following procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and/or retaliation (a flow chart showing the procedures is included in Appendix C):

### **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 or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, 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, a Bullying Allegation Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of a Bullying Allegation Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Alleged Bullying Report 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 district/school's website. The Bullying Allegation 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.

**Reporting by Staff Members:** A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor 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.

**Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others:** The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee of that student's school or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. A member of the school staff may be named the "aggressor" or "perpetrator" in a bullying report. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

**B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation:**

- a. **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. 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. Responses to promote safety and protection 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. If the aggressor is a staff member, the Belchertown Teachers' Association will be involved in this process.
- b. **Obligations to Notify Others:**
  - i. 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.
  - ii. 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.

- iii. 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 the Belchertown Public Schools' established agreements with the Belchertown Police Department. 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.

**C. Investigation:**

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

**D. Determination:**

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, the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, and Superintendent of Schools 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 (in the case of a staff member identified as the aggressor, the Superintendent or designee will fulfill this role) 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 notices to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student and employee 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.

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

## **E. Responses to Bullying:**

The Plan includes specific steps that each school shall take to support vulnerable students and provide all students with the skills knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. These steps include:

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-building: Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, any or all of the following skill-building approaches may be used to work with the target and/or the aggressor:
  - offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the district's anti-bullying curricula, adopted in accordance with Section V of this plan;
  - providing relevant educational activities for individual students, groups of students, or staff members in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel, through the Employee Assistance Program in the case of staff;
  - implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
  - meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
  - adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills;
  - in the case of a school staff member, recommend accessing the town's Employee Assistance Program;
  - making a referral for evaluation; and
  - using identified community resources in accordance with Section IV of this plan to provide support and counseling.
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 Belchertown Public Schools Bullying Prevention Policy and with the school/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 acted upon 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, consistent with district policy and school/district code of conduct.

If the discipline includes a school staff member, the principal/designee and Superintendent will follow due process and take any appropriate action consistent with progressive discipline.

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, including, but not limited to increasing adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. The principal or designee will complete the student safety plan form (Appendix D) and ensure implementation of the plan.

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.

## **F. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff**

The Plan identifies policies and procedures that address how school or district administrators will respond to and resolve a report of bullying of a student by school staff. The policies and procedures address safety planning, notification to parent or guardians and others, investigation, and response – areas that are addressed when a student is alleged to have bullied another student (see Section V. B – E above). They emphasize the importance of the investigation, the need for the aggressor, target, and witnesses to be truthful, and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

See Tables 5.1 & 5.2 (below) of the Plan for details with regard to the development and implementation of reporting measures consistent with the plan for reporting, as outlined above. Appendix E contains a bullying allegation reporting form that will be used in this process.

*Table 5.1. Reporting and Responding to Bullying Plan Details.*

| Goals/Objectives | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Persons Responsible                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Due                                                                                                                                                                          | Progress                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| M. Reporting     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure access to reporting, responding, &amp; investigating flow chart to district web site.</li> <li>2. Ensure access to reporting email link on district and school websites.</li> <li>3. Revision of form for district wide use in reporting</li> <li>4. Monitor telephone line for reporting.</li> <li>5. Ensure access to Belchertown Police Department online anonymous reporting system.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District Administrative staff</li> <li>2. OIT staff</li> <li>3. Leadership Team, School Resource Officer</li> <li>4. District Office Staff</li> <li>5. District Admin, School Resource Officer</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> <li>3. February, 2014 and as needed thereafter</li> <li>4. Ongoing</li> <li>5. Ongoing</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> <li>3. Ongoing</li> <li>4. Ongoing</li> <li>5. Ongoing</li> </ol> |
| N. Responding    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. B.1. Ensure implementation of district-wide protocols for ensuring student safety and protection during and following investigation period.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District Admin and School Resource Officer</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> </ol>                                                                                                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> </ol>                                                                                 |

Table 5.2. Reporting and Responding to Bullying Plan Details (Continued).

