

Granite Academy
6 Columbian St
Braintree, MA 02184

DESE Criteria 20

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Statement of Intent

Granite Academy endeavors to provide a learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying (similar policies exist and define sexual harassment and hazing). Granite Academy expects that all members of our school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

We understand that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Granite Academy will take specific steps to create a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable populations in our school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

Granite Academy is, by definition, a school established to meet the needs of students who have identified vulnerabilities. Our learning community is organized around principles of respect, understanding and responsibility. With a staff to student ratio of 1:5, we are afforded the opportunity to have close communication with students, parents and community-based service providers.

Granite Academy also understands that the bully may have identified needs and that when an identified bully is a member of our school community we have a responsibility to address her/his needs as well.

Shared Responsibility

To successfully protect the safety of community members, all community members must share the effort. Granite Academy believes that is the responsibility of every student, parent and employee to be alert to and to report suspected acts of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation.

Collaboration with Families

Granite Academy's active engagement and collaboration with families increases our capacity to prevent and respond effectively to bullying.

Through mailings and the Parent Advisory Committee, Granite Academy provides information about bullying and how to report suspected incidences. Parents are provided copies of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on admission and thereafter annually at the IEP meeting.

Definitions

Bullying is defined as 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:

1. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
2. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
3. Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
4. Infringes on the rights of the target at school;
5. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of Granite Academy.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying by use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes but is not limited to any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by such things as electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile. Cyber-bullying includes:

1. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
2. The knowing impersonation of another person, as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation is a violation under the law.
3. Cyber-bullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting is a violation of the law.

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

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

Hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the 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, or athletic coaches.

What Constitutes a Violation of the Granite Academy Anti-bullying Policy?

It is a violation of this policy for any student to engage in bullying or cyber-bullying, or for any employee of Granite Academy to condone or fail to report acts of bullying or cyber-bullying that they witness or become aware of:

1. On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
2. At school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs, whether on or off school grounds;
3. On school buses or vehicles owned, leased or used by Granite Academy;
4. Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by Granite Academy.

It is also a violation of this policy for any student to engage in bullying or cyber-bullying at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of the school, as determined by school administrators.

Programmatic Resources Employed to Prevent Bullying

Granite Academy promotes safety, mutual respect and tolerance through a variety of educational, healthcare and clinical services. The Granite Academy Skills for Living Curriculum addresses risks factors underlying vulnerabilities that may be targeted by bullies. The Skills for Living Curriculum also promotes understanding and tolerance, anger management and social skills training aimed at bullying prevention.

Specific services and social forums include:

Individual Counseling: Each Granite Academy student is assigned a school counselor with whom he or she meets for weekly sessions. The school counselor is also involved in classroom activities affording an opportunity to observe and understand student relationships and to identify potential conflicts or vulnerabilities.

Milieu-based Norms and Structures: A number of school-wide programs and activities are designed to maintain and strengthen positive, respectful norms as well as structures that respect students' need for rules and supervision.

- ✎ Setting clear expectations for students.
- ✎ Established school and classroom routines.
- ✎ Suggestion Box: Enables students to voice their concerns anonymously. Concerns are discussed in a monthly community meeting attended by all students and staff.
- ✎ Creating a safe school environment for all students, including those with disabilities, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homeless.
- ✎ Using appropriate and positive supports and reinforcement.
- ✎ 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.
- ✎ Promotion of safe internet use.
- ✎ Supporting student's interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities.

Psycho-educational Group Therapy: Weekly counseling groups address a range of issues including: multicultural awareness, disabilities awareness, respecting differences, peer pressure, social skills building and bullying prevention. Methods employed include:

- ✎ Using scripts and role plays to develop skills
- ✎ Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance
- ✎ Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and 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
- ✎ Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference

Therapeutic Response System (TRS): TRS supports a highly structured milieu by clearly identifying unacceptable behavior and resulting consequences. Frequent communication with parents and community-based service providers is built into TRS. Anti-social behavior results in heightened clinical services.

Staff Communication: Each Granite Academy staff member receives a daily briefing on risks, safety concerns and required interventions.

Assessing Needs and Resources

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, Granite Academy will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, Granite Academy will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

Plan for Reporting and Investigating Suspected Bullying

Students, parents and staff who witness or become aware of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation should immediately report it to a Program Director.

