Massachusetts Department of
Elementary & Secondary Education

Family & Community ❯ Students & Families ❯
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Resources

Addressing the Needs of Students with Disabilities in the IEP and in School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Efforts[1]

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This resource document contains tools to assist schools and IEP Teams to prevent bullying of students with disabilities and to enable Teams to comply with special education-related provisions of the law. The document is organized according to the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework[2]. The Framework sections are used in the Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan[3] and in this document so that whole school approaches *and* individual supports for particular students can be aligned with each other. This will help to include students with disabilities in the school- and district-wide bullying prevention and intervention initiatives from which all students should benefit. These Framework sections are leadership, training and professional development, access to resources and services, academic and non-academic activities, policies and procedures for reporting and responding to bullying, and collaboration with families.

The Department is making this document available to all educators - general and special education teachers, administrators and student support staff - in recognition of the collaboration between special education and general education that is necessary to address proactively and effectively the needs of students with disabilities relative to bullying. By bridging whole-school efforts with those taking place on behalf of individual students with disabilities, we can begin to eliminate the threat of bullying for this vulnerable population and continue to make progress toward the long-term goal of safely and effectively including all students in their school communities.

First, the document provides assistance in the form of questions to help Teams determine which students are covered by the new law and what their needs may be. Second, the document provides questions for schools to consider in order to enable the broader bullying prevention and intervention initiatives taking place at the school and district level to support the efforts of IEP Teams to help individual students develop necessary skills and proficiencies. These questions, organized by each Framework section, are titled *Whole School Considerations*, to help educators begin a planning process about the role of the entire school community in supporting students with disabilities. A third set of guiding questions in each Framework section, titled *Questions for IEP Teams*, is written primarily for those who are directly involved in the IEP development process - special education directors, Team chairpersons, general and special educators, parents, service providers, and others. They provide guidance for Team members as they develop IEPs that will help individual students build the skills and proficiencies necessary to avoid and respond to bullying, teasing, and harassment as required by the new bullying prevention and intervention law[4]. The Framework informs the IEP development process as it helps Teams to holistically address all of a student's needs.

Determining whether a student is covered by Sections 7 and 8 of the bullying prevention and intervention law and identifying his or her needs

IEP Teams must determine whether the sections 7 and 8 provisions of the Massachusetts bullying prevention and intervention law apply to eligible students. The provisions apply if the student's disability (a) is on the autism spectrum, or (b) affects social skills development, or (c) makes the student vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing.[5]

For students on the autism spectrum, protection under the law will be automatic. For students in the other two categories, the Team must make a determination as to whether the student's disability affects social skills development or renders the student vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Teams should be aware that students with emotional impairments, developmental delays, health impairments, communication disorders, and neurological impairments are likely to have a disability that affects their social skills development. However, Teams should carefully evaluate whether students with any type of impairment have delays in social skills development or are otherwise vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of their disability.

The questions below are designed to help the Team to determine whether the student has a disability that renders him/her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing. In addition, the questions will help to identify a student's specific needs and inform the process of developing specific goals and objectives for the student. In preparation for consideration of these questions at the Team meeting, it may be helpful to provide the student and parent with a bullying prevention and

intervention survey, consisting of these questions, which should be modified to the student's developmental level. In addition, the school could conduct an individual interview about the student's social experiences at school.[6]

Questions to Consider:

