

**GREAT FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL [www.gfms.gmrzd.org](http://www.gfms.gmrzd.org)**  
**Student Handbook Excerpts**  
**2021 - 2022**

**Great Falls Middle School Mission Statement**

The mission of the Great Falls Middle School is to provide a safe, nurturing and academically challenging environment, thus empowering students to develop and recognize their value and place in the global community.

**Staff Contact Information**

To reach any middle school faculty or staff member or to schedule a conference, call the main office at 863-7300. Indicate your child's name/grade, and leave time/dates and a phone number and/or email address where you can be reached. Email addresses for all staff are provided on the school's webpage.

Christopher Barnes, Principal  
Joey Kotright, Assistant Principal  
Lindsay Jones, Guidance Counselor  
Sandra Bailey, Susan Smith, and Kimberly Charboneau, Administrative Assistants

**GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Jane Oakes, Chair [jane.oakes@gmrzd.org](mailto:jane.oakes@gmrzd.org)  
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**School Hours**

Students may enter the building at 7:30am and must be in their CPRs (Circle of Power and Respect) by 7:45 a.m. for attendance to be taken. The school day ends at 2:25pm (11:00am on early dismissal days). If you need to reach a student during the school day, please call the main office and we will get them a message immediately. **Once the school day ends, students must be in the main lobby or with an adult if they remain in the building for any reason.**

**Abbreviations**

**ASR** - After School Responsibility  
**IEP** - Individualized Education Plan  
**CPR** - Circle of Power & Respect  
**CRA** - Child Requiring Assistance  
**DD** - Developmental Designs  
**GMRSD** - Gill-Montague Regional School District

**MIAA** - Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association

**GFMS** - Great Falls Middle School

**TFHS** - Turners Falls High School

**RP** - Restorative Practices

**RBR** - Responsible Behavior Room

**ISS** - Internal Suspension/In-school suspension

**OSS** - External Suspension/Out-of-school suspension

### **Student Identification Cards**

At the beginning of the school year, students will be issued an identification (ID) card and lanyard. ID cards increase record keeping efficiency, improve data collection, and help to ensure a safe educational environment for all our students. Students will need to use their ID cards when purchasing lunch, checking books out of the library, entering the building after the school day has begun, and for general identification purposes. Students and parents are reminded that ID cards are school property and are not to be purposely damaged. Should the ID card be lost or misplaced, the student must purchase a replacement at the main office for \$2.00. Students failing to abide by this policy may receive consequences that include lunch detentions and phone calls home.

### **Textbooks/Library Books/Chromebooks**

Students and their parents are responsible for all books and materials issued to them. If books or materials are lost, damaged, excessively soiled or worn beyond normal use, they must be paid for by the student. If a book or other item is lost, the teacher should be notified immediately. End of the year report cards may be delayed for any students who have not turned in or paid for materials or books that were issued to them. Students are responsible for any loss or damage to their 1:1 Chromebooks according to the terms of the GMRSD 1:1 Policy and Loan Agreement (see district website).

### **Parent and Student Plus Portals**

Parents may review their student's grades, attendance, homework assignments and receive messages and updates from teachers through the Plus Portal online system. Parents and students can check information at any time, from any computer using a private password that only the parent and the student know. When you visit the website for the first time you will be asked to "Create an Account" using the Access ID and Password you receive from the school. You can expect that teachers will post grades weekly and homework assignments daily or whenever assigned. Contact the class teacher if you have questions about the information in the portal. Contact the main office if you need assistance accessing the portal.

### **Medications**

Students are not allowed to carry medications in school. The only exceptions are for those requiring Epipens, inhalers, or diabetes supplies, which may be self-carried if signed medication orders from a MD/PCP are on file in the school health office. Contact the school nurse at 863-7300 with questions or concerns.

### **Illness Policy**

It is district policy that if your child has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, he/she is required to stay home from school until fever-free (24 hours without the use of fever lowering medications such as Ibuprofen

or Acetaminophen). If your child develops diarrhea or vomiting, he or she will need to be home until free of such symptoms for 24 hours, and is able to retain food and fluids. Please report any significant medical conditions, or contagious illnesses such as influenza (“flu”) or strep throat to the school nurse. Also, please make sure that the office has updated contact information including emergency contacts in case your child needs to be picked up from school promptly due to illness or injury.

### **Developmental Designs and Restorative Practices**

Developmental Designs is GFMS’s comprehensive approach to educating adolescents that integrates social- emotional and academic learning to promote a safe, positive school environment for all. Practices include take a break, buddy room, quick conference, reflection sheets, Circles of Power and Respect, and the social contract. GFMS has also implemented Restorative Practices as a tool to build community, resolve conflict and repair harm that may have been done. Students and staff are given an opportunity to talk in a supportive environment to discuss the specific situation and come up with logical solutions and consequences if needed. Parents are encouraged to contact an administrator for more information.

### **Supporting Our Students Through Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports**

**What is MTSS?** Some students struggle with academics. Others struggle with behavioral challenges, and some struggle with both. At GFMS, it is our aim to support students with challenges that interfere with their ability to learn. This year we will be working on the organization of a framework of interventions and supports designed to address behavioral and academic challenges.

