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ROCKPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

Effective June 2011

# ***Rockport Regional School District***

## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Rockport Regional School District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a requirement under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying. The district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of bullying. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. Our principals are responsible for the overall implementation and oversight of the Plan.

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## I. LEADERSHIP

*Leadership at all levels of our educational community plays a critical role in implementing and supporting the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Adult members of the educational community have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference.*

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan - As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Plan has been developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation included discussions at a variety of public meetings.
- B. Assessing needs and resources - The Plan is the 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 various constituencies and staff, have assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services.
- C. Planning and oversight - The following school leaders are responsible for the listed tasks under the Plan: 1) The Principals or their designees will receive reports on bullying; 2) The Principals or their designees will collect and analyze building data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) The Principals will create a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) The Leadership Team (Superintendent, Principals, and Director of Special Services) will plan for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5) The Principals and Deans, in collaboration with the Guidance and Adjustment Counselors, and the School Psychologist, will plan for supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) The Principals will review, revise, and implement the curricula that the school district will use; 7) The Superintendent, in conjunction with appropriate staff, will develop new or revised policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet Safety Policy, and designate key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) The Superintendent and Principals will amend student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct where appropriate; 9) The Principals, in collaboration with the Director of Special Services, will lead the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting of parent information materials; and 10) The Leadership Team will review and update the Plan each year, or more frequently, as needed.
- D. Our Commitment - The Rockport Public Schools expect that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. We are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. 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 understand that members of certain groups, such as youngsters with disabilities, youngsters who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and homeless youngsters may

be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The District will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with opportunities to learn the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, 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.

## **II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O requires the district 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.*

- A. Annual staff training on the Plan - Annual training for 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 strategies to be offered at all grades throughout the district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be 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.
  
- B. Ongoing professional development - The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
  - (i) developmentally- (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
  - (ii) developmentally- (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
  - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
  - (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
  - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
  - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing 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.

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; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

- C. Written notice to staff - The 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 will incorporate appropriate related topics into staff materials.

### III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

*The Plan will describe the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the school's or district'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. Plans will include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.*

- A. Identifying resources - The Plan will include the district's process for identifying its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. The Plan will outline the local processes for identifying existing and needed resources.

As part of the yearly assessment of needs and the financial resources needed, each principal will assess the capacity of his/her school to provide services for targets, aggressors, and their families.

- B. Counseling and other services - The Plan will identify the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district. The Plan will identify 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.

Each school has a team that may include the principal, assistant principal, dean, school psychologist, guidance counselors, adjustment counselor, and other support personnel that reviews students' needs, especially at-risk students. The school counselors will take the lead in developing safety plans for students and providing social skills groups.

- C. Students with disabilities - As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be

included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

- D. Referral to outside services - The school district is currently aware of local counseling services that students and parents can use as resources when issues arise. The school district will create a more extensive list of local resources and provide a list of resources to parents and students anytime bullying issues arise. These resources will be provided to aggressors, bystanders, and targets; students and parents will be given information about outside resources in addition to the resources within the school.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

*The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's or 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.*

- A. Specific bullying prevention approaches - Our bullying prevention strategies will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, 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 district will annually review the Plan with students in the fall of the school year.

- B. 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.

## **V. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

- A. Reporting bullying or retaliation - Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member will be recorded in writing. A district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal, or designee, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voice mail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal, or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal, or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

### **1. Reporting by Staff**

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

### **2. Reporting by 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. 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.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. (Locally established student safety planning policies and procedures will be included here.)

2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to Another School or District If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, 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) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others, as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

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

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

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

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

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

## E. Responses to Bullying

### 1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

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

### 2. Taking Disciplinary Action

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

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

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

### 3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

- A. Parent education and resources - The district will offer educational programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying strategies and any social competency strategies used by the district. In addition, the programs may be offered in collaboration with the PTO, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and/or similar organizations.
- B. Notification requirements - Each year the district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying strategies that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The district will post the Plan and related information on our website.

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

*The Rockport Public Schools prohibit bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. This statement along with the elaboration listed below will be included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook.*

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

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

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

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

## VIII. DEFINITIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

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

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

**Appendix A**  
**Rockport Public Schools**  
**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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.**

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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**

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

2. Interviews:

Interviewed aggressor

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

Interviewed target

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

Interviewed witnesses

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

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 BULLYING, RETALIATION  Yes  No

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)

**Rockport Public Schools Policy  
BULLYING PREVENTION**

The Rockport Public Schools, in accordance with MGL: Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, endeavor to maintain a safe learning environment where students can achieve the highest academic standard. The Rockport Public Schools are committed to creating an environment in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically in a caring and supportive atmosphere free of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying.

**Definitions**

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a:

- wire
- radio
- electromagnetic
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation of 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.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected. For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used, it is to denote either bullying or cyber-bullying.

“Retaliation” is any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment by a current student or former student under the age of 21 directed against a person in response to an action that person has taken or knowledge that person has.

### **Prohibitions**

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 Rockport 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 Rockport Public School district 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.

### **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**

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

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

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

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

Any member of a school staff will immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member witnessed or became aware of to the school principal or their designee.

### **Investigation Procedures**

The Principal or their 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 school principal or a designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying/Cyber-Bullying Report Form that may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students, and/or witnesses.

Staff shall assess an alleged target's need for protection and respond as needed to 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.

If the school principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred, he/she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the 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 a timely manner. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results. The report provided to parents or guardians shall include 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 his/her designee shall contact the parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation.

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

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and the Principal or designee shall maintain a file.

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

**Retaliation**

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

**Target Assistance**

The Rockport 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.

**Training and Assessment**

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 K-12 students.

**Communication with Other School Districts**

If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school district, the school district or school first informed of the bullying or retaliation shall, consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school district or school so that both may take appropriate action. If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in a local school district, the school district or school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall contact law enforcement.

**Special Education**

Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

**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 Rockport Public Schools website.

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

LEGAL REFERENCES: Title VII, Section 703 Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended  
Federal Regulation 74696 issued by EEO Commission  
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972  
603 CMR 26.00  
MGL 71:370  
MGL 265:43, 43A  
MGL 268:13B  
MGL 269:14A

CROSS REFERENCES: AC, Nondiscrimination  
ACAB, Sexual Harassment  
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment  
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing  
JK, Student Discipline Regulations