



THE LEARNING CENTER FOR THE DEAF

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

2023-2025

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The Mission of The Learning Center For The Deaf

The mission of The Learning Center for the Deaf is to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children and adults thrive by having the language, knowledge, opportunity and power to design the future of their choice.

Language & Communication Policy

Marie Philip and Walden Schools at The Learning Center for the Deaf are bilingual schools. American Sign Language (ASL) and English are the primary languages of instruction in the classrooms. In the majority of circumstances, teachers utilize ASL for communicating academic concepts and for teaching English as a second language. Reading and written English are at the core of all coursework and classroom activities. Literacy in both languages is a principal goal of instruction. Spoken English instruction is also provided for students who have the ability to access instruction auditorily. How and when a student receives spoken English instruction is determined by the students' current abilities and communication objectives, and is agreed upon by the school and caregiver(s)/family. To allow for equal accessibility to all students, areas are provided for instruction through spoken English.

Complete language accessibility at all times is of paramount importance for students' cognitive, academic, social and emotional growth. Incidental learning plays an important role in the overall education and language development of children. Since most Deaf people access information visually, American Sign Language is the only fully accessible language for all students and other Deaf TLC community members. Therefore, ASL is utilized in the majority of campus communication contacts. Students should be able to "eyedrop" on conversations and be comfortable in all staff interactions. TLC staff members continually strive to develop fluent ASL and English writing skills. If families or visitors to the school are more adept at communicating in spoken English, arrangements can be made to provide English to ASL interpretation through The Learning Center for the Deaf Interpreting Department.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The Marie Philip School and Walden School at The Learning Center for the Deaf strives to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed in their school. The Marie Philip School and Walden School prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability(ies) race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation, and housing status, and ensure that all students have equal rights and equal enjoyment of the opportunities, advantages, and privileges

Priority Statement

Since its inception, The Learning Center for the Deaf (TLC) strives to be a safe place for deaf and hard of hearing students to learn and grow and belong. TLC's commitment to be a comprehensive school for all deaf and hard of hearing children brings with it accompanying responsibility to provide a positive learning environment for this diversity of learners and to support the healthy development of each "whole child."

TLC is a bilingual school (American Sign Language and English) dedicated to engaging students within an accessible and effective educational environment where students know they are valued, where all members of the community understand their responsibility to promote a positive school climate, and where students can achieve the highest quality of education in preparation for post-secondary opportunities, free from distraction or harm.

TLC's two major education programs Marie Philip School and Walden School offer multiple, flexible options for our students to learn and grow and be participants in a strong learning community. These two schools are united behind a singular vision to assure that all students achieve their full potential and that our students' linguistic, emotional, cognitive, and developmental needs continue to be richly supported.

In order to achieve these shared aspirations, The Learning Center for the Deaf is dedicated to fostering a respectful school culture, free from harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation of any kind. The school design and programs shape our commitment to creating the safest environment possible for all students within the school community. We do this through providing students and faculty/staff with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment and/or inappropriate teasing.

Community members are expected to treat each other with respect, fully aware that acts of bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying, and retaliation are prohibited on school grounds, in school buildings, or in any school related activities. This shared commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all harmful and disruptive targeted behavior that can impede a student's learning process.

We understand that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying or hurtful teasing. This may be based on actual or perceived characteristics, including disabilities, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessless, academic status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school will ensure that faculty and staff have the awareness and tools to take specific steps to create a safe and supportive environment for populations within the school who may be more vulnerable to bullying.

The following *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is a comprehensive approach to address and prevent issues of violence within our school. This Plan establishes a common approach to

prevent, intervene, and respond to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation should they occur. The Directors of each program within The Learning Center are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention Plan.

Definitions

Aggressor: Student(s) or school member who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, or retaliation.

Bullying: As defined in M.G.L. c.71, § 370, 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:

- 1) Causes *physical or emotional harm to the targeted individual(s) or to the target's property;*
- 2) *Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;*
- 3) *Creates a hostile environment at school for the target*
- 4) *Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or*
- 5) *Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.*

Cyber-bullying: Bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices, such as cell phones, computers, pagers, videophones, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to email, texting, instant messages, and Internet postings. Postings on the Internet can be all-inclusive that includes social media postings, public and private postings as well.

Cyber-bullying is treated as multiple counts of bullying by the Law, since numerous other individuals, through the far-reaching effects of technology, can observe it repeatedly. (see M.G.L.c.71, § 370 for a detailed legal definition of Cyber-bullying.)

Hostile Environment: A situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be affected by intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Incident Report: A standard form used to report incidents of bullying, harassment, or retaliation. The form provides a place to document allegations, describe actions observed and list witnesses.

Retaliation: Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or

community member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses and/or has reliable information about bullying that has occurred.

Community Members: Includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, residential staff, nurses, clinicians, food service personnel, coaches, advisors to after school activities, classroom assistants, parents, individuals and agencies working with the school, alumni, volunteers, and Board members.

Target: A student (or students) who has been subjected to bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

Conflict and dispute may occur frequently in schools but are not always harmful. Bullying and cyber-bullying differ from conflict. These behaviors are harmful one-way abuse behaviors. In situations where bullying occurs, there is repetition, power imbalance, and an intention to harm. Bullying is defined as a conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity perpetrated by an aggressor who dominates, in various ways, towards the target.

Acts of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation are absolutely prohibited and will lead to discipline.

