

Falmouth Public Schools

A Community Committed To Excellence: Every Student. Every Day.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

(Updated 2023)



Office of the Superintendent
340 Teaticket Highway
East Falmouth, MA 02536

(Approved by the Falmouth School Committee on March 21, 2023)

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Introduction

The Falmouth Public School District is committed to maintaining a positive and safe learning environment where all students are free from bullying, including cyber-bullying and retaliation. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process, and to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all.

In accordance with the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, we recognize that certain students, as listed in in the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, may be more vulnerable to becoming a target¹ of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race², 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.³ Please note, however, that students do not need to be a member of a vulnerable student population or a member of a legally protected class⁴ in order to be the target of bullying - any student can be the target of bullying, and all students are protected by

¹ Note that the Anti-Bullying Regulations enacted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and DESE's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan recommend using "target" instead of "victim" and "aggressor" instead of "perpetrator" even though the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute uses "victim" and "perpetrator." The Falmouth Public School District has chosen to do the same, and uses target and aggressor throughout this Plan so as to be consistent with DESE's guidance.

² In accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clauses 62 & 63), race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.

³ As noted in the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, school districts are authorized to establish separate discrimination or harassment policies that can include categories of students in addition to those categories of students listed in the Statute who may be more vulnerable to bullying. In this regard, the Falmouth School Committee has adopted policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment of students on the basis of the following categories: race*, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, pregnancy or pregnancy related condition, active marital status, familial status, genetic information, ancestry, national origin, ethnic background, immigration status, English language proficiency, religion, military/veteran status, homeless status, age, or any other category protected by state or federal law. (*Race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.)

⁴ Nothing in this Plan alters the obligations of the School District to take action in order to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected class in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, as well as School District policies. State and federal civil rights laws, as well as School District policies, prohibit treating students unfairly based on their membership in a legally "protected class" such as race*, national origin, religion, disability, sex, gender identity, etc. (*Race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.)

this Plan and the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute.

We will undertake specific steps to support vulnerable students, and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to respond to bullying or harassment.

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 promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and will take prompt action to end that behavior and restore a sense of safety for targets, witnesses, and others as necessary. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (Plan) is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation in accordance with the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, [M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O](#), DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations, [603 CMR 49.00](#), and the Falmouth School Committee's Policy on Bullying Prevention, [Falmouth SC Policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention](#).

The Falmouth Public School District is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent bullying, and in consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

This Plan, which is modeled after DESE's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, reflects the Falmouth Public School District's Mission, Vision, and Core Values, as well as the academic and social-emotional learning expectations outlined in the District's Vision of the Graduate (#IAmA**CLIPPER**):

Mission

The Falmouth Public Schools creates world-class student learning experiences. Our Clippers are empowered to pursue their goals with curiosity, integrity, and resiliency.

Vision

Clippers are creative, inquisitive, and engaged learners who participate in their community as socially responsible citizens. Clippers effectively communicate and solve problems that impact the world around them.

Core Values

Empower students to find joy in their learning

Together, as a community, we commit to achieving excellence by

- Providing learners with the opportunity to achieve their personal best
- Engaging in learning anytime, anywhere that is both personalized and relevant

- Inspiring learners to discover and develop their curiosity, creativity, and talents and actively engage in interesting, relevant, and important learning and reflection
- Challenging students to think critically, innovate, collaborate, and effectively communicate in local and global environments

Embrace each other's differences and cultivate community

Together, as a community, we commit to achieving excellence by

- Strengthening our community to foster mutual respect, honesty, multiple perspectives, and appreciation of diversity and culture to inform shared decision-making
- Partnering with students, families, staff, and the community to deepen student learning
- Fostering kindness among all students, creating an inclusive environment that welcomes students of all abilities
- Creating access by removing barriers that impact student achievement based on race (including, but not limited to, traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles), color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, pregnancy or pregnancy related condition, active marital status, familial status, genetic information, ancestry, national origin, ethnic background, immigration status, English language proficiency, religion, military/veteran status, homeless status, age, or any other category protected by state or federal law

Encourage a life of growth and wellness

Together, as a community, we commit to achieving excellence by

- Creating a safe, secure learning environment
- Challenging learners to move to deeper and more complex levels of knowledge and embrace a flexible learning path that is age and ability appropriate
- Developing social, emotional, and physical health in the pursuit of wellness
- Empowering learners to persevere both independently and collaboratively by developing self-discipline and confidence to work hard, accept responsibility, demonstrate integrity, acknowledge new ideas, and recognize success and failure are both parts of learning

Vision of the Graduate - [Charting Course to Graduation](#)

I am **C**reative.

