

Clearway School is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment free from bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. All school community members are expected to treat each other with respect, in appreciation of the rich diversity in our school. Clearway School will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. This expectation is an integral part of Clearway School's comprehensive efforts to promote learning; eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior; enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential; and allow our students to become successful citizens in an increasingly diverse society.

Clearway School will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation in school, on school grounds, or during school-related activities. Reports documenting bullying and/or retaliation made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school members, may be made anonymously and submitted to any administrator of Clearway School. The Clearway administration will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. This commitment extends to all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. Clearway School is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. The Administrator is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

Definitions

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

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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 target or damage to the target's property;
2. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her 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 the school.

Cyberbullying 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 postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

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 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, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Training and Professional Development

A. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include:

1. Staff duties;
2. An overview of the steps that the administration will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation; and
3. An overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades

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

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

1. Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
2. Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
3. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
4. 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;
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
6. 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.

Academic and Non-Academic Activities

Clearway School's curriculum will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

1. Using scripts and role playing to develop skills;
2. Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
3. Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
4. Emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
5. Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
6. Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

General teaching approaches that support bullying preventive efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

1. Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
2. Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students; and homeless students;

3. Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
4. Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem solving, teamwork, and behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development
5. Modeling and teaching pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
6. Using the Internet safely; and
7. Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, guardians, or others and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A staff member is required to report immediately to the Administrator any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents, guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members may be made anonymously. Clearway School will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form and an email address.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report however, Clearway 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 the Incident Reporting Form available in the school's main office,

3. Make the Incident Reporting Form available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

A. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the Administrator when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Administrator does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with Clearway School's policies and procedures for behavior management.

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

Clearway School 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 Administrator. 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 Administrator.

C. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Administrator 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 transportation; identifying a staff

member who will act as a “safe person” for the target. The Administrator will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Administrator will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying 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.

Obligations to Notify Others

1. Notice to Parents or Guardians: Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Administrator will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target(s) and the aggressor(s) of the occurrence and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Administrator 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, the Administrator 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 or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Administrator has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor(s), the Administrator will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with 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 Administrator shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

D. Investigation

The Administrator will investigate promptly all reports of bullying 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 Administrator, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Administrator 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 Administrator or other staff members as determined by the Administrator. To the extent practicable and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Administrator will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Administrator will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with Clearway School's policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Administrator will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

E. Determinations

The Administrator will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Administrator will take reasonably calculated steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The Administrator will:

1. Determine what remedial action is required, if any;
2. Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary; and
3. 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

Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Administrator cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target and/or the target's family must be aware of in order to report violations.

F. Responses to Bullying

Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skills-building by

1. Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on anti-bullying curricula;
2. Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students;
3. Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
4. Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home.
5. Adopting behavioral plans to include focus on developing specific social skills
6. Making a referral for evaluation.

Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Administrator decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Administrator, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and Clearway School's code of conduct.

If the Administrator determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Administrator will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Administrator 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.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Administrator may 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 administrator or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately

Collaboration with Families

A. Parent Education and Resources

Clearway School will offer education programs to parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by Clearway School.

B. Notification Requirements

Clearway School will inform parents and guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. Clearway School will include the Bullying Plan in the Parent Handbook which is given to the parents and guardians each year.