

ANTI-BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

SEEM Collaborative believes that preventing bullying and/or harassment is critical for creating and maintaining a safe, secure and positive school climate and culture, which in turn supports academic achievement, increases school engagement, respects the rights of all individuals and groups, and purposefully builds community. Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting and SEEM Collaborative will endeavor to maintain a learning and working environment free of bullying. The SEEM Board of Directors and SEEM Collaborative shall not tolerate bullying.

Definition:

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education or process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

“Perpetrator” is defined as a student or member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, and athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

“Cyber-bullying” is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, or the definition of bullying.

Bullying is prohibited: (i) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Collaborative or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a Collaborative or school and (ii) at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the Collaborative or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and

substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities.

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

SEEM Collaborative shall provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the curriculum of the Collaborative or school. The curriculum shall be evidence-based.

The Collaborative shall develop, adhere to and update a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. The consultation shall include, but not be limited to, notice and a public comment period; provided, however, that a non public school shall only be required to give notice to and provide a comment period for families that have a child attending the school. The plan shall be updated at least biennially.

The plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to: (i) descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation; (ii) clear procedures for students, staff, parents, guardians and others to report bullying or retaliation; (iii) a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously; provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report; (iv) clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation; (v) the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation; provided, however, that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior; (vi) clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that victim's needs for protection; (vii) strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying; (viii) procedures consistent with state and federal law for promptly notifying parents or guardians of a victim and a perpetrator, provided, further, that the parents or guardians of a victim shall also be notified of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; and provided further, that the procedures shall provide for immediate notification pursuant to regulations promulgated under this subsection by the principal or person who holds a comparable role to the local law enforcement agency when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator; (ix) a provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action; and (x) a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of said students. The plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

The Collaborative plan shall include a provision for ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers,

custodians, bus driver, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals, to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to: (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (ii) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidence; (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, victim and witnesses to the bullying; (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment; (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (vi) internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

The plan shall include provisions for informing parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of the Collaborative or school and shall include, but not be limited to: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the Collaborative or school plan; (iii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyber-bullying.

The Collaborative shall provide to students and parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in the languages which are most prevalent among the students, parents or guardians, annual written notice of the relevant student-related sections of the plan.

The Collaborative shall provide to all school staff annual written notice of the plan. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the plan applicable to the school. Relevant sections of the plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in a Collaborative or school employee handbook. The plan shall be posted on the website of each Collaborative.

Each school principal or the person who holds a comparable position shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan at his school. A member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, secretary, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional, shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the principal or the to the school official identified in the plan as responsible for receiving such reports or both. Upon receipt of such a report, the school principal or a designee shall promptly conduct and investigation. If the school principal or a designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or a designee shall (i) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against a perpetrator; (ii) take appropriate action; (iii) notify the parents or guardians of a perpetrator; and (iv) notify the parents or guardians of the victim, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one Collaborative school, the Collaborative or school first informed of the bullying or retaliation shall, consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school so that both may take appropriate action. If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in the Collaborative, the school informed of the bullying or retaliation shall contact law enforcement.

Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program team indicates that the child has a disability that affects social skills development or that the child is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the child's disability, the Individualized Education Program shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

MGL: Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010

Approved By: Board of Directors

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