I am a **L**earner.

I am **I**nquisitive.

I am a **P**artner and a **P**articipant.

I am an **E**ffective communicator.

I am **R**esilient.

#IAmACLIPPER

I. Leadership

Leadership at all levels plays a critical role in developing and implementing this Plan in the context of whole school and community efforts to promote a positive school climate. School District leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. The Falmouth Public School District is committed to ongoing partnerships with students, parents/guardians, and community members to establish a positive school climate that is safe and welcoming for all. The School District's 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 this Plan.

A. Public Involvement in Developing the Plan

The Falmouth Public School District's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was initially approved by the Falmouth School Committee in 2010 when the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute was first enacted. At that time, the Plan was developed by a Bullying Prevention Planning Team comprised of administrators, a school committee member, school adjustment counselors, a school nurse, a parent/guardian representative, a student representative, the Director of Falmouth Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), a local law enforcement representative, and a community representative. The Plan is now being updated to comply with updated guidance issued by DESE, as well as updates to the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute and DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations. As required by the Anti-Bullying Statute, M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, this updated Plan was developed in consultation with the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Student Services, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB), the Director of Finance & Operations, the Director of Policy & Legal Affairs, Principals, Assistant Principals, Department Heads, all Faculty and Staff Members, the Executive Director of VIPS, the Wellness Committee, the DEIB Advisory Group, School Councils, the English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC), the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC), the School Resource Officer (SRO), and various student groups. This Plan also was reviewed by and developed in consultation with the School Committee's Policy Subcommittee, and was presented to the community during a meeting of the Falmouth School Committee on March 7, 2023. On this date, the public was invited to participate and provide feedback. A district-wide Anti-Bullying Forum was also conducted on January 19, 2023 for all School District families, at which time attendees were able to ask questions regarding bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and regarding the School District's process for responding to claims of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

B. Assessing Needs and Resources

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is the Falmouth Public School District's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation within the context of the School District's other healthy school climate initiatives.

School leaders, with input from families and staff, are engaged in the ongoing process of assessing the adequacy of current programs, reviewing current policies and procedures, reviewing available data on bullying and behavioral incidents, and assessing available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This “mapping” process will continue to assist the School District in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the Falmouth Public School District will revise policies and procedures as necessary, establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement, and set priorities.

In addition, the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, required DESE to develop a student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools. In response to this statutory requirement, beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, DESE created its Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) Survey Project whereby students in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 are asked to complete school climate surveys at the end of their math MCAS sessions. The surveys are completely voluntary, and DESE was required to design the surveys so as to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation by students. DESE’s VOCAL surveys ask participating students to share their views in response to questions that encompass the following topics:

- Engagement (Cultural Competence, Relationships, Participation)
- Safety (Emotional Safety, Physical Safety, Bullying/Cyber-Bullying)
- Environment (Instructional Environment, Mental Health Environment, Discipline Environment)

The Falmouth Public School District engages in analyzing the data from the DESE VOCAL Surveys for each school in the District, and responds accordingly. Information regarding DESE’s VOCAL Survey Project can be found here: [Views of Climate and Learning \(VOCAL\) Survey Project](#).

In addition, the School District is required to report its bullying incident data to DESE on an annual basis.

C. Planning and Oversight

Designated school and district administrators will provide oversight of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as indicated in the chart below:

TASK	SCHOOL LEADERS	DISTRICT LEADERS
Receiving bullying reports.	Principal and/or Designee	Assistant Superintendent
Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports and accessing information related to targets and aggressors.	Principal and/or Designee	Assistant Superintendent
Collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and measure improved outcomes.	Principal and/or Designee	Assistant Superintendent
Planning supports that respond to the needs to targets and aggressors.	Principal and/or Designee School Adjustment Counselors School Guidance Counselors Special Education Building Administrators Designated Teachers	Assistant Superintendent Director of Student Services Director of Policy & Legal Affairs
Planning ongoing professional development as required by law.	Principal and/or Designee	Assistant Superintendent Director of Student Services Director of Policy & Legal Affairs
Choosing and implementing the curricula.	Principal and/or Designee School Adjustment Counselors School Guidance Counselors School Librarians Teachers	Assistant Superintendent Director of Student Services Director of Physical Education, Health & Wellness Guidance Department Head
Developing new or revising current policies and protocols including Internet Safety Policy and identify key personnel to oversee them.	Principal and/or Designee	Superintendent School Committee School Committee Policy Subcommittee Director of Policy & Legal Affairs
Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct to, among other	Principal and/or Designee	Assistant Superintendent Director of Policy & Legal

