

Safe School Climate Plan
Marlborough Public Schools
Marlborough Elementary School

School Year: 2022 - 2023

Mission Statement

In a partnership of family, school and community our mission is to educate, challenge and inspire each individual to excel and become a contributing member of society.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to inspire wonder, awe, and curiosity, and to motivate young minds to embrace learning.

Purpose/Priority Statement

The Marlborough School District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, and cyberbullying. The goal is the establishment of a positive school climate in which norms, values and expectations make students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. 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. The District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and become successful members of our increasingly diverse society. (2015)

School Climate Plan

On November 18, 2021 the Marlborough Board of Education adopted Policy # **P5131.911** which prohibits bullying in any form. Policy **P5131.911** states in its purpose and priority statement that:

New policy

The Board of Education (Board) promotes a secure and happy school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

The Board believes that a school environment in which students feel safe, supported, engaged and helpfully challenged is optimal for learning and healthy development. The Board seeks an environment in which students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; an environment that is free of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Definitions

“Bullying” means an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive which:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to an individual,
- B. places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm, or,
- C. infringes on the rights and opportunities of an individual at school.

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral, or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics. *(The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the students engaged in the activity.)*

“Cyberbullying” means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

“Teen dating violence” means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening that occurs between two students who are currently in or have recently been in a dating relationship.

“Mobile electronic device” means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

“Electronic communication” means 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, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

“Hostile environment” means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

“Outside of the school setting” means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education.

“School employee” means (a) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (b) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education.

“School climate” means the quality and character of school life based on patterns of students’, parents’ and guardians’ and school employees’ experiences of school life, including, but not limited to, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.

“Positive school climate” means (A) a school climate in which the norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional and physical safety are promoted, (B) students, parents and guardians of students and school employees feel engaged and respected and work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision, (C) educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and (D) each person feels comfortable contributing to the operation of the school and care of the physical environment of the school.

“Emotional intelligence” means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.

“Social and emotional learning” means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks

2. verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs including ethnically-based or gender-based verbal put-downs
3. threats and intimidation
4. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions
5. exclusion from peer groups within the school
6. The misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school (“cyberbullying”)
7. Targeting of a student based on the student’s actual or perceived “differentiating” characteristics such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability.

Such conduct is disruptive of the educational process and, therefore, bullying is not acceptable behavior in this district and is prohibited.

Students who engage in any act of bullying, on 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 Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education, and outside of the school setting if such bullying:

1. creates a hostile environment at school for the victim,
2. infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or
3. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school,

are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials.

A comprehensive program, to improve the school climate, involving everyone in the schools and the community, to address bullying at all school levels is essential to reducing incidences of bullying. Such a program must involve interventions at all levels, school wide, classroom and individual.

Marlborough Elementary School:

1. Requires the development and implementation of a safe school climate plan by the Board of Education to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence in its schools and requires at the beginning of each school year that students and their parents/guardians be notified of the process by which students may make such reports;
2. Permits anonymous reports of bullying by students to school employees and written reports of suspected bullying by parents or guardians and requires at the beginning of each school year that students and their parents/guardians be notified of the process by which students may make such reports;

3. Requires school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to orally notify the safe school climate specialist or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such an oral report;
4. Requires the safe school climate specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report, and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced;
5. Requires the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
6. Requires each school to have a prevention and intervention strategy, as defined by statute, as amended, for school employees to deal with bullying or teen dating violence, including language about bullying in student codes of conduct and in all student handbooks;
7. Provides for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying;
8. Requires each school to notify parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation of the results of such investigation and verbally and by electronic mail, that such parents/guardians may refer to the plan language explanation of the rights and remedies posted on the district's website. (available under CGS 10-4a and 10-4b);
9. Requires each school to invite the parents/guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the students against whom such act of bullying was directed and the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying;
10. Requires each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting of the parents/guardians of the student against whom the act of bullying was directed, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying and teen dating violence;
11. Establishes a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school and make such list publicly

available; and report such number to the Department of Education and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education;

12. Requires the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing reported incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline;
13. Prohibits discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;
14. Requires the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying or teen dating violence;
15. Requires the principal of a school or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal or the principal's designee believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct;
16. Prohibits bullying (A) on 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 a local or regional board of education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of education, and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;
17. Requires, at the beginning of each school year, for each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan; and
18. Requires all school employees to annually complete the training required by C.G.S. 10-220a, as amended. Such training shall include identifying and responding to bullying and preventing and responding to youth suicide;

Note: *Certified employees are required to complete annual training on the prevention and identification of bullying and response to bullying and the prevention and response to youth suicide.*

The State Department of Education, within available appropriations, is required to provide annual training to non-certified school employees.

