

# WHITE OAK SCHOOL

## PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

with Age-appropriate Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for  
Middle School Students

**Please return both the Bullying Prevention and  
Signature Pages signed**

2015/2016 School Year

## **The School's Purpose**

The White Oak School is specifically designed to serve students with dyslexia and similar language-based specific learning disabilities. The students are emotionally sound, and are of average to above-average intellectual capability. White Oak students are motivated to learn, and are committed to spending the time needed to bring their skills up to their potential.

The goal of the school is to develop in the students the language, literacy and study skills they need in order to return to a regular academic program. It is also the school's goal that each student should develop knowledge, confidence and a spirit of inquiry in the areas of social studies, the sciences, mathematics, physical education, and the arts.

## **Introduction**

A school community, by its nature, gathers together a group of people dedicated to a common purpose. White Oak has a set of rules so that we can be a community of caring, considerate, responsible individuals who can grow in our understanding of and respect for one another, while maintaining a level of consistency and fairness among ourselves as a group.

Most of the guidelines in this handbook are simple, logical rules, the sort of laws that govern small units in society -- be they families, schools or other kinds of small communities. Because they are sensible, they will probably seem obvious, and thus easy to follow. It is hoped that in a short time you will find them becoming second nature to you, requiring no special consideration or thought to comply with them.

*When you have read the handbook, please sign the signature page included in the registration packet at the back of the booklet, to indicate that you have read and understood the Handbook. Return the signed page with other required medical and registration documents. Registration is not complete until all required documents have been submitted.*

## **General Behavior**

A good rule to follow in regard to one's behavior toward others is to treat those around you in a manner in which you would choose to be treated: with mutual respect, honesty, concern and consideration. Behavior which is loud, rude, cruel or hurtful is unacceptable for White Oak students, whether they are on campus or out in the larger community representing the school. It is important to remember that each member of

the school community is a part of its identity and an ambassador for the school in the world at large. With that in mind, a White Oak student should understand that it is expected that he/she will always behave in a manner that is sensitive, caring and honorable, thereby reflecting well upon both the student and the school.

## **Absence and Academic Credit**

Academic achievement and good school attendance are closely linked. A student who misses class often spends days catching up, even with lots of individual help from the teacher.

The school is understanding of absences caused by legitimate medical reasons, or by family emergency or loss. Absences caused by any other reason, even for a day, burden a child with needless loss of important educational opportunities.

It is the school's policy to withhold credit if there are more than nine (9) absences in a particular semester, even if the absences are medically excused. This figure represents an absence rate of 10%, and is the equivalent of missing almost two full weeks of class in one semester. Final decision regarding the awarding of credit will be made by the Academic Affairs Committee, consisting of the Headmaster, the Dean of Students, and the Academic Dean.

Students will be considered to have missed one-half day of school if they have missed three or fewer periods of class. Students will be considered to have missed a full day of school if they miss four or more classes on that day.

## White Oak School Dress Code Guidelines For All Students

The White Oak School dress code is designed to help students choose clothing that is appropriate for an academic setting. These guidelines provide an overall structure that all students are expected to follow.

No dress code, including this one, should restrict the right of a student to dress according to the student's identity, regardless of the student's gender. To the greatest extent possible, these guidelines are designed to be inclusive and gender- and identity-neutral.

	<u>O.K.</u>	<u>NOT O.K.</u>
<b><u>Shoes</u></b>	Most styles of shoes, boots or sneakers	Open-toed shoes, sandals, flip-flops, slippers, water-shoes
<b><u>Pants/Slacks</u></b>	Full-length pants ¾-length pants (Capris) "Yoga-pants" or leggings (leggings of form-fitting material are to be covered by a top or over shirt that comes to mid-thigh.) Culottes and skorts, as long as they conform to the length requirements.  The waistband of pants must be worn at the waist.	Nylon wind suit/wind pants/athletic suit Blue jeans/blue "jeggings" Sweat pants Shorts (except after Memorial Day)
<b><u>Skirts (and shorts After Memorial Day)</u></b>	The hem of the skirt (or shorts) is to be no higher than 2" above the kneecap.	Denim skirts, denim shorts
<b><u>Shirts/Tops</u></b>	Conventional collared shirts, Polo shirts, boat-neck or scallop-neck collar, jewel collar, Henley collar, turtlenecks and mock-turtlenecks. Please ask about other collars. All shirts must have sleeves.	T-shirts, tanks, or string-tops, unless covered by a sweater or another top shirt, which is to be buttoned up ¾ of the way. No exposed midriff.