Acts of bullying are prohibited:

- (1) On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds.
- (2) At a school-sponsored or school-related activity, event, function, whether on or off school grounds.
- (3) On a bus or van or other vehicle owned by, used, or leased by TLC or on a school district vehicle transporting a student to or from TLC.
- (4) Through technology or any electronic device that belongs to, is used or leased by TLC; and on any personal electronic device with the intention to bully or cyber-bully.
- (5) Any acts of intimidation, threat, bullying, cyber-bullying at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related,
 - If the act creates a hostile environment at school for the target or witness(es).
 - If the act infringes on their rights of the target at school, or
 - If the act materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously. It is important to note that no disciplinary action will be taken solely because of an anonymous report.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying or who provides information during an investigation is also prohibited. Retaliation can be done by an aggressor and people associated with the aggressor towards the target.

Nothing in this Bullying Prevention Plan requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs, nor is it intended to prevent the school administration from taking disciplinary action against a student for an action that does not meet the definition of bullying as defined earlier but is, nonetheless, unsafe or inappropriate at school.

Leadership

Leadership at all levels plays an essential role in sustaining a respectful community. All members of this community are expected to treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. This expectation is an integral part of TLC's commitment to promote a positive learning community and to eliminate harmful or disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Each student, parent/caregiver, faculty and staff member is expected to take acts of bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying, and retaliation seriously.

The Administrative and Supervisory teams will be responsible for setting priorities, assessing needs and resources, and for staying up-to-date with current research on bullying prevention and effective responses to bullying. Their responsibilities also include the following:

- Ensure that faculty and staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals, to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. receive training in preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying.
- Maintain The Learning Center's Internet safety policy,
- Implement appropriate programming and approaches to teach students about bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, and the prohibition against retaliation,
- Involve and inform parents and caregivers about bullying dynamics, the school's bullying prevention curriculum and how to reinforce the curriculum outside of school and provide information materials in languages other than English, as needed,
- Receive and respond to reports on bullying pursuant to school policies and procedures in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and Student Handbook.
- Maintain The Learning Center's process for tracking and recording incidents,

- Collect department and school-wide data on bullying to continually assess the problem and to measure improved outcomes, at least every four years pursuant to DESE policy, Chapter 86,
- Review and update the Plan yearly,
- Review and amend Student Handbooks annually, as needed.

At least once every four years TLC will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary developed survey for students to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in our school. Additionally, TLC will report annually, bullying incident data to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Training and Professional Development for Faculty and Staff

1) Faculty and staff will receive a copy of this written Plan upon hire and annually, thereafter. The Plan will also be available to faculty and staff in American Sign Language.

2) All new employees will be required to participate in a foundational training on *Preventing Bullying and Implementing Intervention Strategies*. This training will focus on the importance of consistent responses to acts of bullying and a clear understanding that bullying is not conflict, but instead it is a one-way abuse behavior where there is repetition, power imbalance and an intention to harm.

3) 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. Every year, thereafter, during the first week of school before students arrive, all staff including educators, classroom assistants, administrators, school nurses, clerical support personnel, maintenance team, athletic coaches, and extracurricular activities sponsors will receive refresher training on TLC's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the initial and continuing Professional Development attends to the overarching laws and regulations surrounding bullying, the identification of bullying behavior, research regarding specific groups of students who may be at a higher risk of bullying, IEP considerations, as well as strategies to prevent bullying, interventions that are effective, and reporting procedures.

Specifically, the content of school wide and organization wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- Identifying spaces where bullying usually occurs;
- 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 cyberbullying; and
- 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.

When the student's disability makes them vulnerable to bullying the IEP **must** address the skills and proficiencies needed for that student to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, and/or teasing. We must also consider a student may develop reactive behaviors as a result of being a target.

Additional areas identified by TLC 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;
- understanding the role of upstander and bystanders in a bullying situation; 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

Through the year, staff will participate in ongoing training in strategies for supporting those students whose disability affects social skill development (e.g. Autism) and can lead to significant and harmful power differences between and among students. This training will be done in each department and will focus on age-appropriate concerns that apply to the students in that department.

Education that Supports Bullying Prevention

The Learning Center for the Deaf is committed to implementing a comprehensive approach to establishing a safe school environment. This includes direct teaching at all grade levels, along with:

- Setting clear and healthy boundaries for students and staff
- Teaching about diversity and differences
- Establishing classroom routines that provide structure
- Using positive behavioral supports
- Encouraging adults within the school to establish positive relationships with students and to set good examples for social interaction
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding healthy and respectful behaviors
- Creating an environment that encourages problem solving, collaboration, teamwork, and peaceful conflict resolution
- Using deescalation techniques and knowing when to step in to defuse and distract
- Using the Internet and electronic communication safely
- Supporting students' social and emotional development
- Encouraging students' interests and participation in non-academic areas and extracurricular activities that help them to build upon their strengths.

Curriculum and Approach to Bullying

TLC understands that anti-bullying instruction and concepts dealing with respect must be introduced early in a child's life and consistently addressed throughout a student's development toward adulthood. TLC uses several evidence-based curricula and approaches to help promote a safe school environment and foster healthy social emotional experiences for students and staff. The programs described below are in effect as of the Fall of 2023.

Preschool and Kindergarten

The focus of the Early Childhood Center (ECC) is to foster language development which allows children to maximize development across other domains (e.g. cognitive, social/emotional, and self-help). Many youngsters come to our school at age 3 with little or no age-appropriate language skills. Clear language and highly visual, "hands-on" approaches help to make these important

concepts real to our youngest students.