things, make clear that bullying of students by school staff or other students will not be tolerated.		Affairs Superintendent School Committee
Leading parent and family engagement efforts and draft parent information materials.	Principal and/or Designee PTOs School Councils	Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Director of Student Services Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Director of Policy & Legal Affairs District Wellness Committee
Reviewing and updating the Plan at least biennially as required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.	Principal and/or Designee	Director of Policy & Legal Affairs (in consultation with others)

D. Priority Statement

The purpose of the Falmouth Public School District’s Priority Statement is to communicate the School District’s vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

In this regard, the Falmouth Public School District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. To that end, the School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. As mentioned in the **Introduction** section of this Plan, this commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process, and to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all.

Also as mentioned in the **Introduction** section of this Plan, in accordance with the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, we recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race⁵, 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 Falmouth Public School District has identified specific steps it will take to

⁵ In accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clauses 62 & 63), race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.

create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and will provide all students with skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The specific steps include, but are not limited to, providing social skills training, counseling services, and educational supports and resources tailored on a case by case basis to meet students' individual needs, assisting students with identifying what they need to feel safe, welcome, and successful at school, assisting students with developing friendships and making connections at school, and identifying trusted staff members and peer leaders to mentor and support students. Additional steps include creating safe school and classroom environments, providing ongoing professional development for staff, offering bullying prevention education opportunities for students to increase awareness, understanding, and acceptance, reviewing and updating bullying prevention curricula, and providing social-emotional and culturally responsive instruction.

Principals are responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Plan at their respective schools 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 in accordance with this 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 in accordance with this Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged target.

II. Training And Professional Development

The Falmouth Public School District's professional development plans reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 to provide ongoing training and 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 regarding this 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, cyber-bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grade levels throughout the School 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.

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, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Developmentally or age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally or age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- 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;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying, cyber-bullying, and 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 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 this Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc., and bullying behaviors

C. Written Notice to Staff

The 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 District's Employee Handbook and the Student Handbook's Code of Conduct.

III. Access To Resources And Services

The Falmouth Public School District is committed to ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes resources and services designed to meet these needs and enhance the School District's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. Available resources and services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying, and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors. School District resources and services include protocols for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

A. Identifying Resources

The Falmouth Public School District regularly reviews its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. The School District annually reviews its current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive, welcoming, and safe school environments. The process of mapping resources is an ongoing, dynamic process that supports the School District in developing recommendations and action steps to fill any identified gaps in staffing, resources, and services.

B. Counseling and Other Services

The Falmouth Public School District is committed to ensuring that the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of both targets and aggressors are addressed, and all students (K-12) have access to counseling staff and services within each school. In addition, each school has a Coordination Team which meets weekly to review which students may need support and how best to provide that support. The members of each Coordination Team regularly collaborate with and receive information regarding students from teachers and other staff members. The Coordination Teams are comprised of the following staff members:

- Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Special Education Building Administrators
- Guidance Department Head (grades 5-12)
- School Psychologists
- School Adjustment Counselors
- School Guidance Counselors (grades 5-12)
- School Nurses

The School District provides culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, and continuously assesses the needs of staff, students, and families in an effort to develop additional services and resources that may be identified and deemed necessary. The School District partners with numerous community organizations, and maintains up-to-date

information on community-based mental health referrals, outside agencies, and services for Medicaid eligible students. School administrators, school adjustment counselors, school guidance counselors, school psychologists, and other staff members work collaboratively to develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, to provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and to provide education and intervention services, as well as functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans when necessary and appropriate, for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

Additional personnel/programs which routinely support students in need include:

- Gosnold Counselors
- Teachers
- English Language Development (ELD) Teachers
- Interpreters
- Teaching Assistants
- One-to-One Aides
- Board Certified Behavior Analysts
- Speech/Language Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- School Resource Officer
- School Safety Personnel
- Coaches
- Staff in the Bridge Program (grades 7-12)
- Staff in the Graduate Assistance Program (GAP) (grades 9-12)
- McLean Hospital Consultants
- VIPS
- Falmouth Human Services
- Falmouth Service Center
- Outside Therapists
- Family Resource Center
- Cape Behavioral Health Center
- Department of Children & Families

School District Services/Resources

- Bullying Instruction/Curriculum
- SEL Instruction/Curriculum
- Culturally Responsive Instruction/Curriculum
- Racial Trauma Training
- Instructional Support Teams
- DESSA Rating Scales (CASEL Framework)

- Calmer Choice (grades K-4)
- Youth Resilience (grades 5-6)
- Therapy Dogs
- FHS Peer Mentor Program
- VIPS Mentor Program
- Restorative Practices⁶
- Parent/Guardian Forums/Workshops
- Lunch/Friendship Groups
- Social Skills Groups
- Afterschool Clubs & Activities
- Class/Classroom Meetings (to address and resolve issues)
- Safety Care De-Escalation Training (for Staff)
- Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
- Behavioral/Emotional Consultation
- Safety Plans
- Case Management Services
- Individual and Small Group Counseling
- Risk Assessments
- Psychiatric Assessments
- Crisis Team Interventions
- Referral to Outside Providers & Resources
- Collaboration with School Resource Office/Falmouth Police Department
- Community Based Justice Meetings with Cape & Islands District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Division

C. Students with Disabilities

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, when an IEP Team determines that a student is identified as being on the autism spectrum, has a disability that affects social skills development, or the student is more vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of their disability, the Team will consider the social emotional skill development implications for inclusion in the IEP.

D. Referral to Outside Services

The School District has established referral protocols in place that are used when referring students and families to outside services which allow students and their families access to appropriate and timely services. Each school maintains a list of outside agencies and services available for students and families, and parents/guardians are encouraged to contact their

⁶ While the Falmouth Public School District is committed to restorative practices, the School District recognizes that due to the power imbalance between targets and aggressors, a restorative approach to bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation may be counterproductive in that it may very well exacerbate the target's concerns and enhance the aggressor's sense of power. Accordingly, a restorative approach, such as a restorative meeting with the target and the aggressor, will be used cautiously and sparingly, and only if the parties and their parents/guardians mutually agree.

child's school to obtain assistance and/or a referral to an outside agency. All referrals comply with applicable laws and policies. The School District's referral protocols are evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess their relevance to this Plan, and are revised as needed.

IV. Academic And Non-Academic Activities

The Falmouth Public School District provides age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the evidence-based curricula used at each grade level. Effective instruction includes classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

The School District's bullying prevention curricula is informed by current research which 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, cyber-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.

Relevant components of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be shared and explained with students annually through school assemblies.

B. General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment, and underscore the importance of the School District's 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 students of all races⁷ and religions, students of all cultures and backgrounds, students with

⁷ In accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clauses 62 & 63), race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.

disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students using developmentally appropriate language;

- Communicating with parents and guardians regarding the school’s goals and expectations for students and students’ safety;
- 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.

As required, the School District employs evidence-based bullying prevention curricula at each grade level, and the curricula is reviewed and updated as necessary on an ongoing basis.

The following are examples of bullying prevention curricula currently used in the School District:

Grades K through 4	Grades 5 and 6	Grades 7 and 8	Grades 9 through 12
We Thinkers	The Great Body Shop	Advocates of Youth	The Michigan Model
PeaceBuilders	The Michigan Model	The Michigan Model	Stopbullying.gov
DESSA/Aperture	DESSA/Aperture	DESSA/Aperture	DESSA/Aperture
Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum	Stopbullying.gov Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum	Nemours Kids Health EverFi Honor Code Khan Academy Teens Health Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum	Project Adventure Health Curriculum Stopbullying.gov #ThatsNotLove Campaign How to Break Up Respectfully Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum

V. Policies And Procedures For Reporting And Responding To Bullying, Cyber-Bullying And Retaliation

A. Reporting Bullying, Cyber-Bullying or Retaliation

The Falmouth School Committee's Policy on Bullying Prevention can be found here: [Falmouth SC Policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention](#).

