

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, 2020-2021



In May 2010, the Governor signed Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010 into law which addresses Bullying in Schools. The law requires all schools and school systems to develop and implement a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The plan was developed and implemented in the fall of 2011.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Statement

PVPA is a public school and community that prohibits bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation against those reporting accurate and credible incidents. The Bullying Intervention Plan is an approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation. PVPA is committed to working with students, staff, families, and law enforcement and the community at large to prevent issues of violence and inequity through prevention, intervention, and education.

Any action within our community that creates an environment of continued harassment compromises the very fabric of our community. The PVPA learning community is among the most geographically diverse in the Bay State, with students, parents, faculty, staff, and Board members representative of 59 different towns and cities. Our diversity is an opportunity for all of us to learn from many different perspectives and join together around common goals. The responsibility rests with each member in our community to actively cultivate a community dedicated to inclusivity, equity, and the promotion of individual growth, with the goal of maximizing one's potential for educational growth. PVPA's efforts continue to be directed at purposely building community. PVPA looks forward to working with families to support these efforts.

In the spirit of preserving and strengthening the bridges in our community, PVPA adopted the following policy in accordance with the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 92 "An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools."

Definitions

Bullying = 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 and/or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his or her own 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 school.

Cyber-bullying = bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication and includes:

- the creation of a Web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the above conditions noted under Bullying definition.
- 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.

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

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

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

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

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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 37H1/2, 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.

Leadership Oversight and Accountability

The PVPA leadership team plays an integral role in ensuring the safety of all PVPA students and community members. The Dean of School Culture, through working closely with the PVPA School Counseling Department team and Faculty/Staff, will report the total number of complaints, investigations, verified acts, and any trends of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, and retaliation quarterly to the PVPA Board of Trustees.

Training and Professional Development

All PVPA faculty and staff members shall engage in an annual fall training that includes an overview of school policy, procedures on reporting, identification, and intervention techniques. Each annual PVPA staff training will be developed with input from PVPA school counseling department, administration, and faculty/staff, informed by the latest research. It will further develop the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, respond, and report bullying incidents including but not limited to the following:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate effective interventions to stop bullying.
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among aggressor, target, and witnesses to bullying and the potential fluidity between target and aggressor status.
3. 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.
4. Information on types of incidents PVPA students have experienced.
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying.
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.
7. Information on responding to, reporting on, and tracking incidents.

Bullying Related To Students With Disabilities

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the Individual Education Plan (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.

Parent/Guardian Partnership and Access to Resources and Services

PVPA shall make available on our website a range of materials relevant to bullying, cyber-bullying, and Internet safety. The materials will be collected from StopBullying.gov, the PVPA School Counseling department, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The PVPA website resources will be updated annually to reflect the latest research and materials to further support families and students. Families will annually receive an overview of the bully prevention curriculum used at PVPA and materials guidance to further reinforce the bully prevention curriculum at home. The PVPA Student/Parent Handbook will include the PVPA Bully Prevention and Intervention Plan.

PVPA shall annually hold a parent education event that shall include but not be limited to the following topics:

- The dynamics of bullying
- Online safety and cyber-bullying

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- An overview of the school policy and procedures on reporting, investigation, follow-up and guidelines on when to involve local law enforcement.
- An overview of bully prevention curriculum used by PVPA and specific direction in supporting and reinforcing in school efforts towards bully prevention.
- PVPA parents/guardians will be encouraged to access PVPA resources and the DESE resources to further support bully prevention efforts.
- PVPA parents/guardians will be reminded annually that PVPA's school counseling department serves as the primary resource in assisting families and students in identifying therapeutic and counseling services outside of school for students.

Student Partnership and Curriculum

The PVPA student community will play a critical role in creating a safe environment for all students. Student voices will be represented in bullying prevention curriculum planning discussions to share input with administration and faculty on meaningful ways to integrate bullying prevention curriculum into the school. The program approach involves working with individuals, classrooms, the entire school, as well as parents and communities, to successfully address bullying prevention in schools.

Through working with the PVPA student council and the larger student body, the PVPA administration will gather qualitative data on students' experiences at PVPA and the intersection with bullying and harassment to analyze and track the current climate of the school. Included in our beginning of year orientation, students will be given an overview of the PVPA policy, procedures, reporting, and bullying prevention education. As we understand our needs better, we will identify and include programs that respond to student input.

Procedures For Reporting Suspected Bullying

Each member of the PVPA community (students, staff, parents and guardians) is obligated to report any incident of bullying or retaliation. PVPA faculty and staff are required to report any incidents that may constitute bullying or retaliation. Students are strongly encouraged to share incidents with a report that may be made anonymously. It is important that any student who feels that he or she is being bullied and/or harassed should share this with a PVPA staff/faculty member immediately. Each PVPA Staff and Faculty member is trained to accept reporting forms. Please refer to the PVPA Incident Report Form which is also available in electronic form at www.pvpa.org. PVPA is clear that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student or students solely based on an anonymous report. Matters of bullying and retaliation will be approached with particular attention to discretion and confidentiality.

Incidents should be reported to the Dean of School Culture immediately. Upon receipt of such a report the Dean shall promptly conduct and complete an investigation into the allegations within 1 to 5 school days. The Dean of School Culture will track all reporting.

Anonymous Reporting for Bullying and/or Retaliation

The anonymous reporting form is available online at www.pvpa.org, through PVPA School Counselors, in the Office of School Culture and in the PVPA Main Office. Persons submitting the form should make clear the first and last names, dates, place, and witnesses. This form when completed may be handed to any PVPA faculty/staff member and/or brought to the main office directly where the Dean of School Culture will follow the investigation procedures. All faculty and staff are well versed in investigation, disciplinary response, and follow up so that if they are contacted they can respond with those facts alone and refer caregivers to the Dean of School Culture. Students and caregivers are informed annually of the anonymous reporting protocol through the student handbook, open house, new student orientation and grade meetings.