The ECC has adopted anti-bias education in support of this focus, and in conjunction with our child-centered, project-based emergent curriculum in 2016. *Anti-Bias Education (ABE)* is a values-based curriculum that promotes understanding, respecting and embracing differences. In this approach, all individuals and families are recognized and the environment is rich with learning materials that represent various cultures and traditions. Within an inclusive, respectful school society, children develop self-awareness, a positive group identity, and comfort with human diversity. Members of the community develop an increased confidence in problem solving skills and learn to identify and act against bias, allowing students to reach their fullest potential as competent and caring citizens.

Elementary Program

As indicated in the Preschool and Kindergarten section, the Anti-Bias Education curriculum is also implemented at the Elementary level in 2016. Additional curriculum and resources are used at the Elementary level.

The Responsive Classroom: The *Responsive Classroom* (TRC) is an approach to elementary teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. It is used throughout the elementary departments along with individual social skills training and weekly small groups that focus on pro-social behavior. Research has shown that bullying usually starts at grade 3. This approach provides regular opportunities for student group meetings where issues that arise are discussed and positive behaviors are modeled. TRC utilizes parent handouts that offer insight and recommendations to parents in supporting positive social behavior.

Seven principles, as described in *TRC's* literature, informed by the work of educational theorists and the experiences of practicing classroom teachers, guide The *Responsive Classroom* approach:

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need a set of social skills: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self- control.
- Knowing the children we teach-individually, culturally, and developmentally- is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach and working with them as partners is essential to children's education.
- How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Steps to Respect: Steps to Respect (STR) was adopted at The Learning Center for the Deaf in 2004. It is an evidence-based program that addresses issues of bullying directly through lesson units, videos, posters, and activities and is used in grades 1 - 6. The *Steps To Respect* curriculum teaches elementary and middle school students to recognize, refuse, and report bullying, how to be assertive, and strategies to build friendships. *STR* also has a parent component with materials that are sent home as children progress through the various units throughout the year. Faculty and staff from various departments of the school have participated in *Steps to Respect* trainings, and together upon its initial implementation, they developed common reporting language and procedures. Included with *Steps to Respect* is the *Second Step* curriculum, a K-8 curriculum that teaches social emotional learning skills.

The Michigan Model for Health Revised Curriculum is used in our elementary grades at TLC. The *Michigan Model for Health* is a comprehensive and sequential health education curriculum that aims to provide school-aged children the knowledge and skills needed to practice and maintain healthy behaviors and lifestyles. It provides age-appropriate lessons addressing the most serious health challenges facing school-aged children, including social and emotional health; nutrition and physical activity; alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; personal health and wellness; safety; and HIV. Each grade level includes activities and lessons that teach students skills for dealing with bullying situations. The *Michigan Model for Health* facilitates learning through a variety of interactive teaching and learning techniques. Skill development through demonstration and guided practice is emphasized resulting in the development of positive lifestyle behaviors for students and families.

The elementary program also has monthly assemblies that center on interpersonal skills and social emotional wellbeing.

Secondary Program

Middle School Students (Grades 6-8)

Students participate in Health class throughout the middle school years. In this class, opportunities to discuss various issues of social respect and responsibility are included within the curriculum. In the Middle school years, *Second Step*, a K-8 anti-bullying curriculum developed by the same company that publishes Steps to Respect, has been taught during health class, since Fall 2011. In the middle school, monthly community meetings are held in which interpersonal and social emotional wellbeing skills are integrated.

School counselors are in place and meet often with students for small group discussions about social behavior, bullying, and differences in society, Deaf/hearing cross-cultural topics, and conflict resolution.

High School Students (Grades 9-12)

All high school students are enrolled in Health class for one full year. This class provides a broad overview addressing many issues of personal health, mental health, and self-awareness. Bullying and cyber-bullying are addressed through Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) High School's cyberbullying curriculum.

The high school also sponsors a student Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA) group that meets to plan and host discussions and activities related to specific areas of diversity.

Several assemblies are offered each year on issues of diversity and difference, Deaf culture, and cross-cultural communication.

Counseling staff members work individually with students or with small groups to address issues of conflict, diversity, bullying, and harassment.

MARC's high school curriculum, and cyber-bullying curriculum and the *Second Step* are utilized at the high school level.

Curriculum models investigated must meet the following criteria:

- Must include a parent component
- Must be age-appropriate and not be overly reliant upon reading material, only. Videos, "hands-on" activities and visuals would be more effective with our students.
- Must directly address bullying and cyber-bullying prevention
- Must have been evaluated through research and have outcomes data, which demonstrates a positive impact
 - If possible, it would be desirable to have evidence that it has been used effectively with deaf people.

Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

Despite all preventive, educational, and proactive measures, there exists the very real concern that bullying, harassment, and or retaliation may still occur. The following section provides guidance to faculty, parents, students and staff as to how TLC expects its community to proceed when this harmful behavior occurs.

Bullying, harassment and retaliation will not be tolerated in all hours including in communities and events associated with TLC.

Each school faculty or staff member is required to report immediately to the Supervisor or

Administrator any instance of bullying or retaliation that he/she becomes aware of or witnesses. As a community, we value the collaboration in ensuring a safe environment to report bullying. Reports made by students, parents, guardians, or others who are not staff members may be made anonymously. Reports from staff, students, parents, guardians, or others, and may be signed, oral, or written. Oral reports or reports made using sign language must then be recorded in writing.