**Key Components of MTSS:** Using an MTSS model, we will be taking a proactive approach to identifying students with academic or behavioral needs. By implementing interventions as supports for our students, we will assist them in meeting with success. The key components of MTSS include:

- Analyzing student performance and behavior to identify who may need assistance
- Tiers of interventions that can be implemented in response to levels of need
- Continual assessment
- A school-wide approach to expectations and supports
- Parent involvement

**Employing the MTSS Framework:** By using using MTSS at GFMS, we are seeking successful educational and behavioral outcomes for all students. MTSS creates a positive environment for all students which in turn impacts school climate. The interventions and supports found in MTSS also help in relationship building, which is a key factor in student success.

(from PBISrewards.com)

### **USING A RESTORATIVE APPROACH**

Using Restorative Justice to address harm is one of the ways that our staff try to get to the root of challenging behaviors and promote lasting, positive change that benefits the student and their communities. Here are some commonly asked questions and answers about Restorative Justice and its use in our school community:

**What is Restorative Justice and how is it used?** The goal of restorative justice is to “restore” or fix harm that has happened in the community. A restorative justice lens sees behavior as occurring within a community and teaches children that their behavior impacts those around them. Examples could include everything from being disruptive in class, to getting into an altercation, to saying something hurtful about another person. These incidents are seen as affecting the community as a whole, and

after restorative processing, the student is asked to come up with a way to make things right. Some examples of this might be apologizing, creating a behavior plan, or completing community service. If the harm impacted many people in the community, the students and staff involved might participate in a circle process, which will be described in more detail below.

**What does restorative processing look like?** Restorative processing, sometimes called a restorative conference, is a structured way to talk about a behavioral incident that avoids language that would be considered blaming or shaming. Restorative processing seeks to understand why a behavior happened, who it impacted, and how to prevent it from happening again. While a conversation like this may happen in many ways, a general format is used:

#### Restorative Questions to Respond to Challenging Behavior

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been impacted by what you have done? In what ways?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

#### Restorative Questions to Help Those Harmed by the Actions of Others

- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

**What is the end result of the restorative processing?** Our goal is to repair the harm that has been caused through conversation about how to accomplish the reparation. This could come in many forms. It may come through conversation with all parties involved or by restorative actions taken to repair the harm and build community. Ultimately, we are looking for positive transformation in actions, in our relationships, and in our community. School administrators will be directly involved in restorative processing and working with students to determine how to repair the harm that has been done.

**What is a circle process?** A circle process is one of the ways that we address harm that has happened in the community. A circle is usually facilitated by a teacher, counselor,

interventionist, or dean of students. All participants sit in a circle and take turns discussing what happened and how it impacted them. Participants can work together to come up with a way to repair that harm that occurred.

**Alternatives to Suspension** – The GMRSD recognizes that in and out of school suspensions are appropriate consequences for the most egregious infractions of the student code of conduct. When students who have committed a suspendable offense meet the expectations for accountability and are willing to engage in Restorative Action to repair harm they have done, every effort will be made to provide students with an alternative to suspension from school.

## Great Falls Middle School Code of Conduct

The Middle School code of conduct encourages accountability for one's behavior and is intended to assist students in recognizing and taking responsibility for the important decisions that must be made in learning to become independent and productive members of the school community. 1. Our school wide goal is to create a safe and positive learning environment. 2. Our school community collectively abides by a statement of beliefs created by the students known as the Social Contract. 3. All school staff members treat students with respect and maintain open communication with the home.

### Student Responsibilities

1. Attend School Daily. Every student needs to attend school daily and be on time. The school day begins at 7:45am and ends at 2:25pm. After an absence or tardy the student must provide a written note of explanation from a parent or guardian upon their return to school that fits the definition of excused. An excused absence would be for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays. It is the student's responsibility to check in with teachers about missed assignments. Students are not excused from class work during their absence and are expected to make up missed work. *\*\* Please see the Attendance Policy for more details.*

2. Participate Fully in Class. While in class you are expected to actively participate in learning activities. It is your responsibility to be prepared with the materials (planner, pencil, binder, etc.) required by the teacher.

3. Know and follow the SOCIAL CONTRACT as well as.... A. Be honest always.

B. Respect your peers, teachers, other school staff, and most importantly, yourself. Always demonstrate common courtesy to everyone in our school community. This includes respecting the rights and property of others, as well all school property. If you break, damage, or deface school property, you will either repair or pay for the damage.

C. Appropriate Dress: It is important to create a learning environment that is comfortable, safe, clean, and not disruptive to others. All students are to dress in a manner that does not violate established codes of respect, health and safety. Specifically:

1. Wear clothing that fits properly and completely covers all undergarments. For example, low-cut shirts, low-hanging trousers, and baggy or spaghetti-strap tank tops should not be worn.
2. Wear tops and bottoms that meet, even when your arms are raised (the midriff should be covered front and back.)
3. Hats, hoods and other forms of headgear are not to be worn in the school building at any time (excluding those worn for religious reasons).
4. Any clothing with offensive pictures/statements or that promote drugs/alcohol/tobacco or promotion of violence will not be permitted.
5. Do not wear fragrances -- we are a "scent-free" school. Many people are sensitive to body sprays/scented lotions/etc.

6. If clothing worn by a student violates these guidelines, students will be offered the option to change or call home for a change of clothes, with no further consequence unless the situation is escalated by the student's refusal to change.

D. Be punctual. You should be in your assigned area always; otherwise you must have a pass from your teacher. When dismissed from one class you are expected to go directly to the next class. Students who are late to class without a pass will be required to stay after school with that teacher. If classroom tardiness exceeds three times, the student will be referred to the Responsible Behavior Room for further consequences.