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, Granite Academy has established the following procedures for receiving and responding

to reports of bullying or retaliation.

Reports of bullying or cyber-bullying will be promptly investigated. Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation the Program Director will:

- Restore a sense of safety for the target and assess the target's needs for protection;
- Assess the need and provide for the safety of person who reports bullying or provides information during an investigation;
- Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor;
- Notify the parents or guardians of the target;
- Take appropriate disciplinary action;
- Notify the police if the Program Director believes that criminal act has been committed.

Responses to promote safety may include:

- Creating a personal safety plan
- Pre-determining seating arrangements in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus.

The Program Director will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

During the investigation stage, the Program Director will:

1. Review the definition of bullying, ideally with the reporter (e.g., target, friend of target, parent, etc.) present.
2. If incident does not seem to meet the definition, treat the incident with standard school therapeutic response system or conflict resolution procedures.
3. If incident meets the definition, or you have any doubts about whether it *might be bullying*, continue to follow the procedures below.
4. Notify the reporter that because this incident may constitute bullying, we have an obligation to investigate and take action in a timely manner.
5. Interview all students involved, collect evidence including digital or hard copies of electronic communication, web pages, notes, etc., notify parent(s)/guardian(s) of all students involved, notify the police if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, apply appropriate disciplinary action, notify target's parent(s)/guardian(s) of action taken to prevent further acts of bullying, to the extent consistent with state and federal confidentiality laws (note: we cannot share the extent of all disciplinary actions with the target's family).
6. Complete a copy of the *Granite Academy Bullying Investigation Form*.
7. Prepare to interview students:
 - Consult, as needed, with additional staff (e.g., counselor, nurse, teacher).
 - Determine which additional staff, needs to be present during student

interviews and/or decision process.

8. Take reasonable precautions to ensure that students are unable to undermine the investigation (e.g., each student is interviewed separately with Program Director and assigned counselor).
9. Determine which students need to be interviewed. Include target(s), aggressor(s), and bystander(s).
10. Interview all students involved, ideally one at a time.
11. Read back to the student a summary of his/her account to ensure accuracy.
12. If physical injuries occurred, have nurse examine.
13. Collect and compile evidence:
 - Printouts of emails, social networking pages, online posts, etc.
 - Copies of student notes
 - Nurse or staff report(s)
 - Police report(s)
 - Written statements
14. Determine whether bullying has occurred.
15. Determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. Consult student's liaison if necessary.

Responding to Behavior that Does Not Meet the Definition of Bullying

Granite Academy employs a range of interventions and supports in response to conflict between students. These include parent conferences, staff supervised mediation, increased structure and supervision, increased individual counseling time, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, behavior plans, safety contracts, transportation monitoring and additional support from community based service providers.

Responding to Behavior that Does Meet the Definition of Bullying

Working with the aggressor, complete a *Safety Contract Agreement* (included in the packet) that includes warning against retaliation and repeat offenses. It should include disciplinary actions, strategies and supports to be used to stop the bullying and restore a sense of safety for the target, including steps taken to ensure there is no retaliation against the targets or reporters. See the table below for a menu of options:⁴

- Aggressors can be required to take a Bullying Program Workshop at Granite Academy in place of an elective for 6 weeks.
- School can encourage additional outside additional counseling for aggressor.
- Notify the aggressor of his or her rights, and the process to appeal your decision.
- Meet with the target and/or bystanders to develop a safety plan.

Important Guidelines for Staff

- ✎ Do not ignore bullying: Bullies count on adults to ignore bullying behaviors, and this

allows them to continue bullying activities. (Steiner, A. 2002).