O.K.

NOT O.K.

Large or oversized shirts must be buttoned  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up.

Torn or ripped clothing  
Any inappropriate image or message (see below)

Hooded sweatshirts

Indoors, students may not wear hats, caps or bandanas as head wear. Students may not wear sunglasses or visors indoors. Exterior garments (coats, raincoats, etc.) must be removed in the classroom.

Note: Inappropriate is defined as any image or message that promotes, advertises or represents prohibited materials, including, but not limited to, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, firearms and other weaponry. Tops may also not display any image or message that is lewd, violent or demeaning. All determinations of acceptability are made by the Dean of Students and/or the Headmaster.

## Daily Class Schedule

The daily class schedule at the White Oak School is as follows:

Period 1	8:42 - 9:32
Period 2	9:34 - 10:24
Break	10:24 - 10:43
Period 3	10:45 - 11:35
Period 4	11:37 - 12:27
Lunch	12:27 - 12:54
Period 5	12:56 - 1:46
Period 6	1:48 - 2:38
Period 7	2:40 - 3:30

Students should plan on arriving at school by 8:15 a.m. and should be picked up no later than 4:00 p.m.

## Student Cell Phone Use Policy

Students may use cell phones\* before the start of school (until 8:30), during the Morning Break (10:25 to 10:45) and during the Lunch period (12:28 to 12:55). At these times, students are allowed to text, email, or use the web from their personal devices. This policy allows for substantially more time for cell phone use, each day, than our policy in the past.

However, cell phone use at any other time is prohibited. This includes while a student is in class, or while passing from class to class, during assemblies, visiting the nurse, getting a drink of water, or when a student is excused from class for any other reason. Also, cell phones may not be used in student bathrooms except during the three periods noted above.

Please note that “cell phone use” also includes receiving texts or email, not just sending them.

In this regard, *parents, friends and others should not send texts or emails to White Oak students during the school day, except during the three periods noted above.* Texts or emails received during the class day are extremely disruptive and they are distracting to every student in a classroom. Again, we strongly ask parents and friends to understand that sending a student a text or email during the school day – except for the periods mentioned above – often leads to disruption or distraction in the middle of an ongoing class, affecting many other students. A student opening a text or email, except during permitted times, will be subject to the same penalty as a student originating a text or email. The School thanks families for their cooperative support of this policy, and asks that all members of a student’s family be informed of this policy.

The staff of the Student Services Office and the Main Office will be pleased to notify students of any family messages that need to be passed along, and we will be pleased to bring a student to either of these offices to use the school phone if there is an urgent or emergency call. Likewise, students may originate urgent or emergency phone calls from either of these offices.

A student using a cell phone, except during the allowed times, must surrender their phone at the request of a teacher; the phone will be held in the Headmaster’s Office until 3:30 pm. Refusal to surrender a phone by a student is not permitted, and will result in a disciplinary meeting with a student’s parents or guardians. The School may prohibit a student from possessing a cell phone at the School as part of a disciplinary response.

White Oak recognizes that cell phone use is a common feature in the lives of many children and most adolescents. The School also reminds all members of the school community that unregulated cell phone use in school undermines the learning environment and detracts from the good work done every day by students and teachers.

\*For the purpose of this policy, the term “cell phone” also includes tablet devices (such as iPads) when they are used to access email accounts or social media accounts, and such tablet devices when they have activated cellular capacity.

## **Lunch**

The school provides a hot lunch program that is available to all students for a modest charge. Students may also bring their own lunch and, if desired, purchase milk at school. Questions concerning free or reduced-price lunches may be addressed to the school’s Business Manager.

Students bringing their own lunches should be aware that the school does not provide refrigeration or reheating facilities. The school specifically prohibits carbonated soft-drinks, but does allow students to bring juice, water, or “sport-drink” type beverages. Candy should not be brought to school. Students are encouraged to bring a nutritious snack for the mid-morning break or they may buy snacks at the cafeteria.