E. Lockers are school property; on occasion, it may become necessary for designated school staff to open and examine the contents of a student's locker.

F. Use appropriate language, without swears, always. Do not use any language that targets or demeans a person based on their identity; such language makes others feel unsafe and is unacceptable in our school.

G. Demonstrate school appropriate behavior always. Be self-controlled, non-disruptive and reasonably quiet in classrooms, hallways, school buses, on school property, and at school-related activities.

H. Students are encouraged not to bring any items of significant value to school, such as electronics and large amounts of money. Students are responsible for their own belongings; **the school will not be responsible for damaged, lost or stolen property.** *\*\*Please see the Electronic Device policy for more details.\*\**

### Attendance Policies

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. School staff view it as one of our responsibilities to support families in ensuring that their child meets this important expectation. In addition to communicating with parents if attendance problems arise, school staff will work with families to create a plan for successful school attendance. This may include partnering with outside social service agencies.

Parents of children attending our schools have responsibilities as well to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and in accordance with state law. Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays. A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee. Family vacations should be scheduled during school vacations which are posted on the district website each July.

Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school unless it's unavoidable. **Students are expected to be in class 180 school days.** Massachusetts State Law requires an attendance rate of 93% or no more than seven absences in a six-month period. In instances of chronic or irregular absence due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified. Students may not participate in athletics or other after school activities on a day they are absent or arrive at school after 8:00 am. **Each day that students are absent, parents/guardians are expected to call the school (863-7300) prior to 8:30 AM and state the reason for the absence and estimated length of absence.**

**Parent Notification Practices** An automated call will be made to parents/guardians on each day of a student's unexcused tardiness or absence from school. When a student has missed five excused/unexcused cumulative days in a class, the school will notify parents/guardians via a letter. After

seven excused/unexcused absences, the student and his/her parents/guardians will again be notified by letter and may be required to attend a meeting with school personnel to develop a plan for improving the student's attendance. Students with chronic attendance issues may be referred for to social service agencies for additional support in making a positive connection to school.

**Tardiness** Students are expected to be in their CPR, ready for attendance to be taken, at 7:45am. Any student who is late to school must check in at the office to get a tardy slip. All students who are late must provide a note from home explaining why they are tardy. Excused tardies are issued for emergencies, car trouble, and medical appointments. More than four unexcused tardies will result in disciplinary action starting with lunch detention. If the unexcused tardiness becomes a chronic pattern, a parent conference will be required to develop an intervention plan, which may include referral to a social service agency for additional support.

### **Academic Honesty, Progress Reports, and Report Cards**

Academic expectations are high in our school community and we expect that students show integrity in their school work. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will result in the student getting a zero on that assignment. Possible further consequences may include detention, suspension and/or parental meetings. The parents will be contacted by the school in such an event.

Parents should check grades on Plus Portal which are posted and updated regularly. Plus Portal indicates areas where students need to improve. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns with that teacher or team. When a student is unable to complete the required work in a course due to an extended illness, or other reason acceptable to the teacher, an incomplete may be issued. Students with incompletes on their report cards must complete all work within two weeks of the end of the marking period to receive credit for that work. At the end of each quarter report cards are issued and mailed home. The report card includes teachers' comments about behavior and effort.

### **Grades and Honor Roll**

#### **Grades and Numeric Equivalents**

**A = 4.0 A- = 3.7 B+ = 3.3 B = 3.0 B- = 2.7 C+ = 2.3 C = 2.0 C- = 1.7 D+ = 1.3 D = 1.0 D- = 0.7 F = 0.0 I = 0.0 W = 0.0**

#### **Honor Roll Determination**

1. The honor roll shall be based on a simple Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) 2. A student who earns at least a 3.0 G.P.A., or B average, with no grade below a C, shall be eligible to be on the honor roll. 3. Students receiving an incomplete in any graded course will not be eligible for the honor roll. 4. Honor roll computation shall be based on grade point values noted above.
  - a. For purposes of the quarterly honor roll, all courses will have a weight of 1.0. b. All grades except P (Pass) and W (Withdrawal) will be included in the computation. c. The simple G.P.A. is arrived at by adding the numeric equivalents and dividing by the number grades.

The honor roll will be:

**First Honors: 3.7 - 4.0 Second Honors: 3.4 - 3.699 Third Honors: 3.0 - 3.399**

## **After School Responsibility Policy**

An After School Responsibility (ASR) is issued and served with the classroom teacher whenever an issue in the classroom arises. ASR's can be issued for the student to make up missed class time, misbehavior, to conference about concerns, etc. In such a case, the teacher and student will designate a date/time to conference and sign the ASR. A copy of the signed ASR goes to the student as a reminder. It is the responsibility of the student to notify parents or guardians if they are assigned either a detention or an After School Responsibility. Should the student fail to report for the ASR or detention, the office will issue a lunch detention each day until it is served, and make a phone call home. Students are still responsible for serving the original ASR.

After school activities such as sports are not considered reasonable conflicts. After a conversation with the parent, any student who is unable to serve time after school may be assigned to an alternative consequence. A student may also be assigned to in-school suspension for repeatedly failing to report to detention or After School Responsibility.

Parent/guardian support for our policies regarding behavior is very important. Until the student fulfills his/her after school responsibilities and detentions, school-sponsored privileges will be suspended for this student. The student will not be permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities, including, but not limited to interscholastic sports, intramural sports, field trips, performances, and school dances.