- Does the student feel safe at school? If not, why not?
- Is the school aware of the student being a target of bullying? Do educators believe the student could potentially become a target? Why?
- Are parents aware of any incidents of bullying against the student? When? Where? What was the nature of the bullying? Did the bullying occur in school (if so, where? e.g., hallway, cafeteria), out of school, on a transportation vehicle, or was it cyberbullying? When the parent addressed the question with the student, did the student understand that bullying had taken place?
- Does the student have a clear understanding of what bullying is and is he or she able to identify bullying attempts (as well as teasing and harassment)?
- Does the student display particular verbal or nonverbal behavior that makes him/her more vulnerable to bullying?
- Does the student engage in behavior that might be identified as bullying? Is there concern that any new or emerging behavior might be identified in this way?
- Given the specific nature and extent of the student's disability, is the student able to conform to the school's code of conduct relative to bullying prevention and intervention?
- Is the student able to access the general education curriculum, including the bullying prevention and intervention curriculum?
- Does the student have sufficient self-advocacy skills to obtain help/know what to do if he/she is bullied?
- What particular skills does the student need to develop to guard against becoming a target or to stop aggressive behaviors directed toward him/her?
- Does the student have friends at school/in the community who would report bullying or defend the student if the student is subjected to bullying?
- Is the student socially isolated? Does the student spend time physically removed from his or her peers? What has been done to integrate the student into the social life of the school during the school day and during extracurricular activities?
- Does the student have someone she/he trusts at school to whom she/he may report bullying?
- Does the student have an aide? If so, is this aide present during high-risk time periods (e.g., recess, lunch)?
- Are there times of day with less adult supervision and less structure where bullying is more likely to occur? Are there places in the building where bullying is more likely to occur?
- Is there a Behavioral Intervention Plan for the student and, if so, is it being followed? Does it need to be amended to include new information regarding bullying prevention and intervention strategies?

Using The Framework To Develop The IEP

After the IEP Team has identified a student's needs, the Team could use the Framework outlined below to guide a discussion of what goals, objectives services, supports, instruction, and accommodations should be included in the student's IEP. Using the Framework to guide the IEP development process is a helpful way of ensuring that all of a student's needs are taken into account and that the IEP, with appropriate accommodations, is aligned with the school's and district's broader efforts to prevent and intervene in incidents of bullying. In addition, using the Framework helps to ensure that the necessary adjustments to the school environment needed to support and reinforce the student are addressed.

In considering what goals may be appropriate for an individual student, the Department's *Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2011-2: Bullying Prevention and Intervention* referred to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)[7] for current research on specific skills and proficiencies needed to avoid bullying, harassment, and teasing. As the IEP Team moves through the process outlined below, it may wish to consider overarching goals from the core categories identified by CASEL: Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-making.

The approaches in this document are informed by current research on bullying prevention and intervention as well as by research and practice from those who work with students with disabilities, including students with autism and other disabilities that affect social skills development. By no means are these lists exhaustive; rather, they are illustrative of the types of matters Teams should be considering. *(See Appendix for detailed descriptions of how and why these strategies are key to addressing specific bullying risks as well as to developing general skills that will reduce the student's vulnerability to bullying over time.)*

I. Leadership

Whole School Considerations

- Does leadership convey to the school community that an inclusive school-wide culture and the explicit teaching of civility and tolerance are essential to prevent bullying, particularly bullying of students with disabilities?
- Does leadership ensure that all educators - general and special education - have a sense of shared responsibility to help students with disabilities feel connected to and part of the school community, and ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for communication between general and special education staff to allow for coordinated implementation of IEP goals relative to bullying prevention and intervention?
- Do all educators - general and special education - share responsibility for: 1) helping students with disabilities feel connected to and part of the school community; and 2) assisting with the implementation of IEP goals relative to bullying prevention and intervention?
- Are staff, parents, and other experts knowledgeable about the particular needs of students with disabilities, including the students themselves, involved in ongoing planning and discussions about the needs of this population relative to bullying prevention and intervention?
- Do the school's bullying prevention and intervention protocols reflect the needs of students with disabilities, including assisting them to make reports about bullying?
- Do incident reports track numbers of involved students with disabilities along with other data suggested by the Model Plan?
- Are parents and their students with disabilities surveyed to assess services and information that might be useful and concerns that might not be known to staff?
- Are educators and staff surveyed to determine professional development needs and particular concerns about bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities?

Considerations for IEP Teams:

Does the school leadership need to:

- *approve staffing arrangements necessary to monitor the student throughout the day?*
- *inform members of the staff to be vigilant about the student's safety?*
- *create opportunities for general and special education staff to consult together about the student?*

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in the Additional Information section of the IEP or in the Accommodations section of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) A or PLEP B.*

- Provide instructional personnel or supplementary aides and services during identified periods of the school day (lunch, recess, study hall, bus, free times) when the student requires additional support or instruction in order to respond to or avoid bullying.
- Inform leadership, particularly those with disciplinary responsibilities, of disability-related IEP accommodations to the student code of conduct for a particular student.
- Identify any and all staff within the building (guidance counselor, nurse, cafeteria workers, bus drivers) whom leadership should inform to pay particular attention to the student with regard to bullying prevention and intervention.