## **Homework policies**

Daily homework assignments are an integral part of the educational process at White Oak. The teacher's goal is to give useful homework that is matched to the student both in terms of quantity and complexity; consequently, it is expected that students will complete all homework assignments. Should a student arrive in class with homework that is not done, he or she may be asked to stay after school at day's end to finish or make up the work in question. *Please note that this is not considered to be a disciplinary procedure, but rather an effort to insure that a student is not impeding his/her progress by a lack of understanding or attention to the work involved. Parental assistance with homework should only be in the realm of clarification, organization, and encouragement, without substantial direct involvement.* Should parents find themselves needing to offer a great deal of assistance, the school should be notified so that the situation may be discussed and remedied. In the same vein, parents should also notify the school if their child is spending what seems to be either an inadequate or excessive amount of time on homework.

## **Illness**

If a student is too ill to attend school on any given day, the school should be notified by his/her parent prior to 8:30 a.m. on the day involved. If such notification is not received by that time, the school will call a parent to find out the nature of the absence. Students are held responsible for completing work missed through illness.

Should a student become ill during the school day, he/she should report to the school office.

## **Inclement Weather**

Should bad weather cause a delay in the opening of school, or the cancellation of classes altogether, an announcement will be made on the websites for channels WGGB-TV (Ch. 40) [[www.wggb.com](http://www.wggb.com)], WWLP-TV (Ch. 22) [[www.wwlp.com](http://www.wwlp.com)], and WSHM-TV (Ch. 3) [[www.cbs3springfield.com](http://www.cbs3springfield.com)]. As a rule, any "snow day" designated by the Westfield Public Schools will be observed by White Oak School. School bus drivers working under contract with public school systems generally observe the snow day decisions in their own school system.

If White Oak is open on a day declared a snow day in a student's home district, that student's absence will not be counted against a student's allowed absences.

## **Driving and Cars**

A student who holds a valid driver's license and wishes to drive himself/herself to school may be given that privilege by the school's administration on a case-by-case and space-available basis. It should be remembered that holding a driver's license and operating a vehicle are both activities that carry with them the need to display a great deal of maturity and a good sense of responsibility. Students wishing to drive a car to school must seek permission to do so from the Headmaster.

Under no circumstance is a student allowed to be in another student's car, whether moving or stationary, without express written permission from the parents of both students involved. Students wishing to drive to school must sign White Oak's Driving Guidelines, which are available in the Dean's Office.

## Prohibited Materials

Tobacco: It is widely understood in today's society that the use of tobacco in any form (smoking, snuff, chewing tobacco) is unhealthy to both the user and others around him/her. Thus, it would be irresponsible of a school to condone such usage. Tobacco usage of any sort at White Oak School is not acceptable; infractions of this rule will be dealt with as a serious offense.

Drugs and Alcohol: The use or possession of illegal drugs or alcohol in any form by students at White Oak School is strictly forbidden. Infractions of this rule will result in the most serious disciplinary responses by the school. The abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs is also considered a violation of this rule and will be dealt with similarly.

## Medications

If a student is using medication prescribed by a doctor, his/her parents should notify the school to that effect and make arrangements with the school to have it administered during the school day as directed by the treating physician.

*Students should have no medicines, either prescription or non-prescription, in their possession at any time while under the school's jurisdiction. Unauthorized use, possession, or distribution of such medication by students may be cause for dismissal.*

## Disciplinary Responses

Discipline in a school begins with respect. For the school itself, that means respect for the students. Students, in turn, show their respect for the other students and ultimately for themselves.

Learning the meaning of this respect, and indeed, learning the boundaries of self-discipline, is a part of the work of any school. For students, most of this learning occurs through observation and through conversation with teachers and other students. In any good school, including White Oak, discipline is truly the result of networks of respect combined with reasonable discussion and explanation.

It is only when student behavior goes outside this boundary that the school will begin to enact overt "disciplinary" strategies. If a behavior is escalating and teacher-intervention has not been sufficient, or if a behavior warrants it, the student will meet with the Dean of Students. The Dean will listen to the student, review the facts of the matter with the

student, and take appropriate action. If two or more students are involved in a dispute, the Dean will attempt to guide the students to a resolution of any issues rather than simply moving toward a punitive response. Care is given to evaluate the extent to which the matter was based on confusion or misunderstanding by the student. Care is especially given to determine to what degree a behavior may be a manifestation of the student's underlying disability.