Reports of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing by the receiving party. Staff members are 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, cyber-bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals who are not staff members, may be made anonymously. Note that anonymous reports may impede the School District's ability to conduct a complete and thorough investigation. The School District will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form (see Appendix A at the end this Plan), and each Principal's email address and phone number as follows:

Falmouth High School

Principal Alan Harris
aharris@falmouth.k12.ma.us
508-540-22002 ext. 3035

Lawrence School

Principal Tom Bushy
tbushy@falmouth.k12.ma.us
508-548-0606 ext. 501

Morse Pond School

Principal Tim Adams
tadams@falmouth.k12.ma.us
508-548-7300 ext. 403

East Falmouth Elementary School

Principal Paul Goodhind
pgoodhind@falmouth.k12.ma.us
508-548-1052 ext. 7203

Mullen-Hall Elementary School

Principal Rose Moran

rmoran@falmouth.k12.ma.us

508-548-0220 ext. 425

North Falmouth Elementary School

Principal Rebecca Vieira

rvieira@falmouth.k12.ma.us

508-563-2334 ext. 303

Teaticket Elementary School

Principal Sandy Kapsambelis

skapsambelis@falmouth.k12.ma.us

508-548-1550 ext. 102

While the School District has a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form (see Appendix A at the end of this Plan), use of the Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The School District will (1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents/guardians; (2) make the Incident Reporting Form available in each school's main office, counseling offices, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the Principal or designee; and (3) post the Incident Reporting Form on the School District's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents/guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the School District will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, students, and parents/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, and the Superintendent or designee when the Principal or the Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the School District's website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents/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 they witness or become aware of conduct that may constitute bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with School District policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others

The School District expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal or designee, or Superintendent or designee when the Principal or Assistant Principal is the alleged aggressor. 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/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, Cyber-Bullying or Retaliation Allegations - (Student Aggressors)

Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying, cyber-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, cyber-bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. The Principal or designee will inform the aggressor and the aggressor’s parents/guardians and anyone else involved in the investigation that any form of retaliation perpetrated against any of the above-mentioned parties is strictly prohibited and could result in discipline being imposed, as well as notification to the Falmouth Police Department if deemed necessary.

Obligations to Notify Others

- I. **Notice to Parents/Guardians.** Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents/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/guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations, 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, including but not limited to DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations, 603 CMR 49.00.
- III. **Notice to Law Enforcement.** At any point after receiving a report of bullying, cyber-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 Falmouth Police Department. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations, 603 CMR 49.00, and the 2022 School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding between the School District and the Falmouth 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 the Falmouth Public School District, the Principal or designee shall contact the Falmouth Police Department if there is a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. In making this determination, the Principal will, consistent with this Plan and with applicable School 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 promptly investigate all reports of bullying, cyber-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.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee as deemed appropriate. During the investigation, the Principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/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, if claims are substantiated, will result in disciplinary action.

To the extent practicable, and given their 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. Because information

must be shared in order to conduct effective investigations under this Plan, the School District cannot promise strict confidentiality to individuals reporting allegations of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. However, the School District will only release information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation on a legitimate need to know basis.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation will be consistent with School District policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations

In accordance with the School Committee's Bullying Prevention Policy ([Falmouth SC Policy JICFB - Bullying Prevention](#)), the Principal or designee shall complete the investigation and will make a determination within fourteen (14) school days from the date of the report based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying, cyber-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), school adjustment counselor, and school guidance counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents/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/guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. All notices to parents/guardians 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 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. The principal or designee shall inform the parents/guardians of the target about DESE's Problem Resolution System and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the investigation. In this regard, any parent/guardian who would like to seek additional guidance and/or who would like to file a complaint regarding a matter involving the School District and/or their child's school may do so through DESE's Problem Resolution System. Information regarding DESE's Problem Resolution System can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu, or parents/guardians can call DESE at 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available in the Superintendent's Office.

E. Responses to Bullying, Cyber-Bullying and Retaliation

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Upon the Principal or designee determining that bullying, cyber-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. Skill-building approaches that the Principal or designee may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the School District's anti-bullying curricula;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with appropriate school personnel;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents/guardians to engage parent/guardian support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- Adopting behavior 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 this Plan and with the School District's code of conduct.

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

If the Principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying, cyber-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 a sense of safety for targets, witnesses, and others as necessary. 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. Other possible strategies might include, but are not limited to, no contact orders, or changing schedules or seating arrangements.

