



# Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

June 2016

## **Introduction**

The Baraboo School District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. The Baraboo School District is committed to providing a learning and working environment for students, employees, and visitors that is free from bullying and harassment. 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 Baraboo School District supports this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent/guardian involvement.

Consistent with state and federal laws, no person shall be discriminated against on account of sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, color, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. Nothing in this plan, however, prevents the schools or district from taking action to remediate bullying based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or district policies. The Baraboo School District takes 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, teasing, and any forms of retaliation.

The Baraboo School District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in/during school-related activities. All reports and complaints of bullying, harassment, and retaliation are taken seriously and will be promptly investigated. Administration will take prompt action to end such behavior and restore a sense of safety for all.

## Definitions

**Aggressor** is a student/adult who engages in bullying, harassment, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

**Bullying** is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions, intended to cause fear, intimidation or harm. Bullying is repeated behavior and involves an imbalance of power. The behavior may be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, such as, but not limited to: age, color, national origin, race, religion, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, social or family status.

Bullying behaviors can be:

1. Physical (e.g. assault, hitting, kicking, theft).
2. Verbal (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, name-calling, racist remarks).
3. Indirect (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, social exclusion and isolation, using technology in a hurtful manner - electronic aggression commonly referred to as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to the use of e-mail, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, cell phones, or website postings to threaten, harass or intimidate the victim.)
4. Between students and students, students and adults, or adults and adults.

**Confidentiality** is the expectation that anything done or revealed will be kept private. Details of incidents may be disclosed to staff who have a legitimate educational need to know.

**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 condition of a student's education.

**Imbalance of power** occurs when the bully uses his/her power, such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity, to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

**Repetition** occurs when bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

**Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who 1.) reports bullying, 2.) provides information during an investigation of bullying, 3.) witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**Target** is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **Expectations**

The Baraboo School District strives to provide a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, and school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological, and academic impact on bullies, victims, and bystanders. The school district consistently and vigorously addresses bullying so that there is no disruption to the learning environment and learning process.

It is a violation of this plan for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student to engage in or condone bullying in school or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when made aware of an incident of bullying. This plan is not designed or intended to limit the school's authority to take disciplinary action or take remedial action when such bullying occurs out of school but has a connection to school, or is disruptive to an employee's or student's work or participation in school related activities. Reports of bullying occurring in or out of school will be reviewed and, when a connection to work or school exists, will result in a complete investigation and possible disciplinary action and corrective measure.

Bullying behavior is prohibited in all schools, buildings, property, and educational environments, including any property or vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school district. This includes public transportation regularly used by students to go to and from school. Educational environments include, but are not limited to, every activity under school supervision. Bullying is prohibited through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the Baraboo School District. Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or electronic devices that are not owned, leased, or used by the Baraboo School District 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 educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

## **Retaliation**

Retaliation in any form against any person is forbidden. Individuals engaging in retaliatory behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **Reporting**

It is the responsibility of every employee, student, and parent to recognize acts of bullying and retaliation, and to take every action necessary to ensure that the applicable policies and procedures of the Baraboo School District are implemented. Any employee or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to bullying or retaliation has the right to file a report and to receive prompt and appropriate handling of the report. Further,

all reasonable efforts shall be made to maintain confidentiality and protect privacy of all parties, but proper enforcement of this policy may require disclosure of any or all information received. Professional judgement will be used in information disclosure.

It is the responsibility of all school staff members, students and concerned individuals who observe or become aware of acts of bullying to report these acts confidentially to designated staff members at the building level including building principals, school counselors, school psychologists or other staff designated to be the recipients of such reports. All such reports, either verbal or in writing, will be taken seriously and a clear account of the incident is to be documented. The building principal or his/her designee will be responsible for the investigation and disposition of all reports of bullying in his/her building. The building principal/designee may seek the assistance of the Director of Student Services with regard to investigation and/or disposition of reports of bullying.

The safety of suspected targets is our first consideration once a report is received. A safety assessment may need to be made immediately and provisional accommodations implemented by appropriate staff members as deemed necessary.

### **Investigation**

An investigation to determine the facts will take place as soon as possible to verify the validity and the seriousness of the report. The nature and duration of an investigation will depend on the circumstances, including the type, severity, and frequency of the alleged conduct. The goal is to obtain an accurate and complete account of all incidents and circumstances deemed relevant to the allegations in the report. The investigation will generally include personal interviews with the individual making the initial report, the subject(s) of the report, and others who witnessed or may have potentially relevant knowledge about the alleged incident giving rise to the report. Review of documents, videos, voice mails, emails, websites, text messages, instant messages, and other items deemed relevant may also be included.

Parents and/or guardians of each student involved in the bullying will be notified by the building principal that a report has been made if the report is deemed to, in fact, be a case of bullying.

The District will take all steps deemed necessary to protect to the extent practicable the reporter, witnesses, and other individuals from further incidents or retaliation pending the outcome of the investigation. These steps may include, but are not limited to, ordering interim disciplinary action, appropriate adult supervision, reassigning classroom seating, and/or temporarily transferring the subject of the report from classes with the individual filing the report. The alleged perpetrator will be instructed to avoid contact and maintain appropriate safe distance from the alleged target while on school property and at school events. Any court-ordered protective

orders will be monitored for compliance. All interviewees, alleged targets, and alleged perpetrators will be warned against retaliation and made aware of the prohibition to speak about the matter in order to maintain the integrity of the investigation. All interim safety measures will be monitored for success.