In many cases, the Dean will also confer with the Headmaster, the Academic Dean, and relevant teachers for additional information.

When called for, the school's disciplinary options include:

written or verbal apologies  
reprimands and warnings, by a teacher or school administrator  
behavior monitoring sheets, involving parental review  
in-school or after school detention  
meeting with a student's parents  
meeting with a student's LEA liaison  
suspension of 1 - 3 days  
termination or dismissal, pursuant to all Mass. DESE guidelines

White Oak will not tolerate verbally or physically abusive behavior by a student toward himself/herself or others. Other behaviors that will lead to immediate disciplinary action included but are not limited to:

1. Any use or possession of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and/or other prohibited substances or items. Any misuse of medication or other substances in a manner which could reasonably be seen as substance abuse.
2. Any involvement in sexual misconduct or sexual harassment.
3. Theft from other students, teachers, or the school, both on campus or during any school-sponsored activity.
4. Continued failure to observe the dress code.
5. Refusal to obey and follow instructions from teachers or administrators.
6. Withholding, upon application to the school, of information or records central to the student's or school's well-being.
7. Behavior or conduct that is deemed by the school to be detrimental to the school community, whether at school or elsewhere,

while under the school's jurisdiction. This includes conduct deemed to be dangerous, disruptive, harmful or threatening to oneself or to others.

State educational guidelines require all schools to describe their use of non-violent restraints with students. White Oak conforms to state guidelines on this issue, but feels strongly that physical restraint, regardless of how non-violent, is not an acceptable or necessary strategy. Instead, the School's efforts are put into de-escalating confrontations and interpersonal dispute. Given the nature of our population, this is a realistic goal and this policy has resulted in a "zero-restraint" history since the school's inception.

## **Cheating and Plagiarism**

In an academic community, cheating and plagiarism are considered to be serious affronts to the educational process. While there are a multitude of gray areas on this topic at different student grade levels, the school may respond to such cases with a variety of disciplinary measures, including a warning, a failing grade on the assignment, or academic probation. Repeated offenses may be considered cause for dismissal.

## **Academic Reports**

At White Oak School, academic reports chronicle the state of a student's abilities and his/her progress toward personal educational goals rather than focusing primarily on letter grades. Parents receive four reports each year reflecting the current status of the student in each class and giving an overview of the student's achievement.

High-school and junior high-school students will receive quarterly grades, in order to assist their transition to other high-schools, to college or to vocational programs. In this case, however, the narrative academic report will continue to be the most informative source for information on the student's capabilities.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

White Oak School hosts two parent-teacher evenings each school year; one in the Fall and one in the Spring. These afford parents the opportunity to gain familiarity with their child's progress within the academic program, and to learn more about the events and activities taking place at the school. The dates of these conferences will be sent out at the beginning of each school year.

## **Health and Immunizations**

Prior to enrolling in the school, students will be required to present evidence of compliance with all state immunization requirements. In addition, all health information and release forms must be signed and submitted to the school before enrollment can be completed.

Medical expenses occasioned by accidents at the school or on school-sponsored trips are the responsibility of the student's own medical insurer. Up-to-date medical insurance policy numbers must be provided for a student's records, in order to facilitate emergency medical treatment.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

The school offers students the opportunity to be involved in several different activities, including:

Cheerleading	Music
Community Service	School Newspaper
Drama	Student Council

Other activities may be added or deleted to reflect student interest.

## **Field Trip Permission**

The school issues two types of permission forms for field trips. The first, for in-state, short distance travel, is valid throughout the year. The second category of permission forms is for longer distance, out-of-state travel; such forms are issued separately for each trip.

## **Amendments to the Handbook**

This Handbook may be amended during the school year if additions or changes are deemed necessary. Any such change will be noted on the school's website and will be redistributed to parents/guardians.

## **Signature Page**

The signature page, which accompanies this document, must be signed by the student and his/her parent, and returned to the school at the time of the student's enrollment. This should be done each school year.

