
BULLYING INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PLAN

PURPOSE:

The Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

We are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, limited English proficiency, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school or district will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

DEFINITIONS:

Aggressor is a student or 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 or retaliation.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- I. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- II. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself 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.

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, and Internet posting.

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 or staff 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.

I. Training and Professional Development

The Plan must reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O to provide ongoing 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. The Plan should state the content and frequency of staff training and ongoing professional development as determined by the school's or district's needs, and list other topics to be included in these staff programs. The locally identified additional areas of training should be based on needs and concerns identified by school and district staff.

The law lists six topics that must be included in professional development. Additional topics may be identified by the school or district leadership as they consider the unique needs of the school or district community. Plans should also identify which trainings will be provided districtwide and which will be school-based.

The following is sample language for Plans:

- A. 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 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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of schoolwide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
 - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
 - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

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 with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school or 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 the 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 or 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 or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.
- D. Parents and Guardian Notification. Parent and guardians are informed about the school's bullying prevention curriculum. The goal is to educate and inform families of the dynamics of bullying, online safety and cyberbullying as well as strategies to assist families in reinforcing these behaviors at home. This can occur during advisory council meetings, parent workshop offerings, guest speakers, community resources. These will be available and offered annually.
- E. The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The goal is to educate and inform families of the dynamics of bullying, online safety and cyberbullying as well as strategies to assist families in reinforcing these behaviors at home. This can occur during parent advisory council meetings, parent workshop offerings, guest speakers, and community resources/organizations. Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

II. Reporting Bullying, Cyberbullying, 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. The MRVTS staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other

individuals who are not school district staff members, may be made anonymously. The MRVTS will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The MRVTS will:
1) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other location determined by the principal or designee; and 2) post it on the school's website.

At the beginning of each school year, the MRVTS will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying, cyberbullying, 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, on the district website, and in information about the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

A. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or become aware of conduct that may be bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee 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 discipline.

B. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The MRVTS expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying, cyberbullying, 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.

C. False Reporting

If the Dean(s) of Students determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action consistent with school committee policies and student handbook.

III. Responding to a Report of Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation

A. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying, cyberbullying, 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, 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, cyberbullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. **Every attempt will be made to keep reports of bullying confidential.**

B. Obligations to Notify Others

1. *Notice to parents or guardians.* Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation.

2. *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.

3. *Notice to Law Enforcement.* At any point after receiving a report of bullying, cyberbullying, 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 local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making the determination, the principal or designee, will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with applicable school district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. Access to Resources and Services

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, student aggressors, families, and others are addressed. In order to enhance our school’s capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, there are available services and resources to address the needs of targets, student aggressors and family members.

Resources and Services to include:

- Review of positive school environment
- Referral to in-school counseling
- Referral to community based agencies/organizations
- Individual or group counseling with student support services staff
- Establish Safety Plans
- Behavioral Intervention Plan
- Guest Speakers
- De-escalation tools and other alternatives such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and collaborative problem solving.

Students with disabilities:

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, 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 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, cyberbullying, harassment, or teasing.

IV. Pre-investigation

Even before fully investigating allegations of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, school personnel will consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to support the alleged victim and/or protect the alleged victim from further potential incidents of concern. In taking any such action, however, the rights of both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator must be considered.

V. Investigation

The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying, cyberbullying, 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.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or 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 will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To extent practicable, and given his/her 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.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation will be consistent with MRVTS policies and procedures for investigations.

VI. Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation 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. All disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behaviors. Please refer to page 5, Section C, Access to Resources and Services.

BEHAVIORS AND CONSEQUENCES

While each behavior will be judged on an individual basis, the following represents possible consequences:

<p>b) Any direct verbal and/or written deliberate <u>threat</u> regarding health, safety, and/or home of a staff member, spouse, or family member.</p>	<p>b) Removal from class and/or area Up to ten (10) school days suspension Parental/guardian notification Possible police notification Possible psychological evaluation Possible expulsion by the Principal.</p>
<p>c) Any direct verbal and/or written deliberate threat regarding health or safety of a student including references to school shootings or mass violence.</p>	<p>c) Removal from class and/or area Up to ten (10) school days suspension Parental/guardian notification Possible police notification Possible psychological evaluation Possible expulsion by the Principal.</p>
<p>e) Damages on staff member’s <u>property</u>, including, but not limited to theft. Also, willful destruction of school property or property at school sponsored functions.</p>	<p>e) Meeting/conference with student, parent or guardian, Principal, Dean of Students and other interested parties to discuss restitution Up to ten (10) school days suspension Possible police notification Possible expulsion by Principal.</p>
<p>f) Willful damage or theft of another student’s property. This includes property that is found by a student and not</p>	<p>f) Meeting/conference with student, parent or guardian, Principal, Dean of Students and other</p>

immediately returned or submitted to the Dean's Office or Main Office.	interested parties to discuss restitution Up to ten (10) school days suspension Possible police notification Possible expulsion by Principal.
g) Any <u>action</u> that can bring physical harm on any staff member.	g) Removal from class/area Up to ten (10) school days suspension Possible police notification Parent/guardian of record notification Possible psychological evaluation Possible expulsion by the principal
h) Any deliberate action that can bring physical harm to a student.	h) Removal from class/area Up to ten (10) school days suspension Possible police notification Parent/guardian of record notification Possible psychological evaluation Possible expulsion by the Principal
i) Assaulting, bullying or intimidating another person. *Note - Failure to stop fighting when told to do so by staff, faculty or administration may result in additional suspension time.	i) Possible police notification Parent/guardian of record notification Up to ten (10) school days suspension Possible expulsion by the Principal.
j) Hazing	j) Possible police notification Parent/guardian of record notification Up to five (5) school days suspension Possible expulsion by the Principal.
k) Gossiping or spreading untrue stories that may falsely accuse or socially defame another student through word-of-mouth, written statement or use of technology	k) Parent/guardian of record notification Up to five (5) school days in-house suspension
n) Safety Violation - Behavior causing dangerous conditions within shop and/or other areas within the school.	n) Parent/guardian of record notification Up to three (3) school days suspension Meeting with an administrator

Note: Any act, not herein specified, which is unfavorable to the best interests of the school and its community may result in disciplinary action.

SUMMARY:

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the MRVTHS, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to MRVTS or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study at MRVTS on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, homelessness, or limited English proficiency. Nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan prevents the MRVTS from taking action to remediate discrimination or bullying based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school district policies. In addition, nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the MRVTS to take disciplinary action or other action in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan covers the

behavior.

Chapter 86 requires the districts to administer a student survey developed by the Department every four years to assess “school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools.”¹ The survey results will be used to assess the effectiveness of bullying prevention curricula and instruction that is required under the bullying prevention and intervention statute.

The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the opportunity to contact the Department’s problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats

This plan shall be updated at least biennially and posted on the school website.

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