

# Wilmington Public Schools

161 Church Street | Wilmington, MA 01887  
Tel: (978) 694-6000 Fax: (978) 694-6005



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## Wilmington Public Schools *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan*

### Commonly Asked Questions June 2019

The Wilmington Public Schools is pleased to publish an updated version of its *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP)*. After being updated by members of the Behavioral Health Task Force, a draft of the new BPIP was published online for public comment from March 20 through April 20, 2019. During this public comment period, eight (8) members of the community provided feedback and asked questions. Much of the feedback was incorporated into the final version of the BPIP, which is now published on the district's webpage and available in each school office as well as the district office (Roman House). Questions or comments that were not easily incorporated into the final version are addressed below:

**Question:** When the BPIP states “bullying and behavioral incidents”, are the behavioral incidents inclusive of physical contact?

**Answer:** *When bullying is reported, all aspects of the report is investigated. If the report includes claims of physical contact or if physical contact is uncovered through the investigation, then that particular conduct is considered when the administrator ultimately determines if bullying has occurred. It is possible that a bullying investigation that includes claims of physical contact is determined not to be bullying, but the student or students involved may be subject to disciplinary action.*

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**Question:** PBIS varies across the district and within each building. Consistency is very important. How will that be handled in terms of professional development, reporting incidents, and consequences at each school?

**Answer:** *The Wilmington Public Schools remains committed to PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) as an approach to promote positive behavior and improve school safety, culture and climate. All of our schools will continue to work with our PBIS consultant from [Wediko](#). While each school is in a slightly different place with respect to developing their own PBIS protocols and expectations, all of our schools will continue to work towards full implementation of a program that meets the needs of the students of that individual school. With PBIS as a common framework, we will improve consistency over time. While it is the hope that PBIS will help reduce or eliminate bullying incidents in our schools, PBIS is not used to respond to claims of bullying. Protocols specific to bullying are outlined in the BPIP, and it is the expectation of the district that all schools follow these protocols consistently.*

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**Question:** Will there be consistency of resources/services available across all schools? Many of the resources listed in the BPIP are no longer offered in some buildings?

**Answer:** *The list of resources/services in the BPIP is a list of common resources/services that are used in different buildings across the district. As each building is different and has different needs, it is not always possible or appropriate to apply the same resources or offer the same services in all buildings. We are committed to addressing the needs in each building with specific resources/services that work for each individual building. These resources/services may change from year-to-year depending on the needs of each building.*

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**Comment:** The bully needs to be told why he/she is bullying and given a chance to stop. If it continues, then disciplinary action should be taken.

**Response:** *If bullying is confirmed, the law requires schools to consider a range of consequences that “balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.” Simply directing a student to stop is not considered an effective response. The goal is to ensure everyone’s safety and well-being and to employ consequences that have the best chance of changing behavior. As circumstances are different with each case, consequences depend on the specific details associated with each incident.*

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**Question:** If a teacher reports bullying to an administrator, where is the report being documented?

**Answer:** *The teacher should fill out a bullying incident report form (pg. 14 of the BPIP) when reporting alleged bullying. That form provides documentation of the original report and is followed up by a bullying investigation form completed by the administrator (pg. 15 of the BPIP). If the teacher does not complete a reporting form, the administrator or designee should do so.*

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**Question:** Are bullying incident report forms available for all staff to see?

**Answer:** *No. Only the staff member completing the form and the administrator investigating the incident have access to completed bullying incident report forms. These forms may contain confidential student record information and it would be inappropriate to share these forms with staff members who did not fill out the form. When a student moves to another building (i.e. transitions from the middle school to the high school) the administrators of the receiving school may be given access to archived bullying forms/outcomes.*

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**Question:** The BPIP states, “The requirement to report to the principal or his/her designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with each school’s policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.” Oftentimes when bullying is reported to an administrator they handle the response and it is not always in line with the teacher. Will there be consistency in consequences/responses in cases of bullying?

**Answer:** *This statement from the BPIP is referring to a staff member having the authority/responsibility to respond to behaviors in the moment even when a bullying report is*

warranted. For example if a staff member witnesses concerning behavior in the hallway, he or she should address the behavior in accordance with the school's discipline policies to stop the behavior in the moment and then file a report if he or she believes the behavior could potentially be bullying. This statement from the BPIP is not referring to whether or not the staff member agrees with the administrator's response to the investigation. It is possible that the reporting staff member could disagree with the outcome of the investigation. This could be because the administrator learned information during the investigation that the staff member is not privy to. Once the report is made, it is the administrator who makes the final determination based on the information gathered during the investigation.

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**Question:** What about staff being bullied by staff or even by a student?

**Answer:** *The law only recognizes students as targets. Conflicts between adults are not recognized as bullying. Adult to adult conflict could be considered harassment and should be handled following the district's published grievance procedures. Complaints of this nature can be made to the building principal or the district's Civil Rights Coordinator (Human Resources Director). Students cannot bully teachers under the law.*

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**Question:** Would a child be punished if he or she defends him or herself in a physical altercation that arises because the child feels that he or she is being bullied? If a child intervenes on behalf of a target, could the child who intervenes face discipline?

**Answer:** *A student who engages in a physical altercation of any kind is subject to disciplinary action. However, the specific circumstances of each instance are taken into consideration when administrators determine if discipline is appropriate.*

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