## **DUE PROCESS FOR SUSPENSIONS**

### **NOTICE OF PROPOSED SUSPENSION**

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ or an in-school suspension as defined by 603 CMR 53.02(6), the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out-of-school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing. Notice shall set forth in plain language:

- a) the disciplinary offense;
- b) the basis for the charge;
- c) the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
- d) the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
- e) the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- f) the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal sent written notice and documented at least two attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations.

All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.



## **SHORT-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION**

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

Principal Hearing. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts. A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal will provide notification in writing of his/her determination in the form of an update to the student and parent/guardian, and provide reasons for the determination. If the student is suspended, the principal shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

## **LONG-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION**

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

- i. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
- ii. the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense;
- iii. the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; and
- iv. the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;

- v. the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.

Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

- i. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
- ii. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal;
- iii. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
- iv. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during removal, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
- v. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or his/her designee (only if a long-term suspension has been imposed) within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

### **APPEAL OF LONG-TERM SUSPENSION**

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be final.

### **EMERGENCY REMOVAL**

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. A principal may not remove a student from school on

an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal.

During the emergency, removal the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason for the emergency removal. The principal shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable, within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day. The decision shall meet all of the due process requirements of a principal's determination in a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable.

### **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION UNDER 603 CMR 53:02(6) & 603 CMR 53.10**

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year.

A Principal may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

The principal shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.

The principal shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent.

### **SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION FOR DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES UNDER M.G.L. 71 §§37H and 37H½**

The due process notification and hearing requirements in the preceding sections do not apply to the following disciplinary offenses:

#### **Possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or assault of staff**

A student may be subject to expulsion if found in possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or the student assaults a member of educational staff, and the principal determines the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The Principal shall notify the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the opportunity for a hearing, and the right to have representation at the hearing, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. After said hearing, a principal may, in his/her discretion, decide to levy a suspension rather than expulsion. A student expelled for such an infraction shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the Superintendent of his/her appeal. The student has the right to counsel at the hearing before the Superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student was guilty of the alleged offense.

#### **Felony complaint or issuance of felony delinquency complaint**

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the Principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the Principal if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The Principal shall notify the student in writing of the charges, the reasons for the suspension (prior to such suspension taking effect), and the right to appeal. The Principal will also provide the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the process for appealing the suspension to the Superintendent. The request for appeal must be made in writing within five (5) calendar days. The hearing shall be held within three (3) days of the request. The suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing before the Superintendent. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

#### **Felony conviction or adjudication/admission in court of guilt for a felony or felony delinquency**

The Principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for the proposed expulsion. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent, as well as the appeal process. The expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the Superintendent.

The student shall notify the Superintendent in writing of his/her request for an appeal the decision no later than five (5) calendar days following the date of the expulsion. The Superintendent hearing shall be held with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) within three (3) calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and shall have the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

### **STUDENT SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING**

The District shall collect and annually report data to the Department regarding in-school suspensions, short-term and long-term suspensions, expulsions, emergency removals under 603 CMR 53.07, access to education services under 603 CMR 53.13, and such other information as may be required by the Department. Such data shall be reported in a manner and form directed by the Department.

The principal of each school shall periodically review discipline data by selected student populations, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and

student with a disability status. In reviewing the data, the principal shall assess the extent of in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, and emergency removals under 603 CMR 53.07, and the impact of such disciplinary action on selected student populations. The principal shall further determine whether it is necessary or appropriate to modify disciplinary practices due to over-reliance on expulsion, or in-school or out-of-school suspension, or emergency removals, or the impact of such suspensions, removals, and expulsions on selected student populations compared with other students.

### **Discipline for students on Individualized Education Plans or Section 504 plans:**

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed for the identified students with disabilities eligible for special education services will indicate whether the student can be expected to meet the regular discipline code or if the student's handicapping condition requires modifications. Any modifications will be described in the IEP. The suspension/expulsion of students with disabilities shall be handled in accordance with the Discipline Procedures outlined in the Federal Special Education Regulations, Sections 300.519-300.529.

1. A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive days or a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days but constitute a pattern are considered to represent a change in placement.
2. Prior to a suspension that constitutes a change in placement of a student with disabilities, the Team will convene a Manifestation Determination.
3. If the Team determines that the behavior is **NOT** a manifestation of the disability, then the district may suspend/expel the student consistent with policies applied to any student without disabilities. With the exception that the district must still offer an appropriate educational program to the student with disabilities which may be in another setting.
  - a. Regardless of the Manifestation Determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative setting (as determined by the Team) for up to 45 days. If the behavior involves weapons/illegal drugs/other controlled substance or the infliction of serious bodily injury on another person while at school or at a school function; or
  - b. If the district provides evidence that the student is "substantially likely" to injure themselves or others and a hearing officer orders the alternative placement; and c. The interim alternative education setting enables the student to continue in the general curriculum to continue receiving services identified on the IEP, and provides services to address the problematic behavior.
4. If the team determines that the behavior **IS** a manifestation of the disability, then the district takes steps (with the consent of the parent) to complete a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plan and does not suspend the student again during the school year. If a behavioral intervention plan is already in place, the team reviews it and modifies it as necessary. The team may modify the student's IEP and/or placement.
5. The school district provides written notice to the parent of all rights to appeal and to an expedited hearing. If the parent chooses to appeal, during the appeal the student stays in the placement on the last accepted IEP or the interim alternative placement, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

### **Procedures for discipline of students not yet determined eligible for special education:**

A child who has not yet been determined to be eligible for special education and related services will be provided the student disciplinary protections under IDEA if the District has a basis of knowledge that the child is a child with a disability before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred. The District shall have knowledge that the child is a child with a disability if: (1) the child's parent expressed concern in writing to administrative or supervisory personnel of the school or district that the child is in need of special education and related services; (2) the parent of the child had requested a special education evaluation; or (3)

the child's teacher or other school or district personnel expressed specific concerns to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child. The school or district is not deemed to have knowledge of a disability if (1) the parent has not allowed an evaluation or has refused special education and related services, or (2) the child has been evaluated and determined not to be a child with a disability. 34 CFR § 300.534.

