

WATERTOWN

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Public Schools

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February 2, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In May of 2010, the Massachusetts state legislature passed a comprehensive anti-bullying law. In compliance with that legislation, the Watertown Schools convened a committee comprised of school staff, community members, and students to work on a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan which was sent to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in December. I am writing at this time to outline the elements of the plan and its impact on our schools.

In regard to the law itself, there are two major areas of impact which are new. First, the law extends the jurisdiction of the school beyond the school walls. Thus, any bullying activity on or off school grounds, if it disrupts the school environment, will be subject to school oversight, discipline and intervention. Second, the law indicates that when bullying takes place electronically (on the internet, social sites, etc.), just one posting will be defined as bullying.

The aim of the legislation and the Watertown Plan is to help identify troublesome behaviors and to intervene to help victims regain a sense of safety in school and to help aggressors to learn new behaviors. In all cases, parents/guardians will be quickly notified about such incidents by the building principal.

As part of our plan in Watertown, we have instituted bullying-prevention curriculums at all levels. At the elementary level, all three schools began using the *Caring School Community* program in September. At the Middle School, the *Let's Get Real* program, which was initiated last year, is continuing. At the High School, we will be training staff in the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*. For information about these curricula and the Plan itself, please go to the Bullying Prevention & Intervention website at <http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us/wps/bullying/index.html>

Finally, there are multiple training opportunities for staff and the community being planned. Staff participated in training in the summer and fall of last year and will continue to do so. In regard to the community, Michael Thompson, an internationally known psychologist, spoke in two separate sessions to parents and staff about the social lives of children in December. In the coming months, two more events will be offered. These will include a panel presentation at the library on bullying sponsored by the World in Watertown, and "You Don't Know Me Til You Know Me" with psychologist Michael Fowlin in the Spring.

It is our firm belief that a multi-tiered approach of education, training, community involvement and discipline/intervention will lead to a safer and more welcoming environment in our schools. We encourage you to talk with your children about the importance of these issues.

Sincerely,