# White Oak School

## Junior High School Students

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy  
Reporting Bullying and Cyber Bullying  
How to Answer to Bullying and Cyber Bullying  
Retaliation (Someone Getting Back at You)

### Don't Be Afraid to Report Bullying!

If you feel like you are being bullied at school, don't be afraid to tell any adult. This could be any of your teachers or anyone who works at the school. You can also tell your Mom, your Dad or an adult you live with. You can tell a relative, your friend's parents - any adult you know. Don't be afraid! Adults understand that you might be afraid to say something, but you don't have to be! You can also tell a friend. You can talk to Mr. Drake or Mr. McGovern anytime you want. Your friends do not have to say who they are if they talk to Mr. Drake or Mr. McGovern.

Sometimes bullying happens on phones or computers. If you think you are being bullied by someone who keeps texting nasty things to you, that is called cyber bullying. If somebody makes up bad things about you and they send them to either an internet site like Facebook or to your cell phone or other peoples' cell phones, that is also called cyber bullying. Using a computer to make bad pictures of you and sending them to web sites, by e-mail or to someone's cell phone is also cyber bullying.

Anyone who works at school has to go to Mr. Drake or Mr. McGovern right away if they hear about you being bullied. They will not tell their friends or anyone else, so you don't have to worry about all of the students hearing about it.

If Mr. Drake or Mr. McGovern hear that you are being bullied by someone at school, they will talk to you right away. They will make sure you will

not be embarrassed or made to feel bad. That means the person or people who are bullying you will not be able to bother you in class, in the halls, the bathroom, the cafeteria or outside.

Your Mom, your Dad, or an adult you live with will be told right away. They will meet privately with Mr. Drake and Mr. McGovern and nobody will know they are talking about you.

If someone is bullying you that goes to school somewhere else, the principal of their school will be told so that he can work with everyone to make you feel safe and stop the bullying. Once again, no one that is an adult helping you will tell anyone that they are talking about you. They will meet privately. They want to help you feel better and stop whoever is bothering you.

If you are being bullied badly enough that you think you might really get hurt, the adults may have to call the police. Don't be afraid! The adults will know how to meet when students and your friends don't know. They are here to help you!

You will be included in helping us to help you! We want you to tell us everything you are thinking. Tell us how you think you can stay away from somebody who is bothering you while we help you with what has happened. Tell us how you think we can help you feel better about what has happened. We want to help you! Do not worry about anyone not listening to you!

*A Note to Parents*

The following is White Oak School's official policy written for high school students:

## **White Oak School**

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The school expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The school is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. 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.

- A. Reporting bullying or retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the Headmaster or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school makes a variety of reporting resources known to the school community: Incident Reporting Forms are available in the school's Main Office and in its Student Services Office; reports of bullying (using the Incident Reporting Forms or any other format) should be sent directly to the school's Headmaster or to the school's Dean of Students. Reports may also be made by telephone: Headmaster (413) 562-9500 (X201) and Dean of Students (413) 562-9500 (X224). In addition, reports may also be submitted via email: Headmaster: [ddrake@whiteoakschool.org](mailto:ddrake@whiteoakschool.org) ; Dean of Students: [gmcgovern@whiteoakschool.org](mailto:gmcgovern@whiteoakschool.org).

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school: 1) includes a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) makes it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the Headmaster or designee; and 3) posts it on the school's website.

At the beginning of each school year, the school provides the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the Headmaster or designee, is incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

This plan recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by

association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school identifies specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

#### 1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member must report immediately to the Headmaster or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Headmaster or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

#### 2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The school expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Headmaster or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the Headmaster or designee.

### B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

#### 1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Headmaster or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The Headmaster or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Headmaster or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

## 2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Headmaster or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. The school will notify parents and guardians of targets of bullying of the availability of the DESE problem resolution system and the school will assist parents and guardians in understanding the problem resolution process. There may be circumstances in which the Headmaster or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Headmaster or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal or Headmaster or other designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Headmaster or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Headmaster will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Headmaster or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the Headmaster will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school policies and procedures, consult with other individuals the Headmaster or designee deems appropriate.