### **Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedure**

The Gill-Montague Regional School District is committed to maintaining and promoting an educational environment free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law, and the protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to the District. Discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, genetic information or testing, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability (hereinafter "membership in a protected class") will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any student or other individual who has complained of discrimination, including harassment, or individuals who have cooperated with an investigation of such a complaint, is also unlawful and will not be tolerated. The District will promptly investigate, remedy any harm, seek to prevent recurrence of such conduct, and will also develop procedures to accomplish this end. This policy applies to conduct directed toward persons associated with the educational community by all other persons associated with the educational community including, but not limited to, students, District employees, the School Committee, school volunteers, and independent contractors.

**I. What Is Discrimination, including Harassment?** A. Discrimination: Treating persons differently, or interfering with or preventing them from enjoying the advantages or privileges afforded to others because of their membership in a protected class.

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**General Laws Chapter 76, Section 5:** Every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where he actually resides, subject to the following section. No school committee is required to enroll a person who does not actually reside in the town unless said enrollment is authorized by law or by the school committee. Any person who violates or assists in the violation of this provision may be required to remit full restitution to the town of the improperly-attended public schools. **No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.**

B. Harassment: Oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct relating to a person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit that person's ability to participate in the District's programs or activities by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive educational environment.

Harassing conduct based on a person's protected status may include, but is not limited to:

- Degrading, demeaning, insulting, or abusive verbal or written statements;
- Taking personal belongings, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors;
- Drawing or writing graffiti, slogans, visual displays, or symbols on school or another's property;
- Telling degrading or offensive jokes;

- Unwanted physical contact of any kind;
- Physical violence, threats of bodily harm, physical intimidation, or stalking;
- Threatening letter, emails, instant messages, or websites that come within the scope of the District's disciplinary authority;
- Defacing, damaging, or destroying school or another's property.

**II. Responsibilities of all Persons Associated with Educational Community** Each member of the educational community is personally responsible for ensuring that his/her conduct does not in any way harass or discriminate against any other person that he/she has contact with in the performance of his/her duties or studies or while acting as a member of the school community. In addition, each member of the educational community is required to fully cooperate in any investigation of alleged discrimination, including harassment. Further, District employees are obligated to intervene and stop any discrimination, including harassment they witness and to immediately report to the appropriate party instances of discrimination, including harassment that are reported to them or of which they otherwise learn.

### **III. Designated Officials for Addressing Discrimination and Harassment Complaints** The Civil

Rights Coordinator(s) are responsible for receiving reports and complaints of violations of this Policy. Individuals may file a report or complaint of discrimination, including harassment, with the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). If the complaint involves allegations of discrimination based on disability, the person filing the complainant also has the option to file his/her complaint with the building level 504 coordinator. A report or complaint of a violation involving the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should be filed with the Superintendent. A report or complaint of violation involving the Superintendent should be filed with the Committee.

The Civil Rights Coordinator: TBA; Title IX Coordinator: Dianne Ellis, 222 Turnpike Road, Montague, MA 01351, 413-863-7200, [dianne.ellis@gmrsl.org](mailto:dianne.ellis@gmrsl.org) Section 504/Title II Coordinator: TBA

**V. Procedure for Reporting Discrimination and Harassment** The following complaint procedure has been established to ensure prompt and effective investigation into allegations of discrimination, including harassment. A person who believes that he or she had been discriminated against, including being harassed may, to the extent that they feel comfortable, immediately:

1. confront the harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against him/her; 2. state the conduct that he/she objects to; 3. indicate that he/she/him/her/they finds such conduct offensive, intimidating and/or embarrassing; 4. insist that the person(s) engaging in the conduct stop the conduct immediately; and/or 5. report the conduct immediately to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s).

If the individual with the concern is not comfortable with such a confrontation, or feels that such a confrontation is unsafe and/or otherwise inappropriate, he/she/him/her/they should instead report the situation to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s). Reports/complaints are to be filed within ninety (90) days after the conduct complained

of occurred or within the time the individual reasonably becomes aware of the conduct. (Note: this filing period may be extended for good cause.) The report can be written or oral and should consist of the following:

1. the specific conduct objected to, 2. the date(s) and time(s) such conduct took place, 3. the name(s) of the alleged harasser(s) or person believed to be discriminating against them, 4. the location(s) where the conduct occurred, 5. the name(s) of any witness(es), 6. action sought to remedy the situation, and 7. any other details or information requested by the designated official.

In addition, the person should provide the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) with any documentation (emails, notes, pictures, etc.) or other information in support of the allegation of discrimination, including harassment.