The school will have several resources available to the school community to report bullying or retaliation including, but not limited to, an Incident Report Form, and the regular school mailing address where any administrator can be reached. Blank copies of the Incident Report Form will be available in the main office of each program and included in the Student Handbook provided annually. These handbooks will be provided in other prevalent languages used by families at TLC other than English.

At the start of each school year, the Student Handbook is distributed to students and parents/guardians. TLC will include a description of the reporting procedures and resources available, including the name and contact information of the supervisor or administrator. A copy of the Incident Report Form will be included in the Handbook. This information will also be provided annually to staff and placed on the school web site.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously, and no reprisals will be taken against a student or staff solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Is It Bullying?

Staff Member
Witnesses
Behavior
or
Staff Member Is
Informed of
Behavior
That Could Be
Bullying



Has the behavior happened more than once?
Is the behavior intended to humiliate, intimidate, or do harm?
Is the behavior a one-way abuse that creates a power imbalance between two students or two groups of students?
Are you unsure but think that it may be bullying?



File a Bullying
Incident Report
Immediately



If the behavior does not meet the above standards,
what do I do?



Follow
established
disciplinary
procedures
as usual

Reporting by Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff members will report immediately to a supervisor if he/she witnesses or becomes aware of bullying, harassment, or retaliation involving a student. This requirement to report does not limit the authority of the staff to respond to behavioral or disciplinary actions consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents, Guardians, and Others

The school expects students, parent/guardians, or others who witness or become aware of bullying, harassment, or retaliation involving a student to report it to a supervisor or administrator. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor based solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Parents/guardians and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report.

Students who believe that they are the targets of bullying, observe bullying behavior, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place, are expected to report incidents either verbally or using the TLC Incident Report Form. Students will be provided safe, private, and age-appropriate assistance to report and discuss the incident with a staff member or supervisor. If a verbal report is made, the supervisor or administrator will assist the student in completing the form.

Employees, parents, or students should raise genuine concerns as soon as possible and make reports at any time without fear of reprisal.

Students who knowingly make a false accusation of bullying or harassment shall be subject to possible disciplinary action. The Student Handbook outlines disciplinary actions.

Investigative Procedures

The following are standard guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. All complaints will be taken seriously. These guidelines will be adapted as necessary to respond as appropriately as possible to the complaint.

1. Upon receiving a bullying incident report, the principal or principal designee will notify the parent/caregiver of the report within one day of receiving the report.
2. The principal or designee will notify the school's Director of Student Services that a bullying incident report was received.
3. The principal or designee will start an investigation and collect all information regarding the alleged incident.
4. The investigation shall be completed as soon as possible, but not later than ten (10) school days from the date of the written report of the incident. In the event that there is information relative to the investigation that is anticipated but not yet received by the

end of the ten (10) day period, the school's Director of Student Services may amend the original report of the results of the investigation to reflect the information.

The principal or designee will investigate promptly any and all reports of bullying, harassment, or retaliation. In so doing, consideration will be given to the information available, including the nature of the allegation and the ages of the students involved. All students are afforded the same protections regardless of their legal status.

The principal or designee will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of importance to the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

The results of the investigation shall be reported to the Director of Student Services within two school days of the completion of the investigation, and in accordance with regulations from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (603 CMR 49.00, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §37O, as added by St. 2010, c. 92.)

The Director of Student Services may decide to provide intervention services, establish training programs to reduce harassment, intimidation, or bullying and enhance school climate, impose discipline, or order counseling as a result of the findings of the investigation, or take or recommend appropriate action.

Pre-Investigation: Before fully initiating the investigation, the principal or designee will, among other things, determine if there is a need to take immediate steps to support and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. In taking such action, the rights of both the alleged target and the alleged aggressor must be taken into account.

Possible adjustments to the school environment or increased supervision will be considered, if needed, to enhance the target's feeling of safety. All steps taken in the investigative procedure shall be recorded.

Investigation Process: Investigations will be conducted as quickly as possible and follow all applicable laws and regulations. During the investigation, students, staff, witnesses, parents/caregivers, and others will be interviewed, as necessary. Confidentiality will be maintained to protect the reporter, witnesses and/or interviewees regarding a bullying situation. The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the report, gathering information from the target including:

- What specifically happened?
- Who committed the alleged act?

- Was the hurtful action repetitive?
- Did the action create or foster a power imbalance between two (2) students or groups of students?
- Who was present or who may have relevant information?
- Is there any evidence to consider?
- When did the event(s) occur?
- Where did the event(s) occur?

It is helpful to have the facts in writing. If age appropriate, the target will be asked to sign and date the Bullying Incident Report form. If the target cannot or chooses not to sign, the investigator will record the allegations, read them, or use ASL to restate them aloud to confirm accuracy and sign/date the document themselves.

Interviews: Once the allegations are established, the principal or designee will gather all evidence through interviews with the alleged aggressor, witnesses, parents and/or staff. Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. The target and aggressor will never be interviewed together or required to interact through mediation during an investigation.

All investigations will be consistent with current school policies and procedures. To the extent possible, given the responsibility to investigate and address the matter, the investigator will maintain the confidentiality of the complainant and the witnesses.

The principal or designee, upon determination of a viable report, will promptly contact the parents/caregivers of the student who has been an alleged target and the parents of the alleged aggressor. The principal or designee may only disclose information to a parent about their own child. Each student's LEA will also be contacted.