| Goals/Objectives             | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Persons Responsible                                                                                                                                      | Due        | Progress   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| N. Responding<br>(Continued) | 2. Ensure implementation of district-wide protocols for notification of parents, other districts/schools, law enforcement, and the Belchertown Teachers' Association in the case of a school staff member.                      | 2. District Admin, School Resource Officer, and Belchertown Police Department in concert with the School Committee's Healthy and Safer Schools Committee | 2. Ongoing | 2. Ongoing |
|                              | 3. Ensure implementation of district-wide protocols for implementing education/ counseling support consistent with district curricula for both targets and aggressors, including appropriate supports for school staff members. | 3. District Admin, School Resource Officer in concert with the School Committee's Healthy and Safer Schools Committee                                    | 3. Ongoing | 3. Ongoing |

## **VII. Collaboration with Families**

The Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration, including: (1) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (2) the dynamics of bullying; and (3) online safety and cyberbullying.

Parents and guardians will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents or guardians. School- or district- specific approaches to collaboration should take into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and their parents/guardians.

Table 6 (below) outlines the goals and objectives, strategies, persons responsible, and timelines for accomplishing these aspects of the plan. Among the parent resource and information networks that the task force will access in the execution of this plan include, but are not limited to:

- The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC)
- The Northeast Foundation for Children (Responsive Classroom)
- The Committee for Children (Second Step, Steps to Respect)
- Stop Bullying Now!

Links to these resources can be found on the Belchertown Public Schools web site:  
<https://www.belchertownps.org/bullying-prevention-policy-plan/>

Table 6.1. Collaboration with Families Plan Details.

| Goals/Objectives                                                                                                                                                          | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Persons Responsible                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Due                                                                                                  | Progress                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| O. Parent education and resources.                                                                                                                                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure access to parent resources and related information on district website and make hard copies of flyers and helpful information available at all school buildings.</li> <li>2. Offer evidence-based education programs for parents/ guardians focusing on the parental components of the anti-bullying and/or social competency curricula used by the school district.</li> <li>3. Include evidence-based strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the district to prevent and respond to bullying.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District Administrators</li> <li>2. Healthy and Safer Schools Committee in concert with School Councils, PTOs, and Special Education PAC</li> <li>3. Healthy and Safer Schools Committee in concert with School Councils, PTOs, and Special Education PAC</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> <li>3. Ongoing</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. Ongoing</li> <li>3. Ongoing</li> </ol> |
| <p>P. Notification requirements</p> <p><i>*All notices will be made available in the languages most prevalent among families in hard copy and electronic formats.</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure access to the Bullying Prevention Intervention Plan and related information on its website and make hard copies available upon request.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. District Administrators</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annually</li> </ol>                                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> </ol>                                         |

Table 6.2. Collaboration with Families Plan Details (Continued).

| Goals/Objectives                                                                                                                                                                          | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Persons Responsible               | Due               | Progress          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <p>P. Notification requirements<br/>(Continued)</p> <p><i>*All notices will be made available in the languages most prevalent among families in hard copy and electronic formats.</i></p> | <p>2. Inform parents/guardians of all enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula being used each year (electronically and in hard copy), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about the dynamics of bullying</li> <li>• Information about cyberbullying and online safety</li> </ul> | <p>2. District Administrators</p> | <p>2. Ongoing</p> | <p>2. Ongoing</p> |

## **VIII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, 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.

## **IX. Problem Resolution System:**

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

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

## **X. 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, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. 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, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.



## **Appendix A Belchertown Public Schools Bullying Prevention Policy**

*Belchertown Public Schools Priority Statement*

**The Belchertown Public School community is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning and working environment, where all students, employees, and visitors, are free from bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, a culture of respect and tolerance; and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behaviors that can impede the learning process.**

**DEFINITIONS**

*Bullying*

The law defines bullying as the repeated use of a written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional (aggressors) of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim (target) that has the effect of:

- causing physical or emotional harm to the student (target) or damage to his or her property;
- placing the student (target) in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creating a hostile environment - which 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 - at school for the target;
- infringing on the rights of the student (target) at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to repeated acts of:

- Intimidation, either physical or psychological (in person or via an electronic device)
- Threats of any kind, stated or implied (in person or via an electronic device)
- Assaults, whether verbal, physical, psychological, or emotional
- Attacks on student property
- Demeaning names or phrases directed at an individual student
- Touching another individual in a demeaning manner
- Exclusion.