**VI. Investigation of Complaints** Upon receipt of a report or complaint, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) should conduct a prompt investigation. The investigation must allow for the complainant, the subject of the complaint, the alleged harasser, and any other appropriate party to provide information, including witnesses or other evidence, relevant to the consideration and resolution of the complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will also endeavor to promptly interview and obtain detailed written statements from potential witnesses. If further documentation or information is necessary, the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) will notify the appropriate party, asking that the information be provided within ten (10) school/working days.

The District will take interim steps, as necessary, to ensure the safety and well-being of the complainant while the investigation is being conducted. Interim measures are available even if the complainant does not file or continue to pursue a complaint. The Civil Rights Coordinator(s) shall notify the complainant of specific types of interim measures available, which may include measures to avoid contact with the alleged harasser, allowing employees to change work situations as appropriate, or prohibiting an alleged harasser from having any contact with the complainant pending the results of the District's investigation. At any time, a complainant may request either orally or in writing to the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) that specific interim measures be taken pending the outcome of the investigation.

A written determination regarding the complaint and any resolution will be provided by the Civil Rights Coordinator(s) to the complainant within thirty (30) school/working days of the complaint. The determination of whether the District's anti-discrimination policy has been violated will be based upon a preponderance of the evidence standard. The complainant may request reconsideration of the determination and/or resolution of a complaint by notifying the Superintendent in writing or verbally within seven (7) school/working days of receipt of the written determination of the Civil Rights Coordinators. The Superintendent or his/her designee will respond to such a request within (30) thirty school/working days of receipt of the request for reconsideration; his/her decision is final.

If a violation is found to have occurred, the District will take steps to prevent recurrence of the violation and correct its discriminatory effect on the person(s) affected. Such steps may include appropriate disciplinary action, counseling, development of a safety plan and other remedies, as appropriate.

**VII. Consequences of Violating Policy - Discipline & Discharge** Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with the contractual provisions governing his/her employment. In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.



Any student who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which may range from detention, suspension from school, or expulsion from school. (Note: students with disabilities will be subject to the applicable disciplinary procedures set forth in the Students' Rights and Responsibilities District handbook, which adhere to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973.) In appropriate circumstances, the District may also refer the matter to law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

### **VIII. Confidentiality**

Investigations of discrimination, including harassment complaints shall be conducted in such a manner as to disclose information only to those with a need to know or those who may have information pertinent to the investigation. Please note, some level of disclosure may be necessary in the course of conducting interviews in connection with investigation of any complaint under this policy. The District shall endeavor to keep such information as confidential as it can without compromising the thoroughness of the investigation.

**IX. State and Federal Authorities** In addition to the process described above, the complainant may, at any time, file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or other appropriate federal or state agency charged with enforcement of state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, including harassment based on membership in a protected class.

U.S. Department of Education Office for  
Civil Rights 5 Post Office Square 8<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
Suite 900 Boston, MA 02109-3921 Telephone: (617)  
289-0111 <http://www.ed.gov>

Massachusetts Commission Against  
Discrimination 436 Dwight St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rm. 220  
Springfield, MA 01103 Telephone: (413)  
739-2145 Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission (EEOC) John F. Kennedy Federal  
Building 475 Government Center Boston, MA  
02203 Telephone: (800) 669-4000 <http://www.eeoc.gov/>

**Definition of Bullying:** The repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: Causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property. Places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

An aggressor is perpetrator of bullying or retaliation through the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a

victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school, including through the use of cyber-bullying.

### ***Turners Falls High School/Great Falls Middle School Bullying Plan***

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 or district staff member is required to report immediately to Ms. Menard; Principal, Mr. Gaffigan; Assistant Principal or Deans Mr. Duprey and Ms. McKinley. When the Principal, Assistant Principal or Dean is the alleged aggressor, complaints should be reported to the Superintendent. Bullying complaints against the Superintendent should be sent to the school committee.

Any instance of bullying or retaliation a staff member becomes aware of or witnesses should be reported immediately. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form in the following locations and online at the school's website.

# SAMPLE BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: *This line may be left blank if an anonymous report is being made*  
(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)
2. Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior ☒ Reporter (not the target) ☐
3. Check whether you are a: ☐ Student ☐ Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Parent ☐ Administrator ☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
Your contact information/telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_
4. If student, state your school: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_
5. If staff member, state your school or work site: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Information about the Incident:  
Name of Target (of behavior): \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_  
Date(s) of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Time When Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_
7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

#### FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)
10. Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX A

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. INVESTIGATION

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interviews:

<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed aggressor	Name: _____	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed target	Name: _____	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed witnesses	Name: _____	Date: _____
	Name: _____	Date: _____

3. Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION ☐ Yes ☐ No

Summary of Investigation: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

### III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

☐ YES ☐ NO  
☐ Bullying ☐ Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Retaliation ☐ Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

☐ Target's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Law Enforcement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

☐ Loss of Privileges ☐ Detention ☐ STEP referral ☐ Suspension  
☐ Community Service ☐ Education ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe Safety Planning:

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians;

2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident

Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, 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 principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

## **1. Reporting by Staff**

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor when he/she/him/her/they witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report as provided does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

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

The school or district 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 principal or designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor. 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 principal or designee, or superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor.