- d. Notice to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The school will report to the DESE the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation, the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying and retaliation, the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying and retaliation, and any other information required by the DESE. In addition, starting in the 2015-2016 school year, the school will administer a DESE-developed student survey at least once every four years to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in the school.

- C. **Investigation.** The Headmaster or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the Headmaster or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Headmaster or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Headmaster or designee, and any other staff members as determined by the Headmaster or designee. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Headmaster or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Headmaster or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Headmaster or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

- D. **Determinations.** The Headmaster or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Headmaster or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The Headmaster or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Headmaster or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or Dean of Students, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The Headmaster or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Headmaster or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The Headmaster will inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

## E. Responses to Bullying.

### 1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Headmaster or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Headmaster or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with teachers 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 and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

### 2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Headmaster or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Headmaster or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

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

### 3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Headmaster or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Headmaster or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

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

When appropriate, the school will make arrangements for the provision of counseling or referral services for targets, aggressors and appropriate family members of involved

students. Community-based counselors will be provided in cases of trauma or emergency, and collaboration with referral services will be provided to address longer-term needs.

### **Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff**

The School's policies and procedures address how school administration will respond to and resolve a report of bullying of a student by school staff. The Plan emphasizes the need for individualized safety planning, notification to parent or guardians and others, investigation, and response – identical to the areas that are addressed when a student is alleged to have bullied another student. And as when investigating a report of student-to-student bullying, this plan emphasizes the importance of the investigation, the need for the aggressor, target, and witnesses to be truthful, and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action

### **COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

- A. Parent education and resources. The school offers education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and the social competency curricula used by the school.
- B. Notification requirements. Each year the school informs parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice includes information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The school sends parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians are in hard copy and electronic formats. The school posts the Plan and related information on its website.

### **PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to 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 school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

### **Problem Resolution System:**

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the school may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the School's office

### **DEFINITIONS**

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyber-bullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to the school or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or school policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

## TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to 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.
- B. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, the content of school-wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
  - (ii) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
  - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
  - (iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
  - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

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 school or district for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive 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; and
- engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc and bullying behaviors

- C. Written notice to staff. The school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the school or employee handbook and the code of conduct.

## **ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

Working with the students' sending school district, the school will develop an individualized Plan for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for student aggressors, targets and family members affected by bullying, based on the unique factors of the bullying situation, including the district from which a student comes, the location of family members, and the age, preferences and related clinical factors of the students involved.

- A. Identifying resources. The Plan will include the school's and the district's process for identifying its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, student aggressors, and their families. This will include a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Once this mapping of resources is complete, the school or district may develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. This may include adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services. The Plan will outline the local processes for identifying existing and needed resources.
- B. Counseling and other services. The Plan developed by the School and the District will identify the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district. If resources need to be developed, the Plan will identify linkages with community based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, the Plan will identify staff and service providers who assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. The School may consider current tools including, but not limited to, behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula.

- C. Students with disabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the 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/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.
- D. Referral to outside services. The School, working with sending school districts, will establish a referral protocol for referring students and families to outside services. Clear protocols will help students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals must comply with relevant laws and policies. Current local referral protocols will be evaluated to assess their relevance to each individualized Plan, and revised as needed.

## **ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

- A. Specific bullying prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula is informed by current research which, among other things, 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 or school staff engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The school will review the Plan with students annually, at a minimum.

- B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. 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, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;

- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

#### Faculty Professional Development Information

Professional Development in-services are provided to all White Oak staff annually in the following areas:

Strategies for interventions to stop bullying

Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target and witnesses to bullying

Information on students who are at risk for bullying

Information on cyber-bullying

Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying

**White Oak School  
2015/2016 Student Handbook**

**Middle School  
Signature Page**

We have read the White Oak School Student Handbook and reviewed the guidelines and policies it presents. We understand the school's commitment to protect the integrity of its program, and support White Oak's commitment to its students and to their education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return this form to the school office with your other parent packet information.

# White Oak School

## 2015/2016 Student Handbook

### Middle School Age-appropriate **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy Signature Page**

We have read the White Oak School Student Handbook and reviewed the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy. We understand the school's commitment to protect the integrity of its program, and support White Oak's commitment to its students and to their education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return this form to the school office with your other parent packet information.