II. Training And Professional Development

Whole School Considerations

- Does training for all staff in the school include the following points of understanding?
- Students with disabilities can form successful relationships with other students and participate fully in school activities when provided with sufficient supports and opportunities for interactions.
- Students with autism spectrum disorder and students with other disabilities affecting communication and social skills are vulnerable targets for bullying because they often lack the skills necessary to understand social cues. Sometimes these students are viewed as atypical or "odd" when they engage in "quirky" behaviors. Unable to understand when they are in a bullying situation, they can have difficulty protecting themselves and require specialized teaching, supports, and services to help deal with the problem.
- Students with emotional impairments, such as attachment, post-traumatic stress, and impulse control disorders, can be at risk for being both targets and aggressors. Some are easily persuaded to participate in bullying behavior. Others may adopt a "strike first" posture due to having been bullied or excluded in ways that have not been evident to adults. It is important to be alert to signs of stress and communicate openly with parents to identify underlying causes of behavior for these students.
- Disability awareness among staff and students will increase understanding and empathy for students with social, emotional, communication, and behavioral differences and motivate them to intervene if a student with

a disability is involved in bullying. This includes helping staff and students understand that unusual and disruptive behaviors, including noises, rocking, and pacing, may be meeting a student's internal needs and are not addressable by behavioral interventions.

- Students with disabilities must be taught to avoid and respond to teasing and harassment as well as bullying.[8] Staff may need to be trained on the differences among these three categories so they can teach students how to respond accordingly.

Considerations for IEP Teams:

- *Is there a need for specialized training or consultation for staff who will be working with the student?*

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in the Additional Information section or Section A of the Service Delivery Grid.*

- Provide training to staff (either the entire staff or selected staff members involved with the particular student) on strategies or approaches necessary to avoid and/or respond to bullying.
- Provide ongoing consultation to the student's classroom teachers, or other direct service providers, from a professional (either in- or out-of-district) with expertise in avoiding and/or responding to bullying in the context of the student's particular needs and disabilities.
- Provide specific training and consultation to staff related to the student's particular disability.

III. Access To Resources And Services

Whole School Considerations

- Does the school offer a range of flexible individualized supports and services (including individual and group counseling, social skill building, pragmatics groups, friendship groups, etc.) that are specifically designed to address issues related to bullying and to help students with disabilities participate in the school community?
- Are educators, specialists, and providers who interact with a student given time and opportunity to communicate regularly with each other so they can collaborate effectively and ensure that each knows and can reinforce in the classroom and throughout the day the specific skills the student is working on, adjust the school environment to meet the student's needs, and be alerted in a timely way should a bullying incident occur?
- Do specialists and providers require particular skills in order to provide consultation to educators and to help students avoid becoming targets and/or aggressors?
- Do group and individual services supporting students' safety plans teach the steps of safety planning?
- Are individual and small group interventions used in order to balance skill acquisition with opportunities for generalization?
- Do services use a range of approaches, adapted to a particular student's needs and known to be effective with this population, including repetition, role play, providing an array of scenarios to enhance generalization, and videotaping appropriate responses?

Considerations for IEP Teams

- *Is there a need for additional counseling or skill-building?*
- *What supports and services outside of the classroom are necessary to build the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid bullying?*
- *Do referrals need to be made to outside agencies with particular expertise?*

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in the Additional Information section, the Transportation section, or Section C of the Service Delivery Grid.*

- Provide a social skills group to help the student develop social competencies and gain skills necessary to identify a potential bullying situation and to respond appropriately. There are multiple types of social skills groups, and Teams should consider which of the following options are needed for the individual student:
  - Specifically designed social skills group[9]
  - Social lunch group *(See Appendix #3.)*
  - Social recreation group *(See Appendix #3.)*
- Provide a communication skills/social pragmatics skills group. This group might serve several purposes:

- Help the student understand who to go to with a problem related to bullying, how to say what the problem is, and when to tell someone.
    - Help the student develop the ability to express what she/he wants and needs, using both verbal and non-verbal expressions, as a way to avoid becoming a target when interacting with peers and to report bullying incidents to an adult.
- Provide direct one-to-one instruction using the specific techniques of a Social Story&trad;[10], role plays[11], and/or other strategies identified by the IEP Team to teach the student how to respond in bullying situations. (Note that these techniques require specialized training and a small group setting with students of similar abilities and needs.) *(See #1 in the Appendix.)*
- Provide direct one-to-one instruction by a school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, or other appropriate professional to help the student learn how to increase pragmatic skills (instruction in the social use of language) to reduce his/her vulnerability to bullying; such skills can include distinguishing between friendly overtures and attempts to bully, learning to read the nonverbal aspects of communication, and learning to discern and respond appropriately to bullying situations. *(See #2 in the Appendix.)*
- Provide school-based counseling with the school psychologist, guidance counselor, or other appropriate professional, that uses cognitive-behavioral approaches that have shown promising success in addressing all domains of social functioning.
- Provide a Functional Behavioral Analysis and develop a Behavioral Intervention Plan that identifies target or aggressor behaviors and antecedents to these behaviors, and proposes interventions for teaching the student to reduce and/or avoid these behaviors.
- To the extent that the student is receiving Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) services, consider having the student's target or aggressor behaviors addressed by these services.
- Provide assertiveness and/or self-advocacy training.
- Provide a bus monitor if a student is routinely a target or aggressor on the school bus.

IV. Academic And Non-academic Activities

Whole School Considerations

- Is the bullying prevention and intervention curriculum designed with the needs of students with disabilities in mind? (Refer below to discussion of the specialized instruction, modifications, and accommodations that IEP Teams should use to ensure students with disabilities can access the bullying prevention and intervention curriculum.)
- Is the emotional impact of the bullying prevention and intervention curriculum recognized? For many students with disabilities, discussing bullying may feel highly personal and uncomfortable. Educators should consider the potential emotional response to this material and collaborate with IEP Teams to consider accommodations that go beyond those listed in the IEP.
- Does instruction focus on understanding of and tolerance for disabilities? Instruction in each grade should teach about all types of disabilities, including those that are hidden or affect communication, social and behavioral skills, in order to focus on respect and acceptance for differences and promote the development of empathy for students with all disabilities
- Are educators prepared to help students report? Educators should be mindful that many students with disabilities will need special assistance in recognizing and reporting when they are in a bullying situation. In addition, monitoring and check-ins with students may be necessary in order to ensure that bullying incidents are addressed.
- Are students adequately supported during unstructured times? Opportunities for bullying increase during unstructured times, such as nonacademic and recreational activities, and in specialty classes, such as art and gym. Communication and collaboration among staff is critical for ensuring that students with disabilities are supported during these times.

Considerations for IEP Teams

- *Have all of the student's needs for modifications and accommodations to access the general education bullying prevention and intervention curriculum been addressed?*
- *Is the student being provided with opportunities to build social skills and self-advocacy skills in the classroom and during unstructured parts of the day (e.g., lunch, recess, etc.)?*
- *Are the student's non-academic strengths (music, art, sports, etc.) being used as ways to bolster the student's self-esteem and social skills?*
- *What supports does the student need, and what corresponding changes need to take place in the activity the student is joining, for the student to participate successfully, without fear of bullying?*

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in PLEP A, in the Testing Accommodations section, in Section B or Section C of the Service Delivery Grid, or in the Additional Information section.*

