

**Superintendency Union 31
and
Silver Lake Regional School
District**

**Bullying Prevention
and Intervention Plan**

**Serving the Towns of Halifax, Kingston and
Plympton
December 2010**

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I. LEADERSHIP

The development of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan began in the spring of 2010 with the formation of an Anti-Bullying Task Force. The Task Force consisted of all intervention staff in the district (kindergarten through grade 12) including: school psychologists, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, behavior interventionists and the assistant superintendent. A draft Plan was developed and presented to the administrative team consisting of all principals, the special education director, the assistant superintendent and the superintendent. The Task Force met throughout the spring and fall of 2010 and presentations were made to all four school committees. The school committee meetings are televised and the draft Plan has been posted on the school's website with a public comment period. The draft Plan was also discussed at a Community of Concern meeting including local law enforcement representatives from the Towns of Halifax, Kingston, and Plympton. The Memorandum of Understanding was also updated to include information regarding the new Bullying Law. The student and staff handbooks include copies of the policy and procedure. Online resources have been developed for parents, students, and staff at <http://teacherweb.com/MA/SilverLake/SafeSchoolInitiative/apt1.aspx>

II. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Superintendentcy Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District Public Schools are committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities, and a safe learning environment free from bullying. This will be possible when all members of the school communities treat each other with respect, appreciating the individual differences in our schools. This protocol is an integral part of Superintendentcy Union 31's and Silver Lake Regional School District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning and eliminate all forms of violent, harmful and disruptive behavior. All students require this support to reach their personal and academic potential.

The Superintendentcy Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, in our schools or during school-related activities. Such reports of bullying will be promptly investigated.

As stated in the Massachusetts Anti-bullying Law, **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 victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of**

this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying. “Cyber-bullying”, 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 (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

The Superintendency Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District responses to bullying actions will include, when appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. The Superintendency Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District will support this protocol in all aspects of their activities, including their curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parental involvement.

RATIONALE

The Superintendency Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District prohibit all forms of harassment, discrimination and hate crimes based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability. The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law. The protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to our school district. The Superintendency Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District also prohibit bullying of school community members for reasons unrelated to their race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability. Further, Superintendency Union 31 and Silver Lake Regional School District will also not tolerate retaliation against persons who take action consistent with this protocol.

APPLICATION

This protocol applies to all sites and activities under the supervision and control of Superintendency Union 31 & Silver Lake Regional School District, or where they have jurisdiction under the law. The protocol applies to all students and staff on school premises or in school-related activities, including school-related transportation. Nothing in this protocol is designed or intended to limit the District’s authority to discipline or take remedial action under General Laws Chapter 71, §37H, or in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this protocol covers the conduct.

III. DEFINITIONS

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

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings.

Hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

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

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

IV. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying is prohibited:

- on school grounds,
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
- at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether it takes place on or off school grounds,
- at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school,
- through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by a school district or school (for example, on a computer or over the Internet),
- at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation or bullying against a person, who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses/interviewees who have reliable information about bullying is prohibited. Protection will be provided to witnesses of bullying and/or retaliation and appropriate discipline for the aggressor will be determined.

V. **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Reports of suspected bullying and/or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others. These reports may be made to the principal and/or designee in person, by phone, mail or by email.

Anonymous reports are accepted and will be investigated; discipline will not be issued based solely on information contained in an anonymous report. Anonymous reports will be accepted from parents or students and the Incident Report Form on page 11 of this document may be used. The word Anonymous should be written in the following sections *Person Completing Form* and *Who Reported Incident*

Forms may be mailed to the school or the superintendent's office at 250 Pembroke Street, Kingston, MA 02364. Forms may also be dropped off in a sealed envelope at either location.

VI. **DISCIPLINARY RESPONSE TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Violation of this protocol is a serious offense. Violators may be subject to appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action to stop the conduct and prevent its recurrence. The District is committed to protecting the complainant, and all students, from bullying. Procedural manuals containing responsibilities of staff and students, reporting procedures, complaint process, resolution, and protection against retaliation shall be in place at each level. All disciplinary incidents will be reported using the school disciplinary action process. The flow chart, on page 13, describes the district's protocol.

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 students(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

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

If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the school will take reasonably calculated steps to prevent recurrence, to restore the target's sense of safety, and ensure that the target is not restricted from participating in school or benefiting from school activities.

The principal or designee shall promptly notify the parents of the target and the aggressor of the results of the investigation. If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the target's parents/guardians will be informed of the actions school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. The legal requirements regarding confidentiality of student records prohibit the principal and/or designee from disclosing specific information to the target's

parents/guardians 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.

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.

When a confirmed incident of bullying or retaliation has occurred, the local law enforcement agency may be notified if the school principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. In school supports will be provided to the target, aggressor and appropriate family members by the school psychologist, adjustment counselor or guidance counselor as available within the school. Additionally, when appropriate, referral to such services will be offered to the target and/or the aggressor and appropriate family members.

VII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT STAFF

Silver Lake Regional School District and Superintendency Union 31 will provide ongoing professional development to increase the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying.