19. Requires students and the parents/guardians of students to be notified at the beginning of the school year of the process by which they may make reports of bullying or teen dating violence;

20. As required, the Board of Education shall approve the safe school climate plan developed pursuant to statute and submit such plan to the Department of Education for its review, analysis, cooperative assistance and approval not later than July 1, 2014; and
21. Requires that not later than thirty calendar days after approval by the State Department of Education, the safe school climate plan shall be made available on the Board's and each individual school in the District's Internet website and such plan is to be included in the District's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

The Board expects prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying and teen dating violence. The safe school climate specialist of each school is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying and teen dating violence. The safe climate specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and teen dating violence promptly.

In addition, the norms that are established by adults through consistent enforcement of all policies pertaining to conduct and modeling appropriate behavior at school and at home will reduce the instances and damage of bullying and teen dating violence. It is necessary for students to promote the concept that caring for others is a valued quality, one that is accepted and encouraged.

Prevention and Intervention Strategy

The District shall implement, as required by C.G.S. 10-222d, a prevention and intervention strategies:

1. Implementation of a positive behavioral intervention program (PAWS – MES Way) for the prevention of bullying as identified by the Department of Education.
2. MES School has rules prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation and has established appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts.
3. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur.
4. Inclusion of grade-appropriate information on bullying education and prevention is presented in kindergarten through 6th grade.
5. Individual interventions are provided with the bully, parents, student who was bullied and school employees as appropriate.
6. School wide training related to safe school climate (Trauma Sensitive Schools, Restorative Practices).

7. Student peer training, education and support (Sandy Hook Promise – Start with Hello).
8. Crisis Intervention Team completed Signs of Suicide workshop and will present information to staff at the beginning of each school year.
9. MES professional development October 2021: Talk Saves Lives (presenter: Tom Steen).
10. Implementation of DESSA Social Emotional Screener – Late Winter 2022.
11. Creation and implementation of Strategic Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) – Goal 2: Social Emotional Wellness and Health
12. Gizmo’s Pawesome Guide to Mental Health (spring 2022) – 4th grade
13. DESSA Social Emotional Screener – full implementation 2022 – 2023 school year

Marlborough Public School (Marlborough Elementary School)
District / School Climate Coordinator & Specialist

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Superintendent of Schools shall appoint, from among existing District staff, a District Safe School Climate Coordinator.

The Coordinator shall:

1. Implement the District's safe school climate plan;
2. Collaborate with safe school climate specialists, the Board, and the Superintendent to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying and teen dating violence in the schools of the district.
3. Provide data and information derived from the safe school climate assessments, in collaboration with the Superintendent to the Department of Education;
4. Respond to bullying and teen dating violence in District schools;
5. Meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss bullying and teen dating violence issues in the District and make recommended changes to the District's safe school climate plan.
6. Successfully complete, for the school year commencing July 1, 2014, the mental health first aid training provided by the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services. (Such training only required once.)

Safe School Climate Specialist

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, each school Principal shall serve, or designate someone to serve, as the Safe School Climate Specialist for the school.

The Specialist in each school shall:

1. Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying or teen dating violence in the school in accordance with the District's Safe School Climate Plan;
2. Collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying and teen dating violence in the school; and
3. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying and teen dating violence reports in the school.

Safe School Climate Committee

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Principal of each District school shall establish a new committee or designate at least one existing committee that is responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing

issues related to bullying in the school. The committee must include at least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school, appointed by the Principal.

Beginning July 1, 2021 and each school year thereafter, such committee shall also include: (a) school personnel, including, but not limited to, at least one teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining unit representative for certified employees, (b) medical and mental health personnel assigned to such school.

The Safe School Climate Committee shall:

1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying and teen dating violence;
2. Identify and address patterns of bullying and teen dating violence among students in the school;
3. Implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, (developed pursuant to Section 87 of PA 13-3) regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying or teen dating violence (defined in Connecticut General Statutes 10-222d) and report such information, as necessary, to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator and to the school's security and safety committee;
4. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying and teen dating violence;
5. Review and make recommendation to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator regarding the District's Safe Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
6. Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying and teen dating violence;
7. Collaborate with the District Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying and teen dating violence; and
8. Perform any other duties as determined by the School Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying and teen dating violence for the school.

Parent members of the Safe School Climate Committee are excluded from activities #1 and #3 or any other activity that may compromise the confidentiality of a student.

