

Boston Public Schools

**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION FOR  
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**SY 2019-20**

Office of Student Support Services



Jodie Elgee, Senior Director  
Succeed Boston at the CIC

[jelgee@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:jelgee@bostonpublicschools.org)

# WHY THIS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

Bullying is a learned behavior, and the most common form of violence in society

30% of gen ed students and 50% of students with disabilities are aggressors or targets ([safeyouth.org](http://safeyouth.org))

Students with disabilities were more worried about school safety and being injured or harassed by other peers compared to students without a disability ([Saylor & Leach, 2009](#)).

Students with disabilities or special education needs are twice as likely to be identified as targets and aggressors when compared to peers without disabilities. [Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011](#)

School-based bullying prevention programs decrease bullying by up to 25% ([McCallion & Feder, 2013](#)).

# What is bullying?

## Bullying:

Bullying is an unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated and over time and is done deliberately to intimidate, coerce, physically or emotionally hurt, abuse, or humiliate.

1. **Deliberate:** An aggressor's intention is to hurt someone. *Students with disabilities may fail to understand an aggressor's hurtful intentions.*
2. **Repeated:** An aggressor often goes after the same target again and again. *Students with disabilities are at greater risk because they may not fully realize they are being bullied repeatedly.*
3. **Power imbalanced:** An aggressor chooses victims he or she perceives as vulnerable. *Students with disabilities are often targeted for bullying because they are perceived as vulnerable.*

# POWER

## IMPORTANT

**Bullying occurs where there is, or is perceived to be, an imbalance of power, i.e., social, emotional, cognitive, age, size, gender.**



# IMBALANCE

- Physical attributes: size, age, strength
- Popularity or association with popular peers
- Member of majority/minority groups
- Socio-economic status
- Abilities and skills: academic, physical, artistic
- Access to money and other resources
- Access to information
- Being outnumbered
- Presence of weapons

# BULLYING vs. CONFLICT

## BULLYING

Goal is to hurt, harm, or humiliate

Person bullying has more power\* (“Power” can mean the person bullying is older, bigger, stronger, or more popular)

Continue behavior when they realize it is hurting someone

## CONFLICT

Disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views

Equal power between those involved

Generally stop and change behavior when they realize it is hurting someone

# UNWANTED

In many bullying incidents reported to our department, unwanted behavior (targeted student wants the aggressive behavior to stop) is confused with “rough play.” For example, two students enjoy teasing each other in a playful manner. This is NOT bullying.



# BEHAVIOR

However, sometimes, the unwanted behavior continues and the “rough play” can become bullying.

## Adults should watch for cues:

- **The relationship between students**
- **The expressions, body language and classroom atmosphere**

RELATIONAL



PHYSICAL



VERBAL



CYBER  
BULLYING



# 4 TYPES OF BULLYING

# MODES OF BULLYING

**DIRECT**



**INDIRECT**



## Direct Bullying

The bullying behavior happens in the presence of the target of bullying:

- Hitting
- Pushing
- Direct hurtful written or verbal communications

## Indirect Bullying

The bullying behavior does not happen in the presence of the target of bullying:

- Spreading rumors
- Talking behind the target's back
- Telling others to exclude the target