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

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

Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On 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 Belchertown Public Schools.

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

- create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

### Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying, which is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means, which includes, but shall not be limited to; cell phones/smart phones, personal electronic devices and computers using email, social networking sites (such as Facebook, My Space, Twitter, FormSpring, etc.), any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo- optical system, including but not limited to; electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. This includes, but shall not be limited to, the distribution of communications such as text messages or emails and posting of material on web sites that can be accessed by more than just the student who may be the target of such bullying.

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 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.

The following definitions describe other behaviors that may be associated with bullying and are governed by state and federal laws, as well as Belchertown Public Schools policies:

### Discrimination

Treating people differently, or interfering with or preventing a person from enjoying the advantages, privileges, or course of study in a public school because of an individual's protected status (i.e., race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability). A person may not be subjected to discipline or more severe punishment for wrongdoing, nor denied the same rights as other students because of his/her membership in a protected class (See Belchertown Public Schools Policy JB).

### Harassment

Harassment is oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct on school property or at a school-related event, function or activity relating to an individual's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability, that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent, so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the district's programs or activities, by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment. For purposes of this policy, harassment shall also mean conduct, if it persists, that will likely create such a hostile, humiliating intimidating,

or offensive educational environment. A single incident, depending on its severity, may create a hostile environment (See Belchertown Public Schools Policy JBA).

### *Hate Crime*

A hate crime is a crime motivated by hatred, bias, or prejudice, or where the victim is targeted or selected for the crime at least in part because of his/her actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or sex. A hate crime may involve a physical attack, threat of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or damage to another's property (See Belchertown Public Schools Policies: JB and JBA).

## **Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which 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**

Individuals, 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.

The district shall have a means for anonymous reporting by individuals of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A member of the school staff may be named the “aggressor” or “perpetrator” in a bullying report.

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

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

Belchertown Public Schools Faculty and Staff, which includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extra-curricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals take bullying very seriously and will investigate and take prompt action with individuals who engage in these activities. Belchertown Public Schools Faculty and Staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or designee.

Through the Belchertown Public Schools’ Memorandum of Understanding with the Belchertown Police Department, the Belchertown Public Schools may share any and all information with regard to student safety, and/or possible illegal activity with the Belchertown Public Schools Resource Officer and/or other members of the Belchertown Police Department.

## **Investigation Procedures**

The Principal or designee, upon receipt of a viable report, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged perpetrator of bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

The Principal or designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying Intervention and Prevention Incident Reporting Form, which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

Staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection 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 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 perpetrator, 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 within fourteen school days from the date of the report. 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. The Principal or designee shall contact the parents or guardians regarding the status of the investigation throughout the investigation process.

Disciplinary actions for students or staff members who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies for students and due process/appropriate discipline for staff.

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. All reports shall be provided to the Superintendent for his/her files.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B section 3, when a Special Education Team determines that a 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 Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and to respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The Principal or his/her designee will take any step he/she determines is necessary and/or advisable to protect, to the extent practicable, the complainant, witnesses, and other individuals from further incidents or from retaliation pending the outcome of the investigation.

The Principal or his/her designee will maintain a separate confidential file containing the original completed Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, investigatory interview notes, and reports, findings made, the results of the investigation, including any decision for action, and other relevant investigatory materials.

## **Retaliation**

Belchertown Public Schools' Faculty and Staff will also investigate retaliation which is any form of

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

### **Target Assistance**

The Belchertown Public Schools shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying, as necessary. In the case of a school staff member, the Belchertown Public Schools will refer the individual to the town's Employee Assistance Program.

### **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-12 students.

### **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 Belchertown Public Schools website [www.belchertownps.org](http://www.belchertownps.org).

### **Relationship to Other Laws**

Nothing in our policy prevents the Belchertown Public Schools 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 this policy is designed or intended to limit the authority of the Belchertown Public Schools to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71 sections 37H or 37H ½, other applicable laws, or local or school district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether our policy covers the behavior.

### **BULLYING AMENDMENTS TO SCHOOL BULLYING LAW**

On April 24, 2014, Governor Patrick signed into law "An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools," Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014, which legislation expands the protections of the 2010 anti-bullying law. The law goes into effect 90 days after April 24, that is, July 25, 2014. The new law revises certain provisions of the current anti-bullying law, G.L.c. 71:380, and adds several new subsections to that statute.

