

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Northborough Public Schools

Parent Resource Guide

Dear Parents/Guardians:

It is important that you read the following information about bullying. After reading, if you believe that your child has been the target of bullying, you may file a written report. Written reports are considered serious allegations that will be addressed through school administration. Please be aware that [St.2010, c.92 Bullying in Schools](#) law, also requires that legal action be taken against those who file false reports or who make unfounded accusations.

We encourage open communication between parents and school staff. Anonymous reports will be investigated, but follow-up may be impossible.

What is bullying?

In the state of Massachusetts, student behavior must meet the following criteria to be considered bullying:

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

- (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- (ii) Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- (iii) Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- (iv) Infringes on the rights of the target at school, or;
- (v) Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

One-time incidents may be deliberately mean or cruel, but are not bullying. Still, one-time incidents may be subject to school discipline.

What is cyber-bullying?

“CYBER-BULLYING” is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution of 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, of the definition of bullying.

What is a hostile environment?

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student’s education.

Bullying may involve but is not limited to:

- Unwanted teasing
- Threatening/intimidating behavior
- Stalking or cyber-stalking
- Cyber-bullying
- Physical violence
- Theft or destruction of school or personal property
- Sexual, religious, or racial harassment
- Public humiliation
- Social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion
- Rumor or spreading of falsehoods

Here are some differences between bullying and other forms of conflict:

Rough Play	Fighting	Bullying
Usually friends; often will do the same things again	Usually not friends; Typically not repeated	Not friends but will be repeated
Power not an immediate Issue	Power close to equal	Power is not equal
Not about hurting	Trying to hurt each other	Bully is trying to hurt, humiliate
Affect is friendly, mutual	Affect is negative, angry	Affect varies between the target and bully

Contacting the school:

The situation	Your Role	What the School Can Do	What the School Cannot Do
Your child is afraid to see another child at school, or generally afraid to go to school because of any incident.	Get many specific details as possible about why this is occurring.	They can create a Safety Plan for your child.	They cannot discuss with you any details or actions taken with other children, including the aggressor.
Your child reports to you an incident that occurred at school.	Be sure to get very special detailed information from your child about the incident.	They can take steps to ensure the safety of the children involved.	They cannot discuss with you the steps they take that involve any other child.
Your child reports to you that they've heard a rumor about a future incident that may occur at school.	Get as many specific details as possible.	Investigate the plausibility of the future incident and take appropriate actions.	They cannot discuss with you the details regarding with other children and/or parents.
Your child or a credible source reports to you that another child is being bullied at school.	Get as many specific details as possible.	Investigate the situation.	Report back to you any outcome of the investigation.
If you have a serious disagreement about a disciplinary action taken by the school.	If this is the case, begin by pursuing a private conversation with the school administration. Challenging the school's authority publicly to make such decisions will only, in the long run, lead to more disciplinary problems among children who will perceive that the adult community does not respect the school administration.		Educators are bound by policy. They may not be able to change an action if doing so violates the policy set by the school committee.

Filing a Report:

There are several methods for reporting suspected bullying incidents:

- You can contact a school administrator by phone.
- You can make a report in person.
- You can complete the **Bullying/Harassment Form**
 - This form can be downloaded, printed and returned to the school.
 - [Click here to download the Bullying/Harassment Reporting Form](#)
 - Copies are available at each school upon request.

Bullying reports may be made anonymously; however no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

What happens next?

When the Northborough Public Schools (NPS) receive a report of bullying, the following steps will be taken:

- Listen to parent, teacher, and/or students to gather information – initial reporting stage.
- Have staff member/parent/student complete the Northborough Public Schools Harassment/Bullying Form (*if not completed already*).

- Involve administrators (*if they are not yet involved*).
- Interview all parties involved (including the aggressor, target, and witnesses), focusing on the incident(s).
- Discuss behavior with guidance counselors, school psychologist, special education liaison (*if appropriate*), and teachers to assess the situation.
- Determine if bullying behavior has occurred. (**Other inappropriate behavior that does not constitute bullying will be handled as indicated in the handbook.*)
- Decide on consequences for unacceptable behavior (*if any*).
- Follow-up with the aggressor.
- Follow-up with the target.
- Follow-up with the parent who reported, the parent of the aggressor, the parent of the target, and the parents of the witnesses (*when appropriate*).