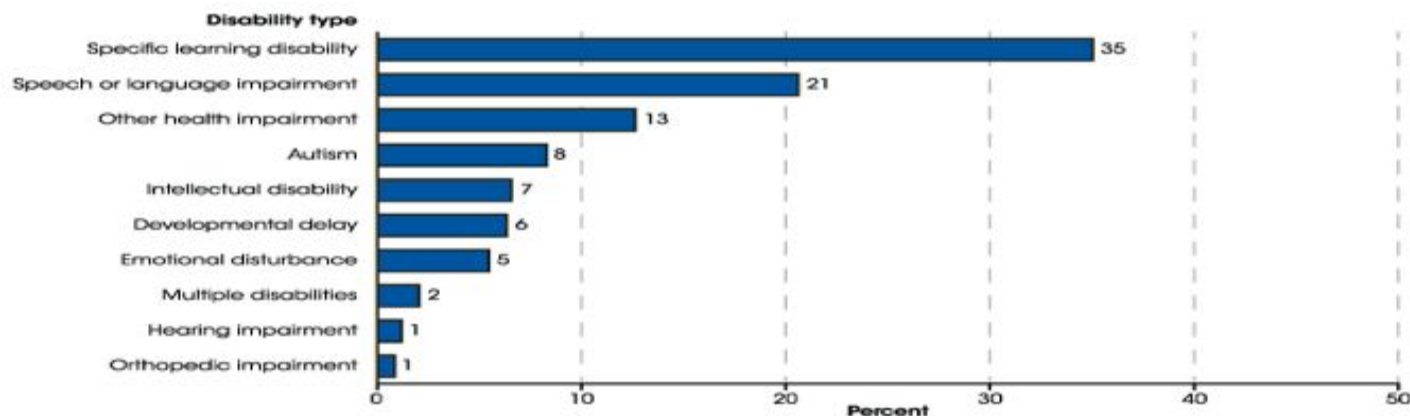


## Statistics:

Approximately 20% of students in BPS receive services through the Office of Special Education

In 2013-14, the number of children and youth ages 3-21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million, or about 13% of all public school students. Among students receiving special education services, 35% had specific learning disabilities.

•Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children ages 3-21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by disability type: School year 2013-14



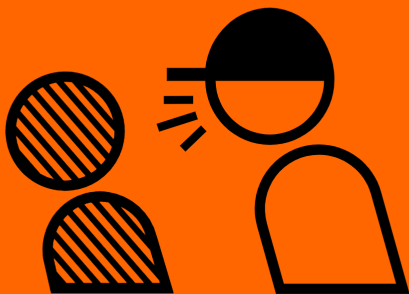
•SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, [table 204.30](#).

National Center for Education Statistics

## Intervention

- **Social Skills Groups:** Small group of students with similar needs working on skills that are important to develop social competencies.
- **Social Lunch Groups:** Another way for students to connect with other students. This can be used as a quiet time away from the lunch room. Not to be confused with social skills group.
- **Social Recreation Group:** May involve games, songs, skits, dance.....
- **Home base:** A location in the school selected by the student and school staff where the student can go when not feeling safe. The location should be a place where the student can be supervised and monitored by a school staff. For instance, home base could include the School Adjustment Counselor's office, the main office, nurse's office....
- **Safe person:** Designated person in the school who the student can talk and process social situations that are troubling and confusing including bullying. This needs to be a person chosen with student and parents/ guardians.

# Bias-Based Speech and Behavior



- Racial slurs
- Name calling
- Verbal harassment
- Mimicking others
- Verbal threats and physical violence
- Notes and gestures
- Sexual comments



**Taunting and teasing based on: sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and culture may fall under Federal Anti-Discrimination laws and will be automatically referred to the BPS Office of Equity for further review.**

# STUDENTS WHO ARE BULLIED



## Children and Youth at Higher Risk for Being Bullied:

- ✓ Have Learning Disabilities
- ✓ Have attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- ✓ Have autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- ✓ Have special health care needs or chronic diseases
- ✓ Are overweight or underweight
- ✓ Are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; are questioning their sexual orientation; or do not conform to gender stereotypes
- ✓ Speak another language at home

**However, these factors don't mean that a child will be bullied**

## **BULLYING & LGBTQ Students**

### **LGBTQ students most frequently targeted:**

- ✓ **Forty percent of students who are LGBTQ have never seen anyone intervene in an instance of anti-gay harassment at school**
- ✓ **Ninety-seven percent of all high school students hear an average of 25 such slurs a day (Center for Children)**
- ✓ **Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts**
- ✓ **22% of gay respondents skipped school in the past month because they felt unsafe there**
- ✓ **Gay students are 3 times more likely to drop out of school than heterosexual students**
- ✓ **Four out of 5 gay and lesbian students say they don't know one supportive adult**

