

Standard of Conduct and Anti Bullying Policy

It is the policy of the Gifford School to maintain a safe, fair, humane and respectful environment so that all people in the community, students and staff alike, are able to enjoy an environment free of discrimination and harassment.

This anti-harassment policy refers to, but is not limited to, harassment in the following areas: age, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, handicap and veteran status. Harassment includes display or circulation of written materials or pictures degrading to other Gifford community members and verbal abuse or insults directed at or made in the presence of other Gifford community members.

All interactions should be on a respectful basis. Harassment or intimidation of any nature is not tolerated. Civility, courtesy and mutual respect in all interactions are expected.

Additionally, the Gifford School administers a student survey at least once every four years to assess the school's climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying at the school in accordance with Chapter 86 of the state statute.

Anti-Hazing Policy

Students and staff are strictly prohibited from participating in initiation or membership rites in connection with school sponsored activities when their conduct may reasonably be seen as demeaning or assaultive in nature. This prohibition applies even if those targeted give "consent" to such conduct. Students afforded the privilege of participating in athletics and other school sponsored activities are expected to take a leadership role, both by avoiding such conduct themselves and by reporting any such conduct by others to the Principal or his designee. Students who participate in this type of conduct, even as a bystander, or who become aware of it and fail to report it can expect to be excluded from athletics and other extracurricular activities.

Students and staff are also reminded that the Massachusetts General Laws imposes criminal sanctions for particularly serious circumstances involving initiation rights and other conduct. (See M.G.L. c. 269, §17-19).

The term "hazing" as used in this section shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person.

Gifford students are presented with, and are expected to sign an Annual Statement of Acknowledgement for State Anti-Hazing Law. (M.G.L. c. 269, §17-19)

If a student is found to have organized or actively participated in the hazing of another student, that student may be required to forfeit membership in relevant programming and athletic teams for a period of ninety school days. The student will also face the possibility of school suspension for up to 3 days.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Gifford School 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 will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We 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. We will support this commitment in 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, and The Gifford School is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. We at Gifford recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Our plan includes steps to support these vulnerable students and provide all of our students, regardless of their status under the law, with the skills, knowledge, and strategies they need to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds; on a transportation vehicle or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by The Gifford School; and
- At a location, activity, function or program that is not school related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by The Gifford School, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Definitions

1. Aggressor is a student, or member of the school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.
2. Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students, or school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:
 - Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
 - Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
 - Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 - Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.
7. 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.

Training and Professional Development

1. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include:
 - Staff duties;
 - 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

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.

2. 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:

- 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.

Academic and Non-Academic Activities

1. Specific bullying prevention approaches

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research, which among other things, emphasizes the following approaches

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- 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;
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying;
- Emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

2. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention 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:

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Modeling and teaching pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using the Internet safely; and
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic activities, particularly

in their areas of strength.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Please see bullying reporting form at the end of this section.

Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A Gifford School staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members may be made anonymously.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

- Include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians;
- Make it available in the school's main office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

1. **Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying 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 policies and procedures for behavior management

2. **Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others**

The school or district expects students, staff, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member or with the principal or designee.

3. **Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation**

a. **Safety**

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying 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 transportation; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for 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 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.

b. Obligations to Notify Others

- 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 the aggressor of the occurrence 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.

- Notice to Another School or District

If the reported incident involves students from more than one 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.

- Notice to Law Enforcement

At any point after receiving a report of bullying 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. 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 principal or designee 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.

4. Investigation

a. The principal or designee 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.

b. 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.

- c. Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee or other staff members as determined by the principal or designee. To the 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.

5. 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:

- Determine what remedial action is required, if any;
- Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary; and
- 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 principal or designee 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 must be aware of in order to report violations.

6. Responses to Bullying

a) Teaching appropriate behavior through skills-building by:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on anti-bullying curricula;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home.

b) Taking Disciplinary Action

- If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, 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.

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

c) Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

- The principal or designee 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 principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.
- Another is to provide counseling or offer a referral to appropriate services for targets, aggressors and their families
- Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately

7. Collaboration with Families

- Parent Education and Resources
Education programs that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school will be offered for parents and guardians by The Gifford School.
- Notification Requirements
The Gifford School will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. The Gifford School will include the Bullying Plan in the Parent Handbook, which is given to the parents and guardians each year. The school will post the Plan and related information on its website.
- Notification Requirements
The Gifford School will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used to include online safety, cyberbullying, bullying dynamics and strategies to reinforce the curricula at home. The Gifford School will include the Bullying Plan in the Parent Handbook, which is given to the parents and guardians each year. The school will post the Plan and related information on its website.
- Additional Assistance
Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the 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 at the Superintendent's office.

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** _____
Please note: Reports may be made anonymously but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

2. Check whether you are the **Target of the behavior** **Reporter (not the target)**

3. Check whether you are a: **Student** **Staff member (specify role)** _____

 Parent **Administrator** **Other (specify)** _____

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

4. **Information about the Incident:**
Name of Target (of behavior): _____

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): _____

Date(s) of Incident(s): _____

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: _____

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): _____

5. **Witnesses (List of people who saw the incident or have information about it):**

Name: _____	Student	Staff
Other _____		
Name: _____	Student	Staff
Other _____		
Name: _____	Student	Staff
Other _____		

6. **Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Use additional space on back if necessary.**

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

7. **Signature of Person Filing This Report:** _____ **Date**
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously)

8. **Form Given to:** _____ **Position:** _____ **Date**