- Administrators will acknowledge receipt of a report within three school days.
- If warranted, an investigation will be conducted and completed within 10 school days.
- Parents of the target and bully will be notified of the results of the investigation and the school will take appropriate action.

All reports of bullying are dealt with respectfully and confidentially. We treat each student as an individual and use each case as a learning opportunity. When appropriate, a range of disciplinary consequences may be utilized as noted in the student handbook including, but not limited to, loss of privileges, removal from part of all of the school community, and suspension from school.

Please be aware that [St.2010, c.92 Bullying in Schools](#) law, also requires that legal action be taken against those who file false reports or who make unfounded accusations.

Additional information about Bullying:

A leading researcher, Dr. Dan Olweus, identifies three critical aspects of bullying:

1. *Power*: The power relationship is inherently unequal. Frequently the bully gains more power and influence among others from his behavior.
2. *Frequency*: Bullies target children for a number of reasons, often because they can. However, they generally do not stop this behavior with particular children unless adults intervene. It is a recurring, often constant problem for the target.
3. *Intent*: Bullies mean to do what they do; generally, they intend to harm, embarrass, or victimize.

Bullying can take many forms; boys and girls tend to bully differently, for example, and generally their methods target whatever the aggressor's group values the most. Boys are often physical and threatening; girls will attempt to alienate the target from their social groups.

Causes:

In general, bullies are using behavior that they have determined will gain them status and feelings of control. They usually seek out victims they can successfully bully. Victims do not "ask for it" but there is a group of victims who are not socially successful, and may annoy others, perhaps in an attempt to gain attention from their peers. Bullies use this annoying behavior to justify their own actions. To many bullies, their victims were "asking for it."

For more information on Bullying, please visit the following websites:

Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center MARC: www.bridgew.edu/MARC/

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: www.olweus.org

Stop Bullying Now: www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/

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Northborough Public Schools

Student Information Sheet

Dear Students:

Feeling safe in school is the first step towards learning. When there are things happening between students that feel unsafe or uncomfortable, it is important that adults know. Everyone has a right to a safe school environment.

If you are worried about how you are being treated by a classmate or peer in school, and you aren't sure about what to do, we offer this information to help you take a next step to get help and support from school staff and parents.

What is bullying?

Bullying behaviors include:

- Unwanted teasing
- Threatening/intimidating behavior
- Stalking or cyber-stalking
- Cyber-bullying
- Physical violence
- Theft or destruction of school or personal property
- Sexual, religious, or racial harassment
- Public humiliation
- Social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion
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Bullies pick on certain people they feel are different in some way. They may have friends who act as if they think bullying is funny, but it isn't funny. It's WRONG!

Bullying also can happen on the Internet or by texting. Cyber-bullying is when children or teenagers bully each other using the Internet, cell phones or other cyber technology. This can include:

- Sending mean texts, emails or instant messages
- Posting nasty pictures or messages about others on websites
- Using someone else's user name to spread rumors or lies

Remember:

- If you are being bullied, it isn't your fault. The aggressor has the problem.
- You don't have to put up with it.
- It is hard to admit that it might be happening to you.
- There are people who can help you.

Are you or a friend being bullied?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Did someone say or do something to you that made you feel unsafe or afraid?
- Has it happened more than once?
- Are they bigger, older, or in some way more powerful than you are?

Other things that may be happening to you could include:

- Am I feeling sick in the morning so I won't have to go to school and face a bully?
- Do I walk home another way or try to avoid the bus so no one will bother me?
- Does someone take things from me or force me to give up my things?
- Does someone say mean things about me, call me names, or tell other kids not to play or hang out with me?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, you may be a target of bullying. Now it's time for you to talk with a trusted adult, at home and/or at school, so you can get the help you need. You should not keep this to yourself.

I'm being bullied. What do I do now?

If you are bullied, you may not know what to do because:

- You might think the bully can beat you up.
- The bully might have lots of friends.
- You don't think an adult can help.
- You are afraid to tell because you think no one will believe you or you think that the bullying will get worse.