- Modify the school's bullying prevention and intervention curriculum so that it is in a form that the student can understand. Review the curriculum with the student and ensure that the student understands the bullying prevention and intervention program that is in place in the school. Choose a setting and format that will be comfortable for the student, establish goals and ideas to reinforce concepts (and communicate these to parents), and re-teach each school year. Build the plan according to the student's strengths, teaching one concept at a time and using visual strategies/social stories/role-plays. Create a basic curriculum for the student that pulls the main concepts out of the school's bullying prevention and intervention curriculum and uses a vocabulary appropriate to the student's level.[12]
- Provide supported and monitored opportunities for the students to practice developing social skills in a larger group setting within the general school population. This helps to reinforce the skills introduced and practiced in the small group setting.
- Instruct the student on how to use relaxation techniques to maintain self-control. In particular, teach strategies to remain relaxed and focused on the known facts of the incident despite feeling upset about the words and actions of the aggressor.
- Reinforce strategies to teach the student how to address bullying in a safe way, including walking away after they have responded to a bullying situation and accessing their "home base" or their "safe person."
- Provide specialized instruction to the student that includes the following components:
    - practice
    - reinforcement
    - extra practice
    - explicit instructions
    - generalization
- Develop a specific Behavioral Intervention Plan and ensure that classroom teachers are aware of specific strategies that they are to use.
- Construct assignments creatively based on a student's strengths and how she/he learns best; allow him/her to use his/her strengths to aid other students, thereby forming the basis for friendship and developing self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Allow extra time/consideration when completing communication-based assignments that encourage the student to express himself/herself.
- Provide non-academic and extracurricular opportunities for the student to demonstrate his/her strengths, practice social skills, and develop self-esteem.

V. Policies And Procedures For Reporting And Responding To Bullying

Whole School Considerations

- Does school policy address the need for students with disabilities to experience the school as safe and supportive, have a clear understanding of what bullying is, know how to respond when incidents of bullying occur, and feel comfortable making reports of bullying?
- Is there a policy that adults check-in with students with disabilities to gather accurate information regarding safety issues?
- Does the policy direct adults identified as a student's "safe person" by the Team to be responsible for communicating the student's needs to the Team and/or school staff?
- Are general education staff responsible for collaborating with IEP Teams when a bullying incident occurs so that they understand any special considerations for the student(s) involved?
- Does the policy direct the principal or designee to consult with the IEP Team and/or "safe person" so that bullying investigations involving a student with disabilities consider specific supports that students may need to communicate effectively?
- Does the policy direct school personnel to consult with the IEP Team to consider the role a student's disability may have played in the behavior before disciplining or reporting an incident to the police?[13]
- Is there a policy in place to consider with the IEP team any adjustments to the school environment that may be necessary (including increased adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying occurred) to enhance a student's sense of safety after being the target of a bullying incident?

Considerations for IEP Teams

- Has the student received specialized instruction on the relevant policies and procedures contained in the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan?
- Have the necessary modifications been made for the student to be able to report bullying in a way that is consistent with his/her communication skills?
- Has a safety plan been developed for the student, if needed?

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in the Additional Information section or in the Accommodations section of PLEP A or PLEP B.*

- Provide direct instruction in all of the relevant policies and procedures contained in the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan.
- Modify the form that is used to report bullying to address communication, cognitive, or other barriers resulting from the student's disability.
- Identify specific individuals to whom the student knows she/he can immediately report incidents of bullying. Also, ensure that the student knows that every adult is an available reporter.
- Identify a "home base" (a place in the school where the student feels safe) with the student's input. *(See #4 in the Appendix.)*
- Appoint a "safe person" chosen by the student and parents to perform several related functions. *(See#4 in the Appendix.)*
- Develop a "safety plan" that includes the following:
    - "Checking in" with the student on a regular basis to determine if the student is feeling safe from bullying, has witnessed any episodes of bullying that are troubling him/her, or has engaged in any behaviors that might be seen as bullying.
    - Ensuring that necessary adjustments to the school environment, as determined by the Team, are made. Specific places, situations, and students identified by the student as potentially high-risk or vulnerable will be shared as well. Increased supervision, accompanied by an aide or a fellow student, or other such plans will be considered.
    - Communicating with all staff who have contact with the student the specifics of the IEP as they relate to bullying prevention and intervention, including the skills the student is working on, the special considerations when a bullying incident occurs, and the specific scripts the student is to use when confronted by bullying incidents.
- Identify issues to be considered in the event a student with a disability is involved in a bullying incident, including:
    - Concern about further exclusion from the social group.
    - Changing the seat of the aggressor rather than the target.
    - Concern about stigma, arising from unique needs related to their disability.
    - Difficulty with self-advocacy.
- Other issues reflecting the social, communication, and other needs.
- Identify any necessary modifications to the code of student conduct that are appropriate based on the student's disabilities.