The district shall keep the complaint and any related student records confidential to the extent required by law for all students involved.

## **Sanctions and Supports**

If it is determined that students participated in bullying behavior in violation of the policy, the principal or appointed designee may take disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials for possible legal action as appropriate.

Employees who participate in bullying behavior or who fail to report bullying behavior, will be considered to be in violation of this policy. Employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in conformance with any board policies, applicable contractual or legal requirements.

Pupil services staff may provide support for the identified victim(s), if necessary.

## **Confidentiality**

Information from a student record of a target or aggressor may not be disclosed to a parent unless the information is about the parent's own child. Pupil records are the property and in the custody of a student's school district of residence. State law specifically requires pupil records to be made available to any DPI-licensed school staff member with legitimate educational interests, including safety interests. A parent could only seek to have a school employee barred access to the parent's child's pupil records on the basis of the school employee not having any legitimate need to have this information. Ultimately, it is the decision of the school district who within the school system has access to pupil records, Wis. Stat. sec. 118.125(2)(d).

Disclose of bullying or retaliation to local law enforcement is also allowed. Such communication must protect the privacy of victims, witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Wisconsin law requires a school board to disclose pertinent pupil records to an investigating law enforcement agency or district attorney if the person to whom the records are disclosed certifies in writing that the records 1) concern the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve the student, 2) relate to an ongoing investigation or pending delinquency petition, and 3) will not be disclosed to any other person except as otherwise authorized by law. Wis. Stat. sec. 118.125(2)(d)

Student record information about a victim or aggressor may be disclosed in connection with a health or safety emergency if such information is necessary to protect the health and/or safety of the student or other individuals. Federal and state law allow a school district to disclose pupil records to appropriate parties in connection with an emergency, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of any individual. Wis. Stat. sec. 118.125(2)(p), 34 CFR 99.31, and 99.36

In addition to school discipline, the bullying conduct may be severe enough to warrant prosecution as an ordinance or criminal matter. There is not a specific ordinance or crime titled bullying, but the bullying conduct may constitute violations for:

- Wis. Stat. § 947.01- Disorderly conduct
- Wis. Stat. § 947.012 - Unlawful use of telephone
- Wis. Stat. § 947.0125 - Unlawful use of computerized communication systems
- Wis. Stat. § 947.013 - Harassment
- Wis. Stat. § 940.32 - Stalking
- Wis. Stat. § 943.201 - Unauthorized use of an individual's personal identifying information or documents.



## **Responses to Bullying**

### Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-Building

Once the determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Baraboo School District will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. These may include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with professional school counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents/guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying and social skills building activities at home;
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills;
- Making a referral for an evaluation.

### Taking Disciplinary Action

If the District decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the action will be determined on the basis of facts found during the investigation, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the students involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the plan and the building's student handbook.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by federal and state statutes. These legal requirements will be adhered to when issuing student discipline.

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

Parents of students alleged to have engaged in bullying or retaliation will be contacted at which time the activity, words, and/or images subject to the report will be reviewed. A student disciplined for bullying or retaliation will not be readmitted to the regular school program until his or her parents have been contacted.

### Promoting Safety for the Victim and Others

The District will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the victim's sense of safety and that of others. One strategy that may be used is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred. Within a reasonable period of time

following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the District will contact the victim to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the District will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **Training and Professional Development**

### Annual Staff Training

Annual training for all school staff will include staff duties as outlined in this plan and an overview of the steps that the District will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will 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.

### Ongoing Professional Development

The content of school and district wide professional development will be informed by research and may include information on:

- Developmentally, age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally, 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, victim, and witnesses to the bullying;
- Research finding 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 incident and nature of cyberbullying;
- 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.

Additional areas identified by the Baraboo School District for professional development included:

- Promoting and modeling the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), including the use of safe, respectful, and responsible behaviors and language;
- Fostering an understanding of trauma and the impact it can have on behavior and learning;
- Incorporating trauma-informed practices into individual classrooms and school wide;

- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- Building relationships and communications with families;
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- Applying restorative disciplinary practices;
- Teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision making;
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

### Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which 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, including the underlying power imbalance;
- Emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in health relationships and respectful communications;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and differences.

### General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment and will be emphasized in the Baraboo School District. 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;
- Using appropriate positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral interventions and supports;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving conflict resolution, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- Using the internet safely;
- Supporting students' interests and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

### Counseling and other Services

Each school within the Baraboo School District has an on-site professional school counselor who works with students and parents/guardians. Upon request, referrals can be made to outside community-based organizations.

### Students with Disabilities

When a student's Individual Educational Program (IEP) team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his or her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

### **Notice**

The Baraboo School District will provide students and parents/guardians, in age appropriate terms and in their most prevalent language, annual written notice of the relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Baraboo School District will annually provide written notice of and training on the plan to all school staff. Relevant sections of the plan will be included in Baraboo School District student and faculty handbooks and will also be posted on the Baraboo School District website.

For any questions or concerns regarding this plan, please contact the Director of Student Services as 608-355-3950.