Ways to deal with bullies:

- Try acting like the bully does not bother you. Bullies like it when you get mad or upset. This is hard and may take some practice.
- Avoid being around the bully.
- Try ignoring; you can walk away, or not say anything.
- Stay close to people who are not bullies. Safety in numbers!
- Tell the bully to stop in a firm voice. Say things like, "I don't like being called names, I want you to stop now."

What NOT to do if you are being bullied. DON'T:

- Use violence to respond.
- Stay quiet – do tell a trusted adult about the problem.
- Avoid coming to school – there are adults in school who can help you.
- Hurt yourself. This is not your fault.

Report bullying right away:

Telling an adult that you or a friend is being bullied isn't tattling. **Tattling** is when you tell on another kid to get him/her into trouble. **Telling** is when you tell something that helps someone get out of trouble or keeps someone from getting hurt! So, if you or a friend is being bullied:

- **Tell a trusted adult, he/she could be:**
 - Your parents
 - A teacher
 - Guidance Counselor or School Psychologist
 - Principal or Assistant Principal
 - School Nurse
 - Other adults that you know care about you
- If the person you told does not help you, talk with someone else. Never keep being bullied to yourself.
- Your school has ways for you to report bullying. The first step is talking with a trusted adult.
- You may also report bullying using this website; get an adult to help if needed.
- Your parents can report bullying for you. Ask them to talk to your school principal or your teacher.
- When you report bullying make sure you tell who the bully is, how you are being bullied, when it happens, and where it happens.

My friend is being bullied! What can I do?

- It is good to try to help. Don't make the friend who is being bullied feel worse by laughing or doing nothing.
- Tell a trusted adult right away.
- If you can, tell the bully to stop. Explain that it is wrong to bully people. State what you don't like and how you want it fixed. For example, "I don't like it when you pick on Mike; it's not funny. I want you to stop right now."
- Walk away with the person who is being bullied.
- Talk to the person who is bullied; tell him/her that you will be his/her friend. You can never have too many friends.

How do I file a report of bullying?

There are several ways to report suspected bullying incidents:

- You can make a report in person.
- You can complete the **Bullying/Harassment Form**
 - This form can be downloaded, printed and returned to the school.
 - [Click here to download the Bullying/Harassment Form \(Word\).](#)

- Click here to download the Bullying/Harassment Form (PDF).
- The schools also have copies of this form available.
- Reports can be made anonymously.

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Schools are communities formed by the adults and children who attend. Establishing a positive climate helps everyone learn and feel safe. Sometimes students do things that can be considered bullying. Some of these include:

- You've spread a nasty rumor about someone, in conversation, in a note, or through email or instant messaging.
- You and your friends have regularly kept one or more kids from hanging out or playing with you. Examples: at your lunch table at school, during sports or other activities, or activities that are a part of a club or other kind of group activity.
- You've teased people in a mean way, calling them names, making fun of their appearance, or the way they talk or dress or act.
- You've been part of a group that did any of these things - even if you only wanted to be part of the crowd.
- There's a boy or a girl (or maybe more than one) whom you've repeatedly shoved, or punched or physically pushed around in a mean way just because you felt like it.
- You had someone else hurt someone you don't like.

If you checked any of these boxes, you're not alone. All over the country, in all types of neighborhoods and schools, there are all types of young people who bully others. Bullying is serious business. It causes young people a lot of pain, and it can affect their ability to do well in school and their general happiness.

But it doesn't have to be that way. By visiting this site - and taking a look at our Webisodes - you can learn about better ways to treat your friends and acquaintances, as well as become part of the solution to this serious problem!

Things to know about bullying - click the following links to learn more about bullying:

[The Jeffrey Johnston Story](#)

[What is bullying?](#)

[What should I do if I'm bullied?](#)

(Elementary)

[What should I do if I'm bullied?](#)

(Middle and High)

[What can students and youth do to "Lend a Hand"?](#)

[Cyberbullying Information](#)

[Stop Bullying Now Website](#)

(Presented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

[Internet Safety Resources](#)