

PVCICS Bullying Prevention And Intervention Plan

PVCICS is committed to providing all students with a safe, respectful learning environment that is free from bullying. We will treat all members of our community with kindness and respect in an inclusive environment. Any and all acts of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation are prohibited in our school. This plan has been developed to help school staff and students respond effectively to reports and observations of bullying, and provide a guideline for preventing bullying through education and anti-bullying programs.

DEFINITIONS:

Aggressor is a student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.

Bullying as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

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

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to intimidation or threats (in person or via an electronic device), physical or verbal assaults, repeated exclusion from a social group, and the taking or breaking of a student's property.

Cyber-bullying is 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 also includes:

- i. the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- 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 listed in (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying; and
- iii. 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 listed in (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

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

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

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

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

GOALS:

PVCICS will not tolerate bullying of any kind in our school. Preventing bullying is critical for creating and maintaining a safe, secure and positive school climate, which in turn supports academic achievement, increases school engagement, respects the rights of all individuals and groups, and purposefully builds community. PVCICS is committed to protecting all students from bullying, regardless of their legal status.

The principal will make clear to students, families and staff that bullying in the school buildings, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions held in any location is prohibited, and will not be tolerated.

Bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are prohibited:

On School Grounds. Including 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, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school district or school.

Off School Grounds. Including at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school, 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.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING PROCEDURES:

Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

PVCICS expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee. PVCICS will implement strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses bullying, or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

PVCICS will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, and an email address. The principal will receive all reports.

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

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of

the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, online, and in information about the policy that is made available to parents or guardians.

Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

Upon receipt of a complaint, report and/or allegation of bullying, the Principal (or his/her designee) will conduct an initial investigation as soon as possible. The timeliness of an investigation will depend upon such factors as the number of individuals involved, the number of witnesses to be interviewed, the availability of witnesses, the school schedule and other factors. A team of staff will be convened to investigate the bullying incident, make a determination, and assess the needs of the target and aggressor. This team will be comprised of the Principal, a school counselor or school psychologist, a teacher, and any other pertinent staff.

When it is determined by the Principal and/or team that bullying has occurred, the Principal or designee will:

- Act promptly to provide a remedy to the target(s), including in-school counseling support as needed and a referral to appropriate outside resources for the target and their family.
- Assess the target's needs for protection and take action to restore a sense of safety.
- Notify parents/guardians of action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against the aggressor(s), as outlined in the school handbook. A range of disciplinary actions may be taken against the aggressor, including but not limited to: in-class consequences, suspension, and expulsion. Disciplinary action will balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
- Notify the parents/guardians of the target and aggressor consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR sect. 23.00 and FERPA.
- Address the school climate, 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.
- Notify law enforcement pursuant to regulations.
- Provide in-school counseling and/or referral to necessary outside resources as appropriate for the aggressor and affected family members.
- 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.

If it is determined that a student has knowingly made a false accusation of bullying or retaliation, he or she may be subject to disciplinary action.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES:

School-wide: School Counselors, School Nurses, Special Education Teachers, Teachers, Paraprofessionals and Administrators will all work together to prevent and address bullying issues.

School Counseling Services: Counseling is available to students either through their school counselor or school psychologist. Counseling staff offer interventions to prevent bullying as well as support for both targets and aggressors. School counseling services will be offered in both English and Chinese.

Students With Disabilities: As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 37O, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or that 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. This will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose disability affects social skills development.

Referral to outside services:

When and where it is appropriate, School Counselors, School Psychologists, Nurses and/or Administrators will make referrals to out-of-school services for students and families. A listing of available counseling, family support, and crisis services will be maintained at the school on a yearly basis.

PROGRAMS:

PVCICS will implement an anti-bullying program as a required part of the curriculum at each grade level. It will be based in age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention using evidence-based curricula. PVCICS will also hold students and adults responsible for behaving with respect toward one another at all times. Instruction will include appreciation of human differences and understanding about differences. The programs that will be used at PVCICS are Second Step and Steps to Respect.

Second Step– Is a research-based social-skills program that teaches socio-emotional skills aimed at reducing impulsive and aggressive behavior while increasing social competence. “Second Step” teaches children to identify and understand their own and others’ emotions, manage their own emotional reactions, and choose positive goals.

Steps to Respect– Is a research based bullying prevention program designed to decrease bullying at school and help students build more supportive relationships with each other. The program’s dual focus on bullying and friendship is based on research showing that friendship protects children from harmful effects of bullying. Students are taught friendship skills, such as strategies for making and keeping friends, and steps for joining a group activity. “Steps to Respect” also teaches children skills for coping with bullying, including recognizing bullying, using assertive behaviors to refuse the bullying and reporting bullying to adults.

The principal will oversee the implementation of the school’s empathy/social skills and anti-bullying curriculum to all students in the school.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

In order to monitor the success of the *PVCICS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* and to help determine the effectiveness of interventions, curricula and actions the school will collect student and staff survey data, parent survey data, and the number and nature of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation instances. A school task force will be created to oversee the implementation of this policy during the academic school year.

Reports of the data will be forwarded to the principal’s office at the end of each school year and presented to the administration.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PVCICS shall provide professional development to school staff addressing the prevention, identification and remedying of bullying. Professional development will also include current research, especially in regards to at-risk students; information regarding the power differential that is often part of bullying; and internet safety as it relates to cyberbullying. A yearly training on the school’s anti-bullying policy and reporting procedures will be given to all staff.

Annual Staff Training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to receive the training during the school year in which they are hired.

Ongoing Professional Development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and

respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide 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
- 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
- the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school 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

PARENT/GUARDIAN EDUCATION:

PVCICS will provide information every year to parents/ guardians of enrolled students about anti-bullying procedures, the school internet safety policy, and the anti-bullying curriculum being used at school. The PVCICS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information will be posted online for families to view.

PVCICS will offer a yearly workshop about bullying for parents and guardians and provide information regarding the dynamics of bullying, online safety and cyberbullying, and reinforcing the bullying curriculum at home.

*** End of Policy ***