# ADULT BIAS & IMPACT ON INVESTIGATION



- ✓ Is a function of values and beliefs
- ✓ Must be identified as these operating beliefs impact the way we deal or not deal with bullying
- ✓ Once identified and addressed, positive implementation of bullying prevention and intervention can occur



she shouldn't  
be dressing  
like a boy  
anyway

bullying is a  
rite of  
passage

he shouldn't be  
dressing like a  
girl anyway

he/she  
needs to  
toughen  
up

real boys  
don't cry

# BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PROCEDURES

**When bullying allegations are made anonymously, no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely because of an anonymous report either through the Hotline or the school directly. However, an investigation will ensue.**

**BPS leadership team has worked collaboratively with Safety Services, Office of Student Supports, and the Office of Equity to actively develop a variety of educational initiatives. These proactive activities include:**

- professional development for school personnel**
- workshops for parents**
- classroom and school-wide bullying prevention education**
- resources for school personnel and parents**

**At BPS & Succeed Boston we are aware that bullying affects a student's ability to focus on learning and to succeed in the classroom and beyond. We are engaged in proactive, innovative, and educationally sound strategies to prevent bullying.**



# BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PROCEDURES

## HOTLINE

**617-592-2378**  
**Call or Text**

## TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS, WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE FOLLOWING METHODS FOR BULLYING REPORTING:

- **Safe Space and Bullying Prevention Hotline 617-592-2378** (call or text), available 24/7 by trained staff from Succeed Boston at the Counseling and Intervention Center (for emergencies reporters should call **911** or **go to their nearest emergency room**)
- **Via Google form** that is available to all students, families, and staff at [www.succeedboston.org/anti-bullying-resources](http://www.succeedboston.org/anti-bullying-resources) & at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/antibullying](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/antibullying). Click "Report Bullying."
- The Google Form is **identical to the Massachusetts Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form**, however, reporters may choose the state form also found at the BPS anti-bullying page and send to our fax # 617-635-8117
- **Send and email to:** [saws@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:saws@bostonpublicschools.org)
- **Mayor's Office: Dial 311:** this service can also be used by all BPS students and families
- **Office Of The Superintendent:** 617-635-9050: @ 2300 Washington St, 5th Floor, Roxbury 02119 - Bruce C. Bolling Building or call to report bullying or retaliation



# HOW TO REPORT & INVESTIGATE BULLYING

## Bullying Reporting via Google Form



Google Reporting form [Link](#)

## Bullying Investigation via Google Form



Google Investigation Form [Link](#)

# BULLYING REPORTING: NEXT STEPS PROCESS

Principal/Headmaster receives the bullying allegation

- The bullying allegation can come from Succeed Boston (hotline)
- Allegations can be made online by anyone via Google form on Succeed's and BPS' website
- Families/students may report with a staff at school

Principal/Headmaster contacts the family within 48h and acknowledges the report has been received

- Principal/ Headmaster may choose their designee to contact the family
- The school staff will inform that an investigation will be completed
- School Staff may gather more information

Investigation is initiated by the Principal/Headmaster or their designee

- Target of bullying is interviewed
- Alleged aggressor and witnesses (if any) are interviewed
- Safety Plan and Action Plan are created as needed
- Families are contacted as needed

Investigation is finalized and findings are shared and recorded

- Google Investigation Form is completed and submitted to Succeed Boston
- Determination letter is completed and sent to Succeed as well as with the reporter/family
- Follow-up: Safety Plan/Action Plan should be evaluated for efficacy and students must be offered check-ins

# DISTRICT AND STATE REGULATIONS ABOUT BULLYING

[Massachusetts General Law: M. G. L. c. 71 & 370](#)

[Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan – Superintendent's  
Circular SSS-18](#)

Exit Ticket: Survey

THANK YOU

