



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE
333 WASHINGTON STREET
BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS 02445

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
William H. Lupini, Ed.D.

September 19, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Governor Patrick signed Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010 (“An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools”) into law on May 3, 2010. Since that time, and in an effort to exceed the mandate of the legislation and reflect our commitment to bullying prevention in the Public Schools of Brookline, we have taken a number of important steps, including:

- The School Committee has strengthened the system-wide policy on bullying prevention and intervention;
- A working group comprised of parents, teachers, students and administrators developed our Master Plan, which was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in December, 2010;
- Students in grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 were surveyed regarding their perceptions and experiences with bullying behaviors; and
- Specific recommendations regarding the implementation of a social competency and bullying prevention and intervention plan have been formulated.

While the survey results and specific program plans will be made public in the next few weeks, our School Committee policy and system-wide Master Plan can be found on our website (www.brookline.k12.ma.us).

Following is an overview of some of the more important aspects of the Master Plan, with respect to definitions, staff training, written notice, reporting bullying or retaliation, responding to reports, investigations, determination and confidentiality.

Definitions

- “Bullying” means the repeated use by one or more students or a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:
 - ❖ causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
 - ❖ places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
 - ❖ creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - ❖ infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - ❖ materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- “Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation about bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff Training

- Annual training for Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) staff will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the Headmaster/Principal and/or his/her designee (Assistant Headmaster, Deans, Vice Principals) will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school.
- Professional development will also include training for regular and special education staff in strategies to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation of students with disabilities.

Written Notice

- Staff, students and parents will be provided with annual written notice of the Plan.

Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

- Reports of 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.

- Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals, may be made anonymously, although no formal disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- Use of a Bullying Incident Report Form is not required as a condition of making a report. However, forms are available in the main office of each school and on the PSB website.
- The Bullying Incident Report Form will be available in English, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew and Russian.

Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

- Only the following individuals are authorized to investigate to a report of bullying or retaliation: Brookline High School - Headmaster, Assistant Headmaster, Dean(s); Elementary Schools – Principal and Vice Principal. However, all school personnel are required to report incidents that they become aware of to these investigators.
- Upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, the Headmaster/Principal or designee will promptly take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety for alleged target(s) and, when necessary, take steps to protect those individuals from possible further bullying or retaliation.
- Upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, the Headmaster/Principal or designee shall promptly notify the parents/guardians of the alleged target(s) and aggressor(s) of the report, as well as providing periodic updates to these individuals during the investigation.
- The Headmaster/Principal shall immediately notify the Brookline Police Department if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor(s).

Investigation

- The Headmaster/Principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation. He/She shall complete the investigation within a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed fifteen (15) school days following the date of the report.
- The Headmaster/Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Determination

- If, after an investigation, the Headmaster/Principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he/she will take steps reasonably calculated to stop the prohibited conduct, prevent its reoccurrence, and ensure that the target(s) is/are not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. Specifically, the Headmaster/Principal shall:
 - ❖ determine what remedial action is required, if any;
 - ❖ determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary; and
 - ❖ notify the parents/guardians of the target(s) and the aggressor(s) of the determination and of the procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation.
- If, after an investigation, the Headmaster/Principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has not occurred, he/she shall notify the parents/guardians of the alleged target(s) and aggressor(s) of the determination.

Confidentiality

- The Headmaster/Principal or designee may not disclose specific information to a target's parent/guardian about disciplinary action taken against an aggressor unless it involves a "stay-away" order or similar directive.
- The Headmaster/Principal or designee may not disclose information from a target's or aggressor's student record to a parent/guardian unless the information is about the parent/guardian's own child.

Again, this information is only meant to provide you with a summary of how we have addressed these important issues in our Master Plan. Please see the complete Plan for more detailed information.

Should you have any questions regarding the Master Plan, please contact my office at (617) 730-2401. More information regarding our bullying survey and the specific program plans will be available through our website before the end of September.

Sincerely,



William H. Lupini, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

