**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN**

It is the mission of the New England Adolescent Research Institute (NEARI) School to provide the highest quality education and treatment services to at risk children and youth, which: 1) integrate knowledge and best practices in the fields of education and treatment, 2) promote relationship, community and self-empowerment, and 3) nourish individual strengths. There can be no place for bullying in such a school, and for these reasons, NEARI is committed to the prevention of bullying or immediate intervention whenever bullying occurs. Our programming and culture have always fostered positive relationships and a strong sense of community among students and staff. In addition to this however, the NEARI School has developed the following prevention and intervention plan to further reduce the possibility of bullying behavior, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71 § 37O.

*DEFINITIONS*

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students or staff member of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of:

* causing physical or emotional harm to the other student or damage to the other student’s property
* placing the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property.
* creating a hostile environment at school for the target
* infringing on the rights of the target at school
* materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying is bullying, as defined above, through the use of technology or any 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.

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 and create an abusive school environment.

Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment in connection with filing a complaint or assisting with an investigation under this policy.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, custodians, support staff, paraprofessionals and advisors to extracurricular activities

NEARI does not employ cafeteria workers, bus drivers, or athletic coaches.

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

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

*PROHIBITION*

Bullying is prohibited on NEARI School grounds, 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 through the use of any school technology or electronic device.

Bullying is also prohibited at any non-school location, activity, function or program and/or through the use of non-school technology or electronic device if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the Day School.

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

*PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES*

• The purposeful creation of a culture of caring that ensures the underlying needs of all students are addressed

• Opportunities for student leadership and decision-making

• The positive and supportive use of behavioral intervention

• Building relationships and communication with families

• Professional development:The NEARI School’s bullying prevention and intervention plan will include ongoing professional development to build the skills of all school staff members to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The content of such professional development will include, but not be limited to:

* Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents;
* Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
* Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can exist among the aggressor, the target and any witnesses to the bullying;
* Research findings on bullying
* Internet safety issues as they relate to bullying.
* Purposeful development of a positive culture
* Annual staff training on the Plan.

• Developmentally appropriate instruction on bullying prevention incorporated into each grade level curriculum that includes, but is not limited to

* Empathy/acceptance
* Internet safety
* Impulse control/anger management
* Problem-solving/Conflict resolution
* Empowerment of bystanders

*PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT*

The NEARI School’s bullying prevention and intervention plan will include provisions for educating parents and guardians about the School’s bullying prevention curriculum, how they can reinforce that curriculum at home, how they can support the NEARI School’s prevention and intervention plan, the dynamics of bullying, and online safetyand cyber-bullying.

The NEARI School will notify students and their parents/guardians annually of the relevant sections of the bullying and prevention policies. A description of the policies will be included in the school’s Policy Handbook, which is distributed to all parents and staff. In addition, a description of the policies will be included in the packet of information sent to all students at the beginning of each school year and to newly admitted students throughout the year. The NEARI School’s bullying prevention and intervention policies will also be posted on the school’s website.

*REPORTING*

School staff will immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or of which the staff member has become aware. The report should be made to the school principal or designee or to any other school official identified in the bullying prevention and intervention plan as responsible for receiving such reports. Failure to report may subject the staff member to disciplinary action. Staff members will use the “Bullying Incident Report Form” appended to these policies. Any student, or their parent/guardian, who believes that he or she has been subjected to bullying or retaliation by another student or staff member, or who has witnessed or learned about the bullying or retaliation of a student, has the right to report the information to the principal or designee. This may be done in writing or orally by informing the principal or designee as soon as possible. If the individual does not wish to discuss the issue with either, the student may report to any staff member at the NEARI School with whom he or she feels comfortable.

Reports can be made orally, by using the “Bullying Incident Report Form”; by calling the NEARI School Executive Director, Craig Latham at 413-540-0712, ext. 12; by email to clatham@gmail.com ; or by mail to Craig Latham, Executive Director, NEARI School, 201 East Street, Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027.

Reports of bullying may be made anonymously by students or by those not directly employed by NEARI School; provided, however, that no disciplinary action can be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. All reasonable efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties, but proper enforcement of these policies may require disclosure of any or all information

received.

Prior to investigating any report of bullying, the Principal or designee will work to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target, or to protect any student who reports an incidence of bullying, from retaliation. Any necessary personal safety plan will continue throughout the investigation.

If bullying is found to occur, NEARI will report its findings to the parents or guardians of the target and aggressor, to local law enforcement as required by statute, and to the LEA of students involved.

*INVESTIGATION*

NEARI School’s Principal or designee is responsible for investigating reports of bullying and/or retaliation. The investigation shall be prompt, fair and of sufficient duration to understand the circumstances of the complaint, including the type, severity and frequency of the alleged bullying. The investigation will generally include interviews of the target, the alleged aggressor, witnesses, individuals whom any of the foregoing identify as having knowledge of the situation, and anyone else the investigator believes may have such knowledge. The investigator will take notes during the interviews for the purpose of maintaining accurate records.

The investigator will also review any documents that may be relevant to the allegations of bullying or retaliation, whether in electronic format or otherwise, and including photographs, emails, voice mails, telephone records, etc. The investigator will maintain a secure, confidential file of interview notes and other documents pertaining to the investigation.

*RESOLUTION*

The Principal has specific requirements to fulfill should it be determined that bullying or retaliation has occurred. It should be noted that any disciplinary action enforced will take into account specific students developmental and diagnostic individualities and needs. For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team ***must*** consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as

amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.)

Whenever the IEP Team evaluation indicates that any student's disability affects social skills development, or when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing, the IEP must address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (See M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.) In addition, IEP Teams will consider all students whose disabilities put them at risk for being unintentional aggressors, and outline strategies to protect all students from this situation.

If the investigator determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he or she will:

• take whatever action is necessary to end the bullying or retaliation;

• take disciplinary action in accordance with the NEARI School’s written policies on

“Student Conduct and Behavior Support”;

• Teach appropriate behavior through skills building

• Immediately notify the local law enforcement agency if there is reason to believe

that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor;

• if the incident involves students from another school district, NEARI School’s investigator will immediately notify the principal of the other school so that they may take appropriate action.

• notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the aggressor;

• notify the target and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s), to the extent allowed by

state and federal law, of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation;

• if indicated, provide information concerning counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets and parents/guardians.

If the investigator determines that an individual has knowingly made a false report of bullying or retaliation, that individual will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the NEARI School’s written policies on Student Conduct and Behavior Support.