The content of such professional development will include, but not be limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (ii) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying; (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment; (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

All administrators have received training from the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, MARC, and attended a variety of workshops on implementing the Bullying Prevention Law. Key staff members in each building have attended the MARC training and are returning to the school using a train the trainer model for the rest of the staff. All staff received and discussed the Safe School Initiative; now known as the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on the opening day. It is also posted on each school’s website. In August, all middle and high school staff had a presentation on Addressing Bullying in 2010: A Guide to Understanding New Legal Requirements. All staff (pre-K to grade 12) will receive training on the next professional development day on Bullying Prevention and Intervention by MARC. The school bus company and local law enforcement have also been invited.

The district Memorandum of Understanding with local law enforcement agencies was updated to include information on the new bullying law.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has been developed by the K-12

intervention staff including the guidance counselors, school psychologists, school adjustment counselors and administrators. The plan was reviewed by all four school committees and posted on the school web sites for public comment.

Additional staff resources are available

<http://teacherweb.com/MA/SilverLake/SafeSchoolInitiative/apt4.aspx>

Training on bullying prevention and intervention and a review of the district Plan will be provided annually to all staff (pre-K to grade 12).

VIII. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The district uses several research based curricula including:

- Second Step
- Steps to Respect
- Responsive Classroom

The district is also reviewing the new MARC curriculum on Bullying Prevention and Intervention. In May 2011 the middle school will be attending training in *Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders* and will begin to implement within the health curriculum.

The Bullying Prevention curricula are informed by current research which emphasizes the following approaches and strategies:

- 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 cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference

The preschool programs also have the Woven Word program which helps to build social skills. To further support social skills and strengthen character education, the district has a Peer Mediation/Leadership program in the Middle School and Peer Mediation and Mentoring programs at the High School. The PTO has also sponsored a variety of programs including BullyGuard and Rachel's Challenge.

Additional resources are available for students at

<http://teacherweb.com/MA/SilverLake/SafeSchoolInitiative/apt5.aspx>

IX. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent presentations are also an integral part of the Plan and include presentations on Internet Safety and Cyber-bullying each year, Rachel's Challenge, BullyGuard, and a four week Active Parenting Course. The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

Additionally, families may access resources posted on the District and individual school websites on prevention of and responses to bullying/cyber-bullying, internet safety, and the dynamics of bullying
<http://teacherweb.com/MA/SilverLake/SafeSchoolInitiative/apt1.aspx>

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, 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 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: SAMPLE BULLYING/CYBER-BULLYING REPORT FORM
The following protocol only applies to alleged bullying situations.

Step One: Initiate Incident Report Process

If a staff member/other adult witnesses or reports incident:

- Staff member completes incident report and gives it to administrator or designee

If a student reports incident to staff member:

- Acknowledge student's feelings
- Determine if there are safety issues that must be addressed immediately
- Staff member completes incident report and gives it to administrator or designee

If an anonymous report is received:

- School official will investigate the report

Step Two: Conduct Investigation

Interview target(s) of bullying:

- Target(s) and alleged aggressor(s) should be separated
- Do not ask to see or interview the target(s) in the presence of the alleged aggressor(s)
- Mediation **should not** be used in bullying situations
- Encourage target(s) to report any additional incidents with the alleged aggressor(s)

Interview the alleged aggressor(s):

- Identify the problem
- Focus more on the behavior of the alleged aggressor(s), protecting the confidentiality of the target(s)
- Make the alleged aggressor(s) aware of consequences of retaliation against target(s) and reporter(s)

Interview witness(es), if applicable:

- In cases of denial, or if further information is needed, interview witness(es)
- Document the witness(es) account

Step Three: Initiate Action Plan

- Assign discipline (if appropriate)
- Contact parent/guardian of primary participants
- Monitor safety of primary participants

Step Four: Finalize Incident Report / Follow-up

- Document outcome of investigation on the Incident Report / Action Plan Form
- Follow up: provide update to appropriate staff member(s)
- Monitor behavior of primary participants

*****Please note, any student who knowingly and deliberately makes a false report shall be subject to disciplinary action.****

Incident Report Form

Bullying is defined as a verbal, physical, written, or electronic action, or incident or other direct or indirect behavior that is cruel and repetitive. Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of physical, psychological or emotional power.

Person Completing Form	
Date, Time, and Location of Incident	
Who Reported Incident	
Student(s) Involved	

To your knowledge, has this occurred before? Yes No
 Are there immediate safety or transportation concerns? Yes No

Details of Incident

Action Plan

To be completed by principal / assistant principal/ designated staff

Action Taken	√	Date	Initials
Interviewed Target			
Interviewed Alleged Aggressor			
Interviewed Witnesses			
Parent Notified			

Summary of Findings/Action Plan

Signature of Principal/Designee _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Communication Form

Date:

Dear

Your child was involved in an incident at school today. We believe it is important to share this information with you.

Reported incident:

The incident has been investigated and will be monitored. Due to reasons of confidentiality, other students' names and disciplinary actions can not be revealed.

Please sign and return this letter to school in the enclosed stamped envelope as soon as possible. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you

Principal/Designated Staff

Date

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Protocol for Responding to a Report of Bullying and/or Retaliation