Marlborough Elementary School's School Climate Trainings / Activities

- Continued implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program based on Marlborough's overarching themes of respect, responsibility and safety.
 - School wide implementation of PBIS outlined at the beginning of the year, with a review of model lessons and reinforcement strategies (Panther Paws).
 - Extra recess is provided to grade levels upon achievement of a grade level 'big paw' goal.
- Electronic Media, Internet Safety and Cyberbullying presentation is provided to students in grade 4, 5 and 6. Parent communication is provided after each presentation.
- Implementation of Sandy Hook's Start with Hello program to assist students who struggle with friendship and may be experiencing social isolation. (grade 6)
- Support Staff (school psychologists and social worker) will share with staff information gained from attending Signs of Suicide training through Sandy Hook Foundation.
- Review for entire staff on Trauma Sensitive Schools training from 2020 – 2021 school year. Ms. Jen Alexander worked with staff for 12 hours, completing levels I and II of the Trauma Sensitive School training. Training outcomes:
 - issues related to COVID-19
 - helping teams learn regulation techniques for the classroom
 - create a trauma informed RTI (response to intervention) action plan
- Weekly meetings with Psychological Support / Crisis Intervention team to discuss / review students requiring support. (Team: 2 psychologists, social worker, administration)
- Social skills groups (snack/lunch groups) are created based on identified need.
- We Thinkers! – Social learning curriculum implemented in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade that promotes social awareness of self and others, builds skills for perspective taking and provides opportunity for social problem solving.
- Implementation of Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) System to provide actionable information on behaviors related to social-emotional well-being – helping MES in identifying interventions and supports for our children.
- Creation and Implementation of the Strategic Continuous Improvement Plan – Goal #2: Social and Emotional Wellness and Health.
- Implementation of Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health (4th grade)

Bullying Reports

Students may file:

- Oral reports to school employees
- Written reports: Students may file written reports of conduct that they consider to be bullying or teen dating violence. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying or teen dating violence, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school employee, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator.
- Anonymous reports:
 - Students shall be made aware of process for anonymous reporting (two kinds of anonymous reporting:
 - Discrete: student wishes to remain anonymous
 - Truly anonymous: no tie to a particular student is ever made

CT General Statute 10-222d: The safe school climate specialist must review anonymous reports, but no disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Parents or Guardians may file:

Parents or guardians may file written reports of conduct that they consider to be bullying or teen dating violence. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying or teen dating violence, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying or teen dating violence, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school employee, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator. **All written complaints must be signed by the parent / guardian.**

School Employees:

School employees who witness acts of bullying or teen dating violence, as defined above, or who receive reports of bullying or teen dating violence shall promptly notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying or teen dating violence. A written report must be filed not later than two school days after making such an oral report concerning the events witnessed or reported.

Investigations

The Safe School Climate Specialist shall be promptly notified of any formal or informal complaint of suspected bullying or teen dating violence received by any school employee. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying or teen dating violence in the school in accordance with the District's Safe School Climate Plan. All such complaints shall be investigated promptly. Prompt notice must be provided to the parents/guardians of the person bullied or the victim of teen dating violence and the student alleged to have committed the act of bullying or teen dating violence that such investigation has begun. The investigation must be completed promptly after the receipt by the Safe School Climate Specialist of any written report. In order to allow the District to adequately investigate all formal complaints, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied or teen dating violence must complete a consent form that allows their District to release that student's name to those third parties who the District contacts as part of its investigation of that complaint. With regard to the investigation of informal complaints, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied or teen dating violence must complete the above-referenced consent form so long as that student has not requested anonymity.

A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

The school shall notify parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying or teen dating violence not later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and in the case of a divorced/split situation, to the other parent/guardian if requested. The notice must describe the school's response, measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the students against whom such act was directed, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when a student making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complainant. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

Verified Acts of Bullying

Verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence shall result in intervention by the Building Principal or his/her designee that is intended to address the acts of the perpetrator and the needs of the victim and to assure that the prohibition against bullying behavior is enforced, with the goal that any such bullying behavior will end as a result.

Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying. While conduct that rises to the level of "bullying" as defined above will generally warrant disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (detention, in-school suspension; suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the Building Principal (or responsible program administrator or his/her designee). The following sets forth possible interventions for building principals to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

The following sets forth permissible interventions for building principals (or other responsible program administrators) to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying.

Non-disciplinary Interventions

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying and teen dating violence do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying.

If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer mediation may be considered. Special care, however, is warranted in referring such cases to peer mediation. A power imbalance may make the process intimidating for the victim and therefore inappropriate. In such cases, the victim should be given additional support. Alternatively, peer mediation may be deemed inappropriate to address the concern.

In any instance in which bullying is verified, the building Principal (or other responsible program administrator) shall invite the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed, and the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the student's safety and to prevent further acts of bullying. The meeting of parents/guardians of the bullied student and the student committing the bullying shall be separate and distinct from each other.

Disciplinary Interventions

When acts of bullying are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints that are not otherwise verified, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

In-school suspension and suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy.

Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the Board of Education, a committee of the Board or an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board of Education in accordance with Board policy. This consequence shall be reserved for serious incidents of bullying and teen dating violence and/or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying.

Interventions for Bullied Students

The Safe School Climate Specialist/Building Principal (or other responsible program administrator) or his/her designee shall intervene in order to address repeated incidents of bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student may include the following:

- Counseling;
- Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying or teen dating violence situations;
- Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;
- Peer mediation where appropriate.

Publication of School Climate Plan

A copy of this District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be provided in written or electronic format to all District employees annually at the beginning of each school year.

The District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be made available on the school website.

The District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be included in the District's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.