Determinations and Further Reporting Procedures

School personnel must weigh all of the facts and circumstances objectively to determine if the alleged events occurred and if a charge of bullying or retaliation is substantiated. 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 following includes procedures for restoring the target's safety and assessing the needs of the target.

The principal or designee will:

1. determine what remedial or adaptive action is required, if any, and
2. determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary.

As with the investigation, the response will be individually tailored to the circumstances, taking into account the nature of the behavior and the ages of the students involved. The range of disciplinary actions for students who have committed acts of bullying or retaliation will be in accordance with the school's disciplinary policies as detailed in the Student Handbook.

Disciplinary action will take into account the need to balance accountability with the student's age and the need to teach appropriate behavior. There exists a range of age-appropriate disciplinary actions that may be used, as identified in the handbook and in accordance with administrative disciplinary policies and applicable state and federal laws.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or 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. Opportunities for individual skill building or working in collaboration with school counselors, teachers, and parents to help reinforce the development of positive social skills may be appropriate responses for individual students and is encouraged. This type of referral process will be offered to the target, the aggressor and the families of each these individuals.

Reporting to Parents or Guardians

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents 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 parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken toward another student unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations. School personnel may, however, share information about the process that was followed leading to a determination of whether bullying did occur, what general measures are being taken to protect the target from further acts of bullying or retaliation, and what is being done to ensure that the target is reassured.

When it has been determined that bullying has occurred, a separate notice will be sent to the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor outlining the actions that will be taken to prevent further incidents. Pursuant to regulations, immediate notification, to law enforcement

will occur when criminal charges may be filed against the aggressor.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process of accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

Reporting to Administrators of Another School or School District

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school, public/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 supervisor or administrator of the other school(s) of the incident, so that each school may take prompt and appropriate action.

Reporting to Law Enforcement

TLC has a strong and long-standing relationship with local law enforcement personnel. They are familiar with our campus and several have taken sign language classes with our instructors. TLC considers these relationships essential to the well-being of our students. The administrator will notify the local Police Department if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be warranted and will cooperate fully in any subsequent police investigations.

If an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 years who is no longer enrolled at the school, the administrator will contact the local law enforcement agency promptly, if he/she has reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Safety Plan

To continue to create a safe and secure learning environment free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying, the school will implement a safety plan for those who have been the alleged targets. This helps secure their emotional and physical safety during and/or after investigations. The student and their family will be involved in creating the safety plan along with the student support team/Student Response Team. The principal or their designee will share this plan with all necessary school staff. See appendix for the Target Student Safety Plan Template.

Reporting to the Superintendent of The Learning Center for the Deaf

A regular summary report of investigations will be provided to the Superintendent of TLC.

Collaboration with Parents

Parent Education and Resources

The Learning Center for the Deaf believes that parents and families are a child's primary teachers and that the students benefit most when school and home work collaboratively as partners. The Learning Center for the Deaf will offer education programs and curriculum

resources to parents and guardians that focus on how families can support ways to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying (and general on-line safety) and provide intervention strategies that can be implemented at home. Programs and resources may be offered in collaboration with the existing parent groups and by departments. TLC will provide resources for parents on the school web site, including specific information about online safety and the potential threats of cyber-bullying.

Notification Requirements

The school will inform parents and guardians about the curricula being used that address anti-bullying, the dynamics of bullying as well as general on-line safety and cyber bullying. TLC will also make available the excellent information for parents that are provided in the various curricula already in use. Written notice will be sent home each year about the student- related sections of the Bullying Prevention Plan, along with the school's Acceptable Use policy for the Internet. These will be provided languages other than English, as needed. The complete Plan will be posted on the school's web site.

All school handbooks will include relevant sections of this Plan.

Problem Resolution System

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 370 of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g)(v): The plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education'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 form.

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of The Learning Center for the Deaf may do so with their district and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available in the main office of the Academic Administrative Building (Kellogg House).

Hearings

1. A parent or guardian may request a hearing before the board after receiving the information, and the hearing shall be held within 10 days of the request. The board shall meet in executive session for the hearing to protect the confidentiality of the students. At the hearing the board may hear from the school anti-bullying specialist about the incident, recommendation for discipline or services, and any programs instituted to reduce such incidents.

2. At the next board of education meeting following its receipt of the report, the board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the superintendent's decision. The board's decision may be appealed to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with the procedures set forth in law and regulation, no later than the 90 days after the issuance of the board's decision.
3. A parent, student, guardian, or organization may file a complaint with the Division on Civil Rights within 180 days of the occurrence of any incident.

Access to Resources

The Learning Center for the Deaf recognizes that the underlying needs of targets, aggressors, and families must be addressed in a truly respectful manner. The Learning Center also works to counteract the dearth of resources available to those who are deaf or hard of hearing and who would benefit from counseling, social work, or mental health services in the larger community. The Learning Center responds to these by making these resources more readily accessible within the organization.

School Resources

Beyond education in our classrooms, TLC resources are in place to restore a sense of safety for a target and to assess that target's need for protection. These resources are also available to provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors or targets and for appropriate family members of the students. There will be staff assigned to work with the target and with the aggressor.

A Response Team at the school that includes school clinical (school counselor or therapist) staff that is skilled and prepared to work with students and families to prevent, intervene early, and to respond effectively to bullying. This team is linguistically and culturally competent in working with youth who are deaf and hard of hearing, and they have developed strong relationships with the community resources that are available to help, including Walden Community Services geared specifically for those families with a deaf or hard-of hearing member who need additional support. TLC also employs the skilled services of Behavior Analysts to help design the broadest range of appropriate responses possible within our school setting. This may include functional behavioral assessment, individually designed behavior plans, and/or consultation to classroom staff.