VI. Collaboration With Families

Whole School Considerations

- Does the school recognize the essential role of families in reinforcing/coordinating the school's bullying prevention and intervention efforts for students with disabilities?
- Does staff communicate regularly with parents about the specific skills and strategies to avoid bullying that have been developed for their child (e.g., specific vocabulary being used in the curriculum) in order to foster improved coordination and reinforcement of learning at home?
- Does the school collaborate with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council regarding bullying prevention and intervention initiatives?
- Does the school/district offer education programs for parents to share information about specific strategies and approaches known to be effective in preventing and intervening effectively in bullying with this student population?

Considerations for IEP Teams

- *Does the student's family need to receive training on the school's bullying prevention and intervention plan or on disability-specific strategies for helping the student build the skills and proficiencies necessary to prevent and respond to bullying?*

- *Has the school established frequent and regular communication with parents regarding adjustments in the school environment to ensure safety, if that is in the student's IEP?*

Sample IEP Provisions to Consider - *These provisions might be included in the Additional Information section or in Section A of the Service Delivery Grid.*

- Provide training and/or consultation to the student's family on the following:
    - The school's bullying prevention and intervention plan.
    - The school's bullying prevention and intervention curriculum and strategies to support the student's mastery of the curriculum inside and outside of school.
    - Strategies and approaches for helping to build the student's social skills.
    - Strategies to help the student understand Internet safety and develop skills to avoid being a target of cyberbullying or an intended or unintended aggressor or participant in cyberbullying.
- Use the Team meeting process as an opportunity to educate families about the district's bullying prevention and intervention plan, the general education curriculum the school is using to instruct all students about bullying, and the reporting mechanisms that are in place within the school.

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Appendix
Sample Best Practices For Teaching Students With Disabilities About Bullying Prevention And Intervention

1) Role Playing and Social Stories

Role Playing: For role playing to be effective, it should be conducted by a professional in a small group setting such as a social skills group with students of similar needs. Role plays should provide explicit concrete instruction, model appropriate responses, and allow students to rehearse. Role plays should provide an opportunity to follow up with supportive feedback to students and opportunities for practicing. Role plays can be used to teach students: 1) how to respond to bullying with "I" statements (e.g., "I need you to stop." or "I am leaving now."); 2) how to walk away before bullying occurs; and 3) how to identify bullying, harassment, or teasing with negative intentions; and 4) how to tell an adult. These activities should be practiced in small group settings, using a variety of scenarios with different types of bullying behavior.

Social Stories: A Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in the first person, in a specifically defined style and format that includes an introduction, body and conclusion. It answers "wh" questions: who is involved; where and when a situation occurs, what is happening, how it happens and why. [*](#) The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner. It is a helpful tool, and often the story needs to be read repeatedly for it to be understood by the student. Training is required for staff to use this strategy and should involve working with an educator or other educational professional who already is using Social Stories. This should be followed by practicing with the student(s) under the supervision of the experienced educator.

2) Pragmatic Instruction and Speech Therapy

Using language to communicate effectively is the basis of pragmatics. It is instruction in the social use of language. Students with disabilities often do not notice - or notice but misinterpret - the nonverbal aspects of what other people are communicating to them, including facial expression, vocal expression, body language, gestures, volume, pauses, and so forth. Instead, these students may miss the context and hear only the words that are spoken. This also includes difficulties in areas of expressive communication such as filtering thoughts before they are spoken and socializing for the sake of interpersonal connection rather than for conveying information. This type of instruction is used to give specific information to students and then practice the "give and take" of conversation in multiple settings with many different people. Providing direct instruction to learn how to increase pragmatic skills to distinguish between friendly overtures and bullying, harassment, or teasing attempts can assist students to reflect back on their day to discuss social interactions and decide whether the interaction was friendly or mean-spirited.

3) Social Groups

Social Skills Groups: These are small groups of students with similar needs working with a qualified instructor on skills that are important to develop social competencies.