There are four main components for the new law: (1) it requires school's anti-bullying plans to recognize that certain enumerated categories of students may be more susceptible to bullying, including LGBTQ students; (2) it requires school districts to annually report bullying incident data to DESE; (3) it requires DESE to develop and school districts to administer surveys at least once every four years on the climate of the school district and prevalence of bullying; and (4) it grants DESE the power to investigate certain alleged incidents of bullying. The law also permits school districts to "adopt an anti-bullying seal to represent the district's or school's commitment to bullying prevention and intervention."

School Committee Approved: August 23, 2016

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

M.G.L. 71:37O; 265:43, 43A; 268:13B; 269:14A

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

DISTRICT POLICY AC, Nondiscrimination

CROSS REFS.: ACAB, Sexual Harassment  
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing  
JK, Student Discipline

Approved by the Belchertown School Committee:

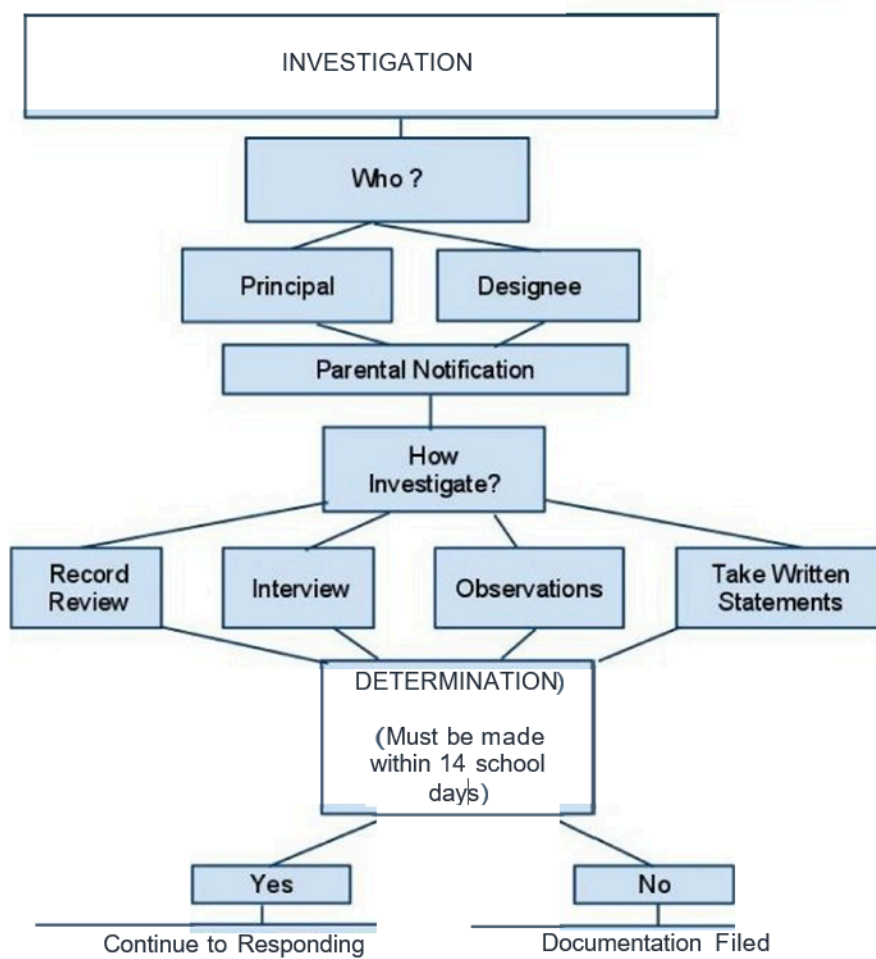
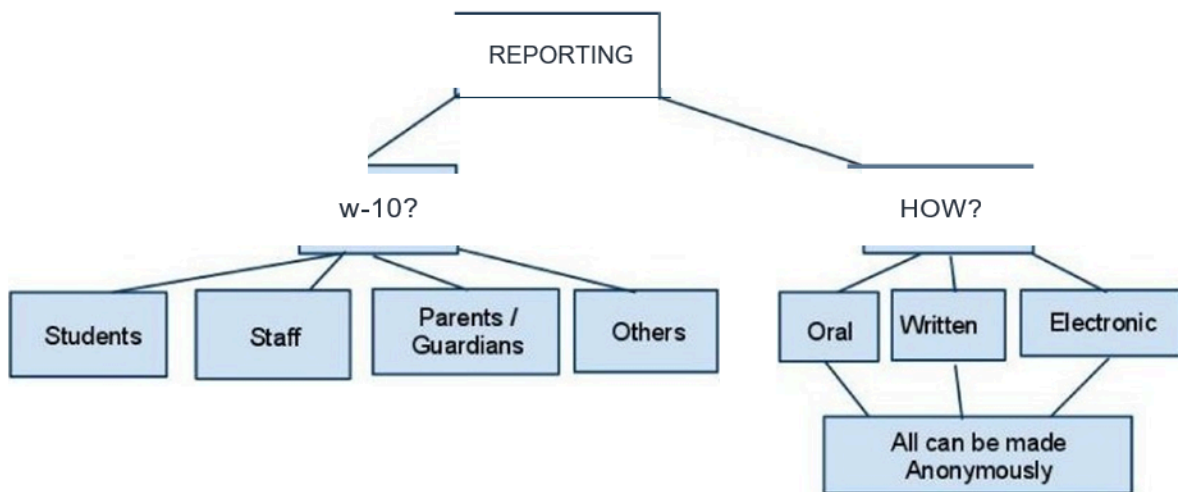
## **Appendix B Bullying Protocol for IEP Meetings**