Special Education Requirements

The faculty at TLC will consider and address the needs of those students who, by nature of a disability or weak social skills development, may be especially vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics (e.g. race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, gender identity mental, physical or developmental disability) or by association with a person who has

or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Addressing these needs will be in collaboration with the child's educational team and may be noted in the student's IEP. Skill-building, social skills awareness and instruction, language and vocabulary building, self-advocacy skills, and a plan to reduce problem behaviors could all be considered as appropriate support.

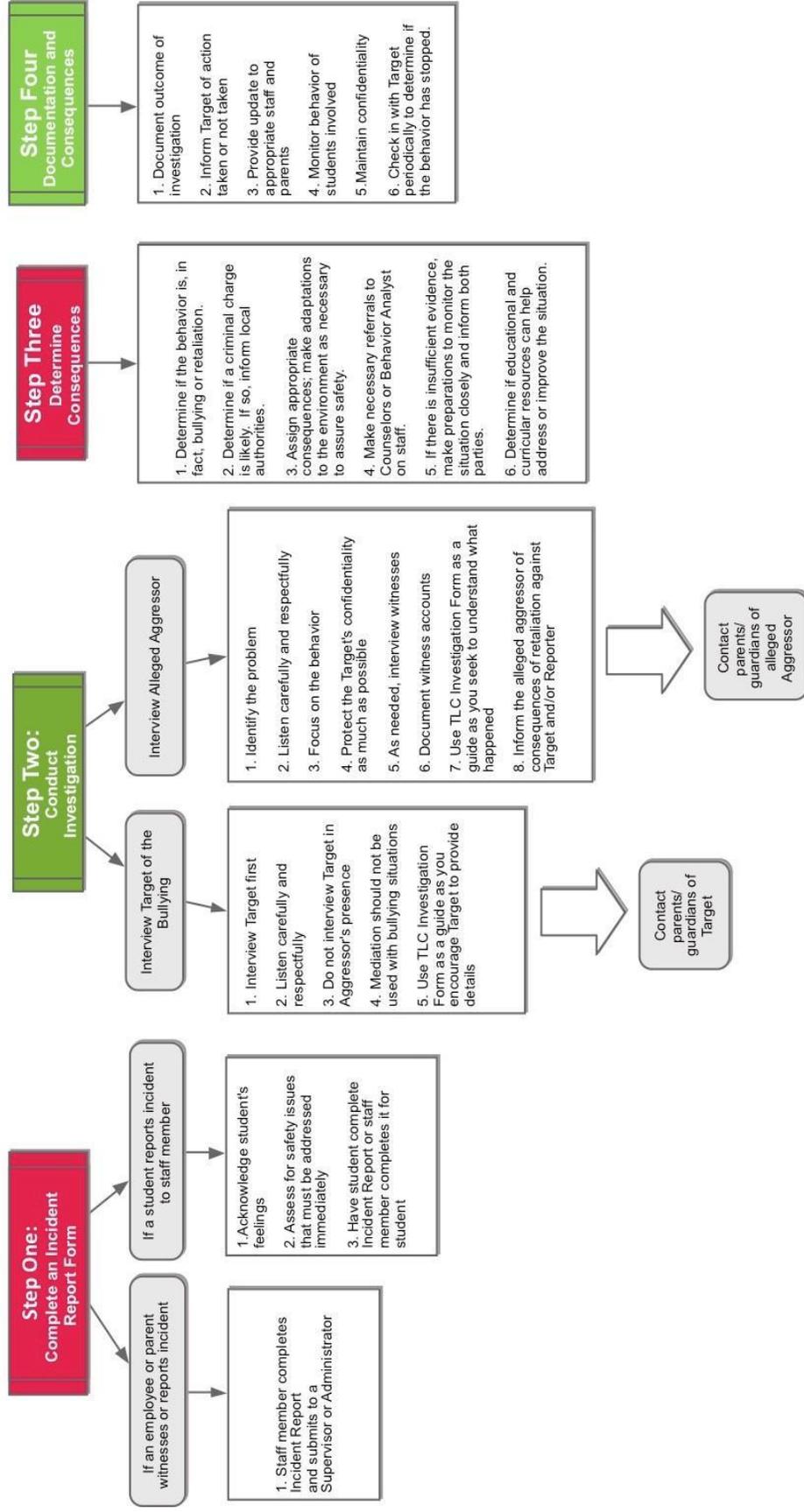
Relationships to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to this approved special education school or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of this school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Nothing in the Bullying Prevention Plan prevents the school 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 Bullying Prevention 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 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Bullying Prevention Plan covers the behavior.

ACTION STEPS ONCE A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION IS RECEIVED AT TLC



Bullying Report Forms

The Learning Center for the Deaf Bullying Incident Report Form

Today's Date: _____

1. About You

I know it can be scary to tell / report bullying. You do not need to include your name on the form. A teacher, staff or a principal may want to ask more questions about this so if you include your name, it will help them. You will not get in trouble for sharing your report.

What is your name: _____

Did bullying happen to you? Yes No

Did you see the event happen? Yes No

2. Information about what happened

Who did this happen to? _____

Who behaved this way? _____

When did it happen? Date: _____

What time: _____

Where did it happen?