Investigation Procedures

Witnesses (students, bystanders, parents, teachers, staff) will be interviewed promptly after an allegation has been made to gather important information for a determination in the investigation. After the information has been gathered,

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the Dean of School Culture will make a decision as to whether or not bullying/retaliation has occurred and/or if it is conflict, harassment, misunderstanding, or false reporting.

- PVPA administration will be prompt and sensitive to confidentiality regarding the use of names and details.
- Procedures for the investigation, disciplinary action, support, and follow up will be gone over thoroughly with parents/guardians and the involved students.
- If the incident is determined to be an act of bullying all involved students (target, aggressor, reporter, bystanders) will be notified and parents/guardians of all parties will be called.
- Following the outcome, administrators and appropriate faculty/staff will monitor all those involved daily/weekly as deemed appropriate to make sure that no retaliation occurs.
- Administration will take appropriate disciplinary actions. (See below)

Follow-Up Procedures in Incident of Bullying/Retaliation Finding

- Notification of the parent/guardian of a student's involvement in a bullying/retaliation incident and an outline of the consequence, follow-up, support, and/or further consequences for future incidences.
- Notification of the parent/guardian of the target, aggressor, and reporter identifying school response taken.
- If students involved in the incident are from more than one school district, PVPA will promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school district(s) so that they may take appropriate action.
- Local law enforcement will be notified in cases of harassment, physical threats/assaults, violation of civil rights, or any behavior determined to be criminal.
- PVPA will inform parents/guardians of right to pursue criminal charges when applicable.

Incidents of Retaliation

Any retaliation will be investigated to determine if the behavior/incident is conflict, bullying, or harassment. If retaliation is found to have occurred school disciplinary protocols will be followed, the tiered response and formal reporting process will result. Appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken accordingly to support targeted student and corrective action for the aggressor.

Consequences for False Reporting

Student/s determined to have engaged in false reporting of an incidence of bullying and/or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action in a tiered response.

Notification of Parent/Guardian of a Target and Aggressor

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Dean of School Culture will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of the procedures for responding to it. The Dean will clearly state the steps that will be taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. The Dean will discuss details of disciplinary action with the caregivers of the student who, upon investigation it has been determined, has engaged in aggressive behavior. All other inquiries (teachers, caregivers of target, community members, board members) will only involve referring to, and further awareness of, the PVPA discipline protocol and follow-up.

Procedures for Restoring a Sense of Safety for a Target

PVPA School Counselors and the Dean of School Culture will meet with the target student to assess needs and make sure that appropriate faculty is aware and vigilant in supporting the student. The Dean in collaboration with other administrators will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. The target student will be monitored and supported through daily/weekly check-in, as appropriate to ensure that student is safe and supported. PVPA will have an identified safe space in the school for the student. The Dean will stay in contact with the caregivers through a determined period of time to ascertain whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Dean will work

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with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately. Students and caregivers are asked to notify the school immediately if there has been an incidence of retaliation.

Any student identified to have been a target will be assessed by the Dean of School Culture with School Counselor consult to determine if outside support and counseling is recommended. The Dean, in collaboration with the School Counselor will refer families to appropriate local agencies for therapeutic and counseling services.

Corrective Action and Strategies for Identified Aggressor

The Dean of School Culture will follow discipline procedures as outlined in the PVPA Code of Conduct as the basis for consequences related to bullying. PVPA does not use Restorative Circles/Conferences as a response when there is a finding of bullying, however under certain circumstances the aggressor student may be able to take restorative steps and make amends, when deemed appropriate and safe. The Dean will consider what adjustments, if any are needed to protect the safety of identified target, aggressor, and others as well. The aggressor student will be monitored and supported through daily, weekly check in, as appropriate to ensure that student has met the requirements of the corrective action. Any student identified to have engaged in the aggressor role will also be assessed by the Dean with School Counselor consult to determine if outside support and counseling is recommended. The Dean in collaboration with the School Counselor will refer families to appropriate local agencies for therapeutic and/or counseling services.

Protection of Others

PVPA will maintain confidentiality for reporters, witnesses, targets, and aggressors – The names of any student involved will only be shared with appropriate staff/faculty.. The names will not be shared with other teachers, parents, or community members.

Protection of Reporter/Witness/Bystander

All names of students who report incidents will be kept confidential. The Dean of School Culture will follow up with the reporting student/s that provide information during an investigation and student/s that provide reliable information about an act of bullying and make sure he or she is supported through daily, weekly check in, as deemed appropriate to ensure that the student is safe and supported for a determined length of time. The Dean will consider what adjustments, if any are needed to enhance the student's sense of safety and that of others as well. If adjustments are found necessary, the administration will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately. Students and parents are asked to notify the school immediately if there has been an incidence of retaliation. The Dean in collaboration with the School Counselor will refer student and families to appropriate local agencies for therapeutic and/or counseling services if recommended by school or requested by family.

Counseling and Referral for Target, Aggressors, and Others

PVPA's school counseling department in consult with the Dean of School Culture will serve as the primary resource in determining when outside support services will be utilized and in assisting families and students in identifying therapeutic and counseling services outside of school.

Disciplinary Consequences

PVPA will use the Discipline Procedures as outlined in the PVPA Code of Conduct as the basis for consequences related to bullying with attention to balancing discipline with teaching appropriate behavior.