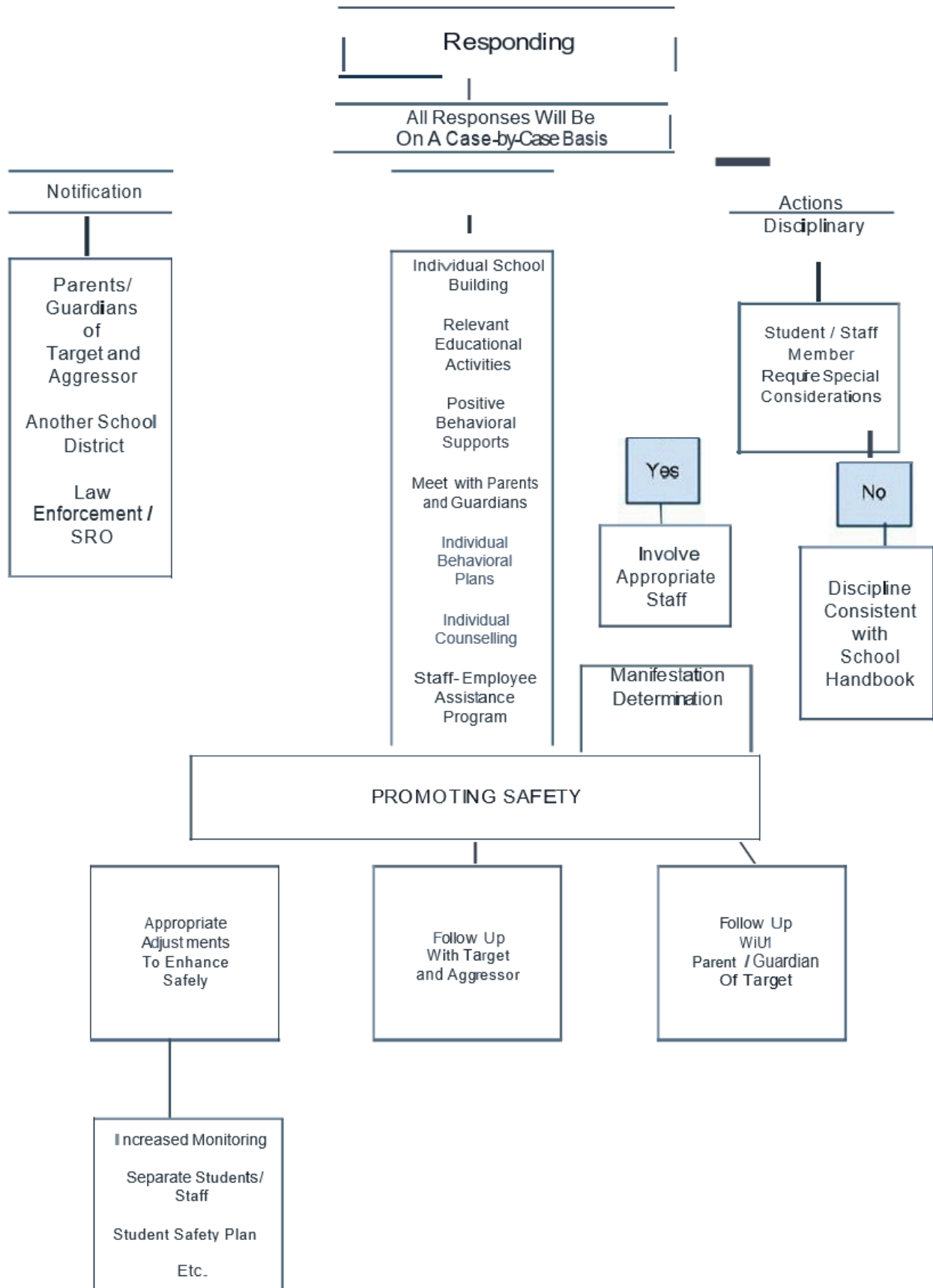


**The following procedures will be followed at every Team meeting for students who have been found eligible for an Individual Education Plan.**

- 1. While completing “PLEP B” (page 3 of the Individual Educational Plan), the Team Leader will address social and/or emotional issues and the Team will complete a form with their decisions at that meeting. All members present sign off on the form.**
- 2. If it is determined that social and/or emotional issues impact the child’s access to the general curriculum, the Team Leader will direct the Team in a discussion regarding the specific impact as well as specific interventions to address this need.**
- 3. The Team will create a goal and corresponding objectives, if deemed necessary by them, to address this issue and will identify the type of staff who will provide the interventions.**
- 4. For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, or for any student whose disability affects social skills development, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing by creating appropriate goals, objectives, and/or interventions.**
- 5. This discussion will be documented on Team meeting notes, on the N1 form, on PLEP B, and on the “Additional Information” page if necessary.**

## **Appendix C Reporting, Responding, and Investigating Flow Chart**





## **Appendix D Student Safety Plan Form**

**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Student Safety Plan**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Plan: \_\_\_\_\_ Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

| Plan Component | Person(s) Responsible for Implementing | Frequency of student check-in (daily, weekly, etc.) | Dates of check-in/By whom |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                |                                        |                                                     |                           |

## **Appendix E Bullying Allegation Reporting Form**

**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BULLYING ALLEGATION REPORTING FORM**

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. **Check whether you are the:**      **Target of the behavior** ☐      **Reporter (not the target)** ☐

3. **Check whether you are a:**    ☐ **Student**      ☐ **Staff member (specify role)** \_\_\_\_\_  
                                         ☐ **Parent**      ☐ **Administrator** ☐      **Other (specify)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your contact information/telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

---

6. **Information about the Incident:**

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

**Name of Aggressor** (Person who engaged in the behavior) \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s) of Incident(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time When Incident(s) Occurred** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident(s)** (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

---

7. **Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

---

8. **Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.**

---

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. **Signature of Person Filing this Report:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)



10: Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. INVESTIGATION

Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

2. Interviews:

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

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

☐ Interviewed witnesses Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Any previous incidents with findings of ☐ HARASSMENT ☐ BULLYING ☐ RETALIATION

Summary of Investigation:

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

## III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ Bullying

☐ Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Retaliation

☐ Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

☐ Target's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Law Enforcement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

☐ **Loss of Privileges**

☐ **Detention**

☐ **STEP referral**

☐ **Suspension**

☐ **Community Service**

☐ **Education**

☐ **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Describe Safety Planning:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Follow-up with Target:** scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ **Initial and date when completed:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Follow-up with Aggressor:** scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ **Initial and date when completed:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Report forwarded to Principal: Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

(If principal was not the investigator)

**Signature and Title:**

**Date:** \_\_