- Intervene immediately; bullying is common, but not benign: Bullies are much more likely to grow up to have criminal or violent behaviors. Targets of bullies suffer disproportionately from mental health problems, school problems, and social problems. Children who witness bullying spend an inordinate amount of time seeking to avoid it and worrying about it.
- Separate alleged bully & target: Do not use mediation or attempt to force them to confront one another.
- Bullying is different from conflict: Conflict is an equal-power quarrel or problem between two students. Bullying is abuse; it occurs when a socially powerful (popular or feared) student mentally or physically abuses a weaker (fearful) student, for the purposes of making them afraid and hurt.
- Stay neutral and calm: The tone you take with students during investigations will affect your ability to defuse the bullying.
- Don't make promises or deals: Wait until your investigation is complete.
- Reassure reporters and target: Provide reassurance that they have done the right thing by reporting. Ensure they know that they will be protected from retaliation.
- Empower aggressors to change: Remind aggressors that they have power to stop the bullying. Teach them strategies to stop (e.g., "for now, stay off of Facebook").
- Maintain confidentiality, but ACT: It is important to protect reporters from retaliation, but information on bullying MUST be acted upon. There are no "off-the-record" conversations.
- Be objective: Maintain objectivity in your note taking; your emails and the notes you take in meetings about students become part of their official record.
- Be timely: The faster you talk to all students involved, the less likely that the students will feel social pressure to change their stories.

Training and Professional Development

Granite Academy provides all staff with both mandatory and optional professional development and training opportunities throughout the school year, starting with mandatory orientation prior to the commencement of each academic year.

Annual and on-going training on Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Annual training for all school staff shall take place during orientation or, for staff hired after orientation, during the first 60 days of employment and then on-going as part of the regularly scheduled staff training program. The training shall include the definition of bullying, cyber bullying and retaliation, an overview of the process to be followed upon a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the school's bullying prevention program.

With respect to bullying prevention, professional development sessions focus on establishing a learning environment that promotes safety, civil and respectful communication and respect for differences, as well as improving and increasing the

skills of staff members to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. Additional areas of training may include:

- ✎ Developmentally and/or age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying.
- ✎ Developmentally and/or age appropriate strategies for effective interventions to stop bullying.
- ✎ Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witness to bullying.
- ✎ Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the academic environment.
- ✎ Information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying.
- ✎ Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.
- ✎ Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language.
- ✎ Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference.
- ✎ Building relationships and communicating with families and service providers.
- ✎ Constructively managing classroom behaviors.
- ✎ Using positive behavioral intervention strategies.
- ✎ Applying constructive disciplinary practices.
- ✎ Teaching effective communication, anger management, and empathy for others.
- ✎ Engaging students in school planning and decision-making.
- ✎ Maintaining a safe and caring classroom and school community for all students.

Respect and Protection for Reporters of Bullying

Granite Academy does not tolerate retaliation against a person who reports, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying or cyber-bullying.

Determination:

The Program Director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Program Director 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 principal 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 Program Director or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director or designee shall 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.

Response Options

Disciplinary Actions – Therapeutic Response System

- ✎ In-School suspension: serve time separate from the classroom in the processing room
- ✎ Safety Contract
- ✎ Drop to level 1
- ✎ Participate in the Bully Program Group
- ✎ School Project Promoting Differences
- ✎ Out-of-school suspension
- ✎ Legal action
- ✎ Expulsion or termination

Remediation Actions

- Meetings between students
- Counseling
- Education including strategies to repeating behavior.
- Revision of IEP, if applicable
- *Individual Behavior Plan* (for repeat offenders; form is included in this packet)

Target Safety

- ✎ Guidelines for avoiding further unnecessary contact with the target
- ✎ Clarification about who will be notified
- ✎ Notify staff about incident and danger of further contact
- ✎ Strategies to avoid further bullying (e.g., script, role playing, etc.)
- ✎ Identifying trusted adults and "safe areas"
- ✎ Education about rights to be free of retaliation and reasonable expectations about social consequences for being part of a bullying investigation (e.g., people will talk about it, but they may not retaliate)
- ✎ Periodic check-ins
- ✎ Whole community meetings
- ✎ Identification and empowerment of bystanders
- ✎ Education

Problem Resolution System

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district 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 or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Printed copies of this information are also available at the Executive Director's office.

Obligation to Notify Others

Granite Academy adheres to the following guidelines regarding notification of suspicion or occurrence of bullying and/or cyber bullying.

- ✎ Granite Academy will notify parent(s)/Guardian(s) of the target and aggressor about our determination and—to the extent allowed by confidentiality laws—actions taken.
- ✎ Granite Academy will not share student names or disciplinary actions with a third party. Parents of targets do not have the right to know the name of the aggressor (or disciplinary actions taken against aggressor).
- ✎ Granite Academy will consult with police, as needed.
- ✎ Granite Academy will consult with and notify the responsible public school.
- ✎ All documentation of bullying, cyber bullying and retaliation will be entered into the Granite Academy student record.