### **B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation – Allegations of Bullying by a Student**

#### **Safety**

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal 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 principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The principal 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. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

#### 1. Obligations to Notify Others

A. Notice to parents or guardians: Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal 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 principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or 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 principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal 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 principal 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 student aggressor. In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

D. Investigation: The principal or designee (Asst. Principal, Deans) 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 principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or Asst. Principal, Dean will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation 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. Interviews may be conducted by the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans and other staff members as determined by the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal Asst. Principal, Deans will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

E. Determinations: The Principal Asst. Principal, Deans will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans 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 Asst. Principal, Deans 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 Principal Asst. Principal, Deans 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 Principal, Asst. Principal, Deans 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 Principal, Asst. Principal, Deans 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 Principal Asst. Principal, Deans 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.

### **C. Responses to Bullying**

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

Upon the Principal Asst. Principal, Deans determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district 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 principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curriculum;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors 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.

Hold a restorative meeting between the aggressor and the targeted student.

## 2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal 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 or district'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 principal 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 principal 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 principal 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 principal 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 principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## F. Responding to a Report of Bullying by School Staff

### VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent education and resources: The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

B. Notification requirements: Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

### VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION



Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, 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 a school district or 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 a school district or 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 a 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 district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

#### **VIII. 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](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's office.

#### **IX. DEFINITIONS**

Aggressor is a student or a member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards a student.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff 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.

Cyberbullying, 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 cyberbullying.

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.

School 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, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **X. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or 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. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district 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 or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

### **Electronic Device Policies**

All electronic devices are to be off and away in student lockers during the school day (7:35am-3:15pm). Cell phones, cameras, mp3 players, and other similar items are both distracting and disruptive to the school's learning environment. To ensure that each student is provided with the education they deserve, any electronic device that is seen or heard by a staff member during the school day will be confiscated and brought to the office. A parent/guardian will be called to pick up the device at their earliest convenience. GFMS is not responsible for the loss of or damage to any such items.

### **Bus Rules**

Students may ride the school bus to and from school if they live 1.5 or more miles from school, unless their behavior endangers the health and safety of other students on the bus. Consequences of breaking the rules on the bus may include a reprimand by the bus driver, parent notification by telephone or letter, parent conference, and suspension from riding the bus for three or more days. Parents are responsible for the student's school attendance during a period of bus suspension.

**\*\*Please refer to the district policy JICC-R (also EEAEC-R) at [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org).\*\***

## **Dances and Field Trips**

Events such as dances and field trips are part of the social, emotional, and academic growth of our students. To ensure the safety and success of such activities, students attending dances and field trips are expected to follow all school policies and rules. Whether on school property or off, during school hours or not, the expectations and consequences are the same. Students who have been in-school or out-of-school suspended within the two weeks prior to a dance or field trip and students who have un-served ASR's will not be permitted to attend the event. Parents of students whose behavior is deemed to be unsafe may be asked to accompany their child on field trips. Students must be in attendance at school on the day of an evening event in order to participate. Students wishing to bring guests from another school to a dance must complete a guest form available at the office. Deadlines for the completion of these forms will be strictly adhered to. All guests must be pre-approved by the principal and only guests who are 6th, 7th or 8th graders and in good standing at their respective schools will be allowed to attend a middle school dance.

## **Appropriate Use of Technology Policies**

Students in the middle school will have access to computers to enhance their education. Our primary mode of monitoring internet use is through direct supervision by our staff as well as internet filters as required by federal law. However, such filters do not block all inappropriate websites. An internet use contract is sent home with students in the beginning of the year for them and their parents to review the entire policy and sign an agreement to abide by such policy. The use policy explains our procedures for acceptable use of computer networks. These privileges are revocable dependent upon compliance with the policy. A user's failure to comply with the policy shall result in limited computer access, and other relevant disciplinary actions. There are hard copies of the policy available in the main office for viewing. \*\*You may also view the district policy IJNDB-R and the Chromebook

1:1 Policy and Loan Agreement at [www.gmrdsd.org](http://www.gmrdsd.org).\*\*

## **Clubs and Sports**

Many different opportunities are available for students to get involved in after school activities. Interscholastic teams are offered for students and involve competition with other local schools (some sports may not be available for sixth graders). Students must be in good academic standing to participate. In accordance with the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), a student who receives an "F" in any course is ineligible for sports during the next marking period. Any student who receives one "F" may apply for a waiver in order to participate in the athletic program. Attending summer school and passing allows the student to play in the fall without using a waiver for fall sports. A student will be granted only one waiver during his/her time at Great Falls Middle School. Student athletes must be in attendance for the entire school day to participate in practice or games. Student athletes are responsible for making up any work missed due to athletic early dismissals. [www.highschoolsports.net](http://www.highschoolsports.net) provides information regarding sports schedules of the middle and high school teams as well as pictures and videos from games. In addition to interscholastic sports, there are a variety of clubs available to accommodate specific student interests such as Student Council, Yearbook, Band, Chorus, GSA, Peer Mediation, Hawkeye Magazine, Photography Club, and more, changing from year to year.

**Extracurricular activities sponsored by the district are nondiscriminatory in that:**

- The Gill-Montague Regional School District provides equal opportunity for all students to participate in intramural and interscholastic sports;
- Extracurricular activities or clubs sponsored by the Gill-Montague Regional School District do not exclude students on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness.