____ On school campus: _____

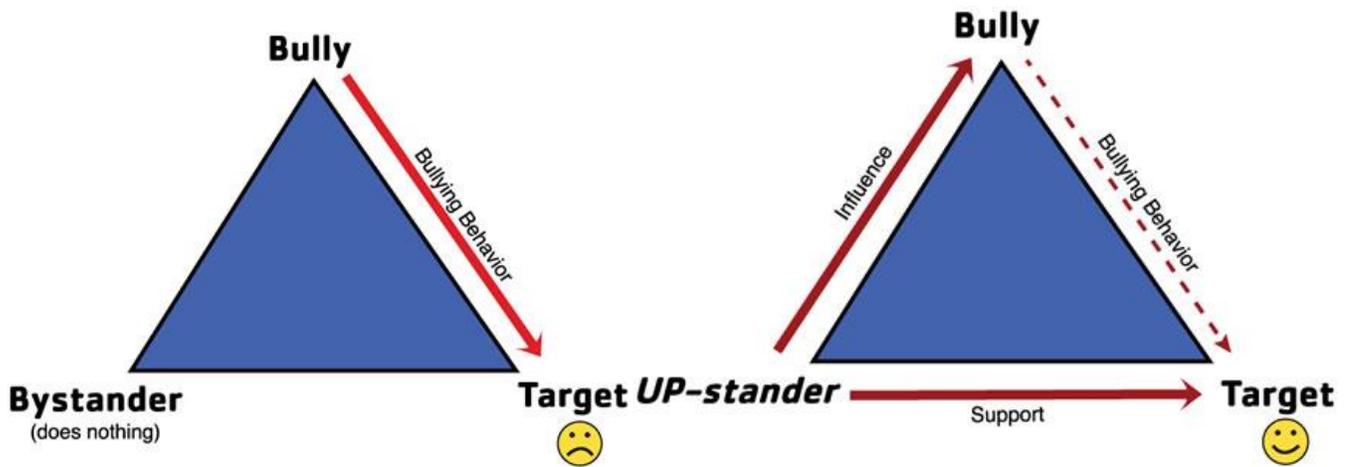
____ Not on school campus: _____

____ On the computer, phone, or tablet, or on the internet

3. Was an adult nearby? Who? Who else saw what happened? Write their names here:

4. Tell us what happened.

Did the bullying include mean comments about you or your friends?



_____ Physical Acts: such as hitting, spitting, kicking, or damaging your or another student's possessions

_____ Did you or someone get hurt? **Yes** **No**

_____ Emotional: Spreading mean rumors or lies about you or another student

_____ Verbal: Saying mean or hurtful things or threatening you or another student

_____ Cyber: Online, through video games, or email / VP

6. Did this happen before?

No **Yes: 1 - 2 times** **3 – 5 times** **many times**

7. Do you feel safe?

Yes, I'm okay **No, I need help!** **I want to.** **I am not sure.**

8. Do you want to share more?

Thank you for sharing. Please give this to your Principal or the Director of Student Services.

Signature of Person Filling Out this Report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

Received by: _____ Position: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Reviewed by: _____ Position: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attach any documents to this form or turn over the page to write notes as needed.

Documents: Interview questions, interview notes, and counseling referral form.

Name: _____ Student Staff Other

Name: _____ Student Staff Other

Name: _____ Student Staff Other

4. Describe the incident(s), (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used).

_____ Physical Acts: such as hitting, spitting, kicking, or damaging your or another student's possessions

_____ Emotional: Spreading mean rumors or lies about you or another student

_____ Verbal: Saying mean or hurtful things or threatening you or another student

_____ Non-verbal: Eye-rolling, making faces, or unkind gestures

Mean comments / behavior were about:

- Size, weight, or how you look
- How well you do in school
- Religion or beliefs
- Gender
- LGBTQIA Identities
- Race, ethnicity, skin color
- Communication style
- Neurodivergence
- Medical disability or another disability
- Other things

_____ Cyber/Online: Occurs on website or social media, by cell phone, email or text message on Facebook, texts, VP or other social media

_____ Social: Excluding you or another student from a group, telling other kids not to talk to you or another student, gossiping

_____ Personal Property: theft, damage, and not respecting personal space

_____ Sexual Bullying: Physical or non-physical behavior that degrades someone, singles someone out using sexual language, gestures or violence, and victimizing someone for their appearance. Sexual bullying is also pressured to act promiscuously or a way to make someone feel uncomfortable.

_____ Other: (Please describe): _____

| How many times? | Do you feel safe? |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One time <input type="checkbox"/> 2 times <input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 times <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how many times | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I'm okay. <input type="checkbox"/> NO , I need help! <input type="checkbox"/> I am not sure. I want to talk with someone please. |

5. Did an injury result from the incident?

_____ No _____ Yes, but it did not require medical or mental health attention.

_____ Yes, and it required medical or mental health attention.

6. Is there any additional information you would like to provide?

No:

Yes:

Thank you. Please return this form to the Principal or Director of Student Services.

This report will be followed up in a prompt manner. By completing this form, you are verifying that your statements are accurate **and true** to the best of your knowledge. If you fear that you or a student is in **IMMEDIATE** danger, please contact a trusted adult right away!

Signature of Person Filling Out this Report: _____

Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

Received by: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attach any documents to this form or turn over the page to write notes as needed.

Documents: Interview questions, interview notes, and counseling referral form.