Social Lunch Groups: These can be ways for students to connect, but are not to be used in place of a social skills group; the "lunch bunch" group can be a short, comfortable, quiet time away from the confusing cafeteria to have lunch with other students and an understanding staff member who facilitates the interactions. The best situation would be for other students (with and without disabilities) to be involved, not just the student and a staff member; these are students whose adult relationships are usually fine, and the lunch time would be an opportunity to connect in a casual way with other students. There should always be the goal of working towards eating in the lunch room successfully. Use non-disabled peers as models,

have staff around to make sure there is no bullying during lunch, and use any other strategies that the Team decides are important to make the lunch time successful.

Social Recreation Groups: This type of group is not skills based but is a way for students to connect and practice skills while doing something fun together.

4) "Home Base" and "Safe Person"

"Home Base": This is a location in the school selected by student and school staff where the student can go when not feeling safe. ("Safe" and "unsafe" feelings would need to be defined and taught.) This location should be a place where the student can be supervised and monitored by school staff. Some examples could include the School Adjustment Counselor's office, the main office, the resource room, or the nurse's office.

"Safe Person": This is a designated person in the school who the student can talk to and process social situations that are troubling, confusing, or agitating, including bullying, that may not be readily understood by the student. This person should be familiar to the student and have a trusting relationship already established. This needs to be a person chosen with the student and parents who understands the student and can help him or her de-escalate a situation or calm down and resume the normal school day routine. This does not need to be a specialist or a teacher but can be a staff member who knows and understands this student and can help him or her interpret confusing situations. The Safe Person must be familiar with practices known to be helpful when working with students with disabilities that affect communication and social awareness.

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[1]This document was developed in collaboration with the Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC). The Department would like to thank MAC for its contributions.

[2]http://bhps321.org/viewframeworkall.asp

[3]http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5680

[4]The following sections in the law are specific to students with disabilities: **Section 7:** Whenever the evaluation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team indicates that the student has a disability that affects social skills development or that the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of the student's disability, the IEP shall address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. **Section 8:** Whenever an evaluation indicates that a student has a disability on the autism spectrum… the IEP Team… shall consider and shall specifically address…… the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

[5]See Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2011-2: Bullying Prevention and Intervention

[6]Decisions about the specifics of who would interview the student, whether the interview would be with the student alone or with parent(s), and the type of communication (verbal, visual) necessary should be made in consultation with the parent and the staff member who is most familiar with the student and his/her particular disability. The goal should be to establish an atmosphere of trust, comfort, and privacy that will enable the student to articulate any concerns.

[7]The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL - www.casel.org) is an organization formed in 1994 that provides national and international leadership to enhance scientific research on social and emotional learning (SEL) and to expand the effective practice of SEL in schools. SEL is defined by CASEL and in the bullying prevention and intervention law (Section 16), as the process by which students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and constructively handle challenging social situations.

[8]MGL c. 71B, § 3.

[9]Defined as small groups of students with similar needs working with a qualified instructor on skills that are important to develop social competencies. A trained professional for social skills groups may be an experienced Speech and Language Pathologist but is not limited to that profession.

[10]A Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner. Specialized training is required to use this technique appropriately.

[11]For Role Playing to be effective, it should be conducted by a trained professional (see note 4 above) in a small group setting like a social skills group with students of similar needs.

[12]Given the nature of the bullying prevention and intervention curriculum, it is likely to evoke a highly personal and potentially emotional response to the material contained therein. Thus, the IEP Team should not expect that the adaptations typically made to academic curricula will necessarily be sufficient to address the student's needs related to bullying prevention and intervention.

[13]Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which should be considered in conjunction with state laws regarding student discipline. See 34 CFR 300.530 - 300.537. DESE regulations require that disciplinary actions taken against an aggressor who bullied a student balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. 603 CMR 49.06(2)(b). School officials are not required to notify local police of the aggressor's conduct under 603 CMR 49.06, Notification to Law Enforcement, if school officials determine that the incident can be handled appropriately within the school. 603 CMR 49.06 (2).

* See The Grey Center for Social Learning and Responsibility (Carol Grey); http://thegraycenter.org/

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