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, Cyber-Bullying or Retaliation Allegations - (Staff Aggressors)

The Falmouth Public School District has policies and procedures in place that address how School District Administration will respond to and resolve a report of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation of a student by school staff. The policies and procedures address safety planning, notification of parents/ guardians, investigation, and response – the same areas that are addressed when a student is alleged to have bullied another student (see Section V. B – E above). The policies and procedures 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, cyber-bullying or retaliation or who provides information during an investigation is strictly prohibited and, if claims are substantiated, will result in disciplinary action.

VI. Collaboration With Families

A. Parent Education and Resources

The School District will offer education programs for parents/guardians that are focused on the parent/guardian components of the School District’s anti-bullying and social competency curricula. These programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTOs, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, English Learner Parent Advisory Council, and other parent/guardian organizations as deemed appropriate

B. Notification Requirements

Each year the School District will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The School District will send parents/guardians written notice each year about the student-related sections of this Plan and the School District’s Internet safety policy (See [Falmouth SC Policy IJNDB - Responsible Use Policy](#)). All notices and information made available to parents/guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents/guardians. The School District will post this Plan and related information on its website.

VII. Prohibition Against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying And Retaliation

Acts of bullying/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, 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/cyber-bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying/cyber-bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying/cyber-bullying is also prohibited.

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

VIII. Problem Resolution System

Any parent/guardian who would like to seek additional guidance and/or who would like to file a complaint regarding a matter involving the School District or their child's school may do so through DESE's Problem Resolution System. Information regarding DESE's Problem Resolution System can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu, or parents/guardians can call DESE at 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available in the Superintendent's Office.

IX. Important Terms & Definitions

The following definitions are adapted from the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute and DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and 603 CMR 49,00). Please refer to the Statute and the Regulations for the full statutory and regulatory definitions.

Aggressor is a student or member of the school staff who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation towards a student.

Bullying, which includes cyber-bullying, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of the school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or

gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to their property;
- ii. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their 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 the 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, postings on social media platforms, and any other 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 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.

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

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

Students As Targets/Students & Staff Members As Aggressors

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute and DESE's Anti-Bullying Regulations, only students, not staff members, can be targets, while both students and staff members can be aggressors.

Bullying Outside Of School

There is a common misconception that school districts cannot impose discipline when bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation takes place outside of school. In fact, school districts can impose discipline when conduct that amounts to bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation happens outside of school if:

- The conduct creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- The conduct infringes on the target's rights while at school; or
- The conduct materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

In addition, the use of a school-issued chromebook or other school-issued device to engage in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is strictly prohibited and subject to discipline, regardless of whether the use occurs at school or outside of school.

X. Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Falmouth Public School District, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to any school within the Falmouth Public School District or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race⁸, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, pregnancy or pregnancy related condition, active marital status, familial status, genetic information, ancestry, national origin, ethnic background, immigration status, English language proficiency, religion, military/veteran status, homeless status, age, or any other category protected by state or federal law. Nothing in this Plan prevents the School District from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected class in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, as well as School District policies.

In fact, behavior that constitutes bullying may rise to the level of discrimination or harassment in violation of state and federal civil rights laws which prohibit discrimination or harassment on the basis of a student's membership in a legally protected class - e.g., race⁹, national origin, religion, disability, sex, gender identity, etc. For example, if a student is repeatedly called derogatory names based on the student's membership in a legally protected class, such conduct might not only constitute bullying under the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, but it also may very well constitute discrimination or harassment in violation of the student's civil rights. If a student is the target of bullying because of their membership in a legally protected class, the applicable state and federal civil rights laws will take precedence over the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Statute, and the matter will be addressed by the School District in accordance with all applicable civil rights laws.

In addition, nothing in this Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the Falmouth Public School District to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H½, and 37H¾, M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 41, 42, and 42D, M.G.L. c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, School District policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan encompasses such behavior.

⁸ In accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clauses 62 & 63), race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.

⁹ In accordance with M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clauses 62 & 63), race includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, hair length, and protective hairstyles.

APPENDIX A
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** *This line may be left blank if an anonymous report is being made*
(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/
Guardian** **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

1. Investigator(s): _____

Position(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 BULLYING, RETALIATION Yes No

Summary of Investigation:(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