Bullying Investigation Form

The Learning Center for the Deaf
Bullying Incident Investigation and Conclusions Form

Investigator(s):

Position(s):

Interviews (Must be conducted separately)

Date Interviewed Aggressor:

Date Interviewed Target:

Date Interviewed Witnesses:

Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor(s)?

- If yes, have incidents previously involved a target or a target group?
 Yes
- Are there any previous findings of Bullying or Retaliation?
 Yes

SUMMARY of INVESTIGATION

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

Findings of bullying or retaliation?

Incident Documented As:

Contacts:

- Target's Parent/Guardian: Date: By Whom:

- Aggressor's Parent/Guardian: Date: By Whom:

- LEA: Date: By Whom:

Action to be Taken:

Target:

Other (please specify):

Aggressor:

Other (please specify):

Describe the Intervention Planning:

Follow-up with Target:

Scheduled for _____ Initial and date when completed: _____

Follow-up with Aggressor:

Scheduled for _____ Initial and date when completed: _____

Report forwarded to Director of Student Services on date: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Student Name: | | Date updated: | |
| School: | | Grade: | |
| Homeroom / Follow Teacher: | | | |
| Person Filling out Safety Plan: | | | |
| Plan Start Date: | | Planned Check in: | |
| Reason for Safety Plan: | | | |
| Main Areas of Concern: | Classes | Before / After School | Lunches / Breaks / Unstructured Time |
| Interventions done previously | | | |

School / Staff

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | All school staff will be notified of this safety plan and will make every effort to implement it successfully. |
| ● | E-mail |
| ● | Staff Meetings |
| ● | Other: |

| | |
|----|---|
| 2. | Any school staff who witness or otherwise made aware of any harassing, intimidating, or bullying behavior directed toward the student will intervene immediately and will report such behaviors to: |
| ● | Superintendent |
| ● | Principal |
| ● | Director of Student Services |
| ● | Director of Curriculum & Instruction |

| | |
|---|------------------|
| • | School Counselor |
| • | District LEA |
| | Other Notes: |

Classroom and Passing Times

| | |
|----|---|
| 1. | The following teacher / staff will be designated as the student's primary point of contact (trusted adult on campus). |
| | Name: |

| | |
|----|--|
| 2. | The following teacher / staff will be designated as the backup should the primary point of contact be unavailable. |
| | Name: |
| | Name: |
| | Name: |

| | |
|----|---|
| 3. | The following classes are classes in which there are conflicts present and the teachers have been notified and will keep the person engaged in bullying behavior and the student separated during class activities: |
| • | Name: |
| • | Name: |
| • | Name: |

| | |
|----|---|
| 4. | A staff member (teacher aide or other appropriate staff member) will be visible in the hall during transition times and monitor the student's progress. Staff member could include one or all of the below. |
| • | Teacher aide |
| • | Teacher |
| • | Principal |

| | |
|---|--|
| • | Other: All students and staff have a responsibility to care of one another and promote safe space at all times. |
| • | An administrator will visit classes and lunch breaks on a rotating schedule each day to increase support, supervision and build relationships. |

| | |
|----|---|
| 5. | The following location has been designated as a safe area for the student to go to should something come up during break, lunch, and/or during transition times |
| • | Location: TBD, pending on student identification of a location |

| | |
|----|---|
| 6. | The student will visit with _____ (counselor, teacher, Principal) on a _____ (check in basis, regular intervals) at an agreed upon time to ensure the plan is working. If the student does not or cannot visit in person at the time, the designated person will locate and check with the student. |
| • | |

| | |
|----|--|
| 7. | The driver(s) of the student's transportation to/from campus will be instructed to intervene immediately and report any transportation incidents immediately to the school principal if applicable. Mainstream driver has been informed. |
| • | |

| | |
|----|---|
| 8. | The school will immediately report any harassing, intimidating or bullying behavior which is made aware of to the students' parents / caregivers / guardians. |
| • | |

| | |
|----|--|
| 9. | Other: School will design and provide peer mentoring; weekly class check in; racial equity work for students through project-based learning; develop new or improve existing anti-bias/anti-bullying prevention program for both staff and students. |
| • | |

The Student Experiencing Bullying Behavior

| | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Any face to face contact between the student experiencing the bullying and the student engaged in bullying behavior will be closely monitored by MPS staff through modification of safety plan, team meetings and additional supervision. |
| • | |
| | <i>Notes:</i> |

| | |
|---------|---|
| 2. • | The student will not have online contact with the person engaged in bullying behavior and will report any contact attempted by the person engaged in bullying behavior. |
|---------|---|

| | | |
|---------|--|----------|
| 3. • | The following students are friend(s) that the student feels safe with: | |
| | Name: | Classes: |

| | |
|---------|--|
| 4. • | The student will remain as close to the trusted friend(s) as reasonable during the school day. |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| 5. • | The student will seek out <u>pre-identified staff (names here)</u> when the student feels threatened or uncomfortable. |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| 6. • | The student will share all passwords and will “friend” their parents / caregivers / guardians on all social networking sites, so the student’s adult can monitor any adverse online experiences. |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| 7. • | The student will report any breach of this plan to their parents / caregivers / guardians, designated trusted adult, teacher, or other staff person immediately. |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| 8. • | The student will also report any such behavior which occurs as a result of this plan on campus and/or outside the regular day. |
|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|---|
| 9. • | Other: Incidents of bullying, intimidation, or harassment will be documented with information about what happened, what was done immediately after, follow up actions and proposed plan/outcomes. Each bullying incident/report will be sent to the student’s parents/caregivers and LEA. |
|---------|---|