### **Managing the care of students with athletic concussions**

Research has estimated that 5-10% of high school or college contact sports athletes sustain a concussion each year. These estimates likely understate the true incidence of concussion. In one investigation over 50% of high school football athletes did not report their injury to a parent, coach, or medical professional. A concussion is an alteration of mental status resulting from the brain being jolted inside of the skull due to a blow to the head or body. Among the many symptoms associated with concussion, headache, dizziness, confusion, amnesia, nausea, and disorientation are commonly reported. Loss of consciousness however, only occurs in less than 10% of all injuries and is not an indicator of concussion severity. Also following the injury the athlete may experience other difficulties such as sensitivity to light and sound, forgetfulness, fatigue and emotional changes such as anxiety or depression. Most athletes who sustain a concussion can fully recover as long as the brain had time to heal before sustaining another hit; but relying only on an athlete's self-report of symptoms to determine injury recovery is inadequate as many high school athletes are not aware of the signs and symptoms of injury, the severity of concussive injuries pose, or they may feel pressure from coaches, parents, and/or teammates to return to play as quickly as possible. One or more of these factors will likely result in under-diagnosing the injury and a premature return to play. Research has shown that young concussed athletes that return to play too soon, before their brain has healed, are highly vulnerable to more prolonged post-concussion syndrome or, in rare cases a catastrophic neurological injury known as Second Impact Syndrome. Therefore, we encourage the following care when an athlete sustains a

### **Concussion in a school-sponsored sporting event.**

1. When the concussion occurs, the injured athlete should visit the local hospital emergency room or review their condition with their primary care physician to ensure there is not a need for emergency medical care.
2. Then a care team consisting of the student's primary care physician and parents, along with the athletic trainer, head coach and athletic director should monitor the symptoms of the injury. Concussion is one of the most complex injuries faced by medical professional as the signs and symptoms are not always straightforward and the effects and severity of the injury can be difficult to determine. The injury occurs in absence of structural changes in brain tissue, generally making traditional neuro-diagnostic tests such as CT, MRI and EEG insensitive. Therefore, we encourage a third step in the concussion care process.
3. Engage the injured athlete in battery of tests that include a combination of self-report symptoms, balance, and neuro-cognitive testing. The combined assessment will provide a more sensitive and objective evaluation of the effects of the concussion that will help better determine when it is safe for the athlete to return to play.

## **Students and Families in Transition**

If, for any reason, you find your home situation such that you do not currently have a place for your family to live, the school district will help you by making sure that your children can still attend their schools on a daily basis, receive transportation, meals and all additional supports to help you in such a difficult time. This is not only the right thing for us to do; it is also both federal and state law. Please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal at 863-7300.

## **Food Services Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks**

The Gill-Montague Regional School District Food Service Program takes pride in serving nutritious meals that follow USDA Nutrition Standards. Meal calendars that detail what will be offered for breakfast and lunch are available on our website: go to the “Students” section and choose “School Menus.” Since August 2018, we are a “free school meals for all” school. Breakfast: Breakfast is available to all students beginning at 7:30 am in the cafeteria or from our mobile Breakfast Cart. In the event of a delayed opening, no breakfast will be served.

Lunch: Our cafeteria offers several options each day for lunch. The main meal is free to all; a la carte items are priced individually and must be paid for. A bagged lunch is available on half-days to students who sign up the previous school day.

## **Payment Methods**

Great Falls Middle School students can pay with cash or pre-pay using a PaySchoolsCentral account. To set up an account, you will need a student identification number, which you can get by looking at your student ID or contacting the kitchen manager at 413-863-7315. Visit the GMRSD Food Services webpage at [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org) for more detailed information on the PaySchoolCentral program. When students owe money to food services, we will notify their parents/guardians and expect them to settle the bill in a timely manner. Payment can be made with cash or a check, or through the student’s PaySchoolsCentral account. All accounts must be settled by the end of the school year. Seniors’ accounts should be settled prior to graduation.

## **Peanut/Food Allergies**

It is important that you notify the school nurse and school food service staff of any food allergies. The GFMS/TFHS cafeteria does serve peanut butter and peanut products; there is seating available for those with contact allergies that is sanitized between meals. \*\*Please refer to the GMRSD policy manual on the district website ([www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org)) for the full district policy regarding food allergies.\*\*

## **School Resource Officer**

(Adapted from a Memorandum of Understanding between the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Montague Police Department)

The goal of the formal working relationship between the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Montague Police Department is to provide a safe, secure, just and violence-free educational setting. A collaborative approach between the district and the police department should advance the missions of both institutions as they serve the young people of the community. The district and the police department agree to coordinate their preventive measures and their response to violent, delinquent, or criminal acts by students

which occur on school property, on school buses, or at school sponsored or school related events. The presence of law enforcement in schools should not result in unnecessary escalations, citations, arrests, detainments, use of force, or introduction of students into the criminal justice system. It continues to remain the sole prerogative of school officials to enforce the code of conduct and impose discipline for infractions of school rules and policies. The main duties of the school resource officer (SRO) include developing rapport with students and staff, working with school staff to provide preventive help and services to students and families, investigating crime committed on school grounds, supporting plans for crisis management, and serving as a contact for support services within and outside the school. The SRO is based in the secondary building but spends time working in each district school.

**Animals in School \*\*Please see the District website at [gmrtd.org](http://gmrtd.org) for the full policy. \*\***

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building Principal. The School District is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment. School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

For the complete Great Falls Middle School Handbook, and for the Policy Manual of the Gill Montague Regional School District, please go to [www.gmrtd.org](http://www.gmrtd.org). GFMS reserves the right to revise this handbook between printings. All handbook references to parents are inclusive of parent/guardian/caregivers.

Thank you for reading! You make Great Falls GREAT!