



## **Responding to Incidents of Bias or Discrimination**

The Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) is committed to providing equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Our School Committee policy against discrimination is [here](#).

Any form of discrimination based on ancestry, race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or any other state or federally protected category is not tolerated. WPS will promptly report, investigate and respond to all allegations of discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, to the fullest extent possible and take appropriate disciplinary, corrective, and remedial measures necessary to ensure a safe and equitable learning and workplace environment for all school community members. WPS will also report such incidents to the appropriate authorities when applicable and share major incidents and patterns with the community affected.

Below please find specific questions related to reporting and responding to specific incidents.

### **What is an incident of bias?**

A bias incident is any biased conduct, speech or expression that has an impact but may not involve criminal action, but demonstrates conscious or unconscious bias that targets individuals or groups that are part of a federally protected class (ie. race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, or disability). Bias-based behavior can also be described as when someone treats another person differently or makes an offensive comment because of their membership in a protected group, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

### **What is WPS's protocol for responding to incidents of bias or discrimination?**

Please review the [Equity Protocols Training](#) for the protocols for responding to incidents of bias or discrimination.

### **How can I report an incident?**

Students can report incidents of discrimination or any concerning pattern of biased behavior to any WPS staff member or one of their trusted adults in the district.



## WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Dr. Charmie Curry, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, [dei@wellesleyps.org](mailto:dei@wellesleyps.org)

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Parents/guardians can report specific concerns to their school principal or any district or school administrator, all of whom are trained in the protocol to respond to incidents. Complaints may also be made to the Office of Human Resources or the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

#### **Can a report of an incident be anonymous?**

Reports of any concerning behavior may be made anonymously. To the extent possible, WPS will strive to honor requests for anonymity; however, this is not always possible. Anonymous reports are more difficult to investigate and respond to, so whenever possible, we encourage concerned community members to speak directly to a staff member with their concerns, knowing that we are always sensitive to the need for confidentiality of victims and reporters in any investigation.

#### **How are incidents reported and investigated?**

Reported incidents of discrimination, including harassment or retaliation, are promptly investigated by a designated official at each school. The specific steps are as follows: the staff member responsible for investigating must notify the individuals involved, (including the families of students), interview witnesses, determine if a violation of school policy has occurred, and respond appropriately with consequences as well as support for those impacted by the incident. When relevant, for example, if a hate crime has been committed, the Anti-Defamation League will be notified, as will the Wellesley Police Department.

**How long do investigations take?** We will aim to complete investigations within 10 days, but some may take longer depending on the nature of the case.

#### **Is WPS's response the same every time?**

While the incidents are investigated and documented in accordance with the established protocol, the specific facts of each substantiated incident impact the specifics of the response. However, each case will typically include the following:

- Discipline for the person responsible
- Remedial or supportive actions to assist those directly impacted
- Corrective action or education steps for the individual and potentially the larger school community to ensure that similar events do not happen in the future



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#### **What are the disciplinary actions taken when such incidents occur?**

Potential disciplinary actions for students who violate the anti-discrimination policy could include detention, suspension, or other restorative responses that require them to acknowledge their responsibility and minimize its impact. A staff member would be subject to the disciplinary procedures of their bargaining unit, which might typically include a process of formal warnings and reprimands, suspension, or more serious consequences. Non-staff adult community members may be sanctioned by limiting or ending their participation in WPS community activities or ending their ability to be on WPS premises. In most cases, specific disciplinary steps taken are protected by relevant confidentiality laws.

#### **Is the communication about an incident the same every time?**

Communication to the school or larger Wellesley community about the incident and response varies based upon the details of the incident and its impact or potential impact on those involved.

#### **How and when is the WPS community alerted to an incident?**

There are many instances in which the community is alerted to a specific incident, but there are some in which it is not. Administrators work in concert with teachers and families to determine the best approach given the circumstances of the incident. Specific consideration is given to protecting the confidentiality of individual students and promoting the optimal educational response for involved students. While not all incidents will be reported to the entire community, WPS takes any report or incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation seriously and will address it promptly and thoroughly.

#### **How does WPS collect data on bias, discrimination?**

Any such incident that is investigated and addressed by WPS will be documented. We will review such data periodically to analyze it for patterns of behavior and efficacy of our responses. District administration may periodically report these findings to the School Committee on trends and commonalities that need to be addressed.

#### **What is WPS doing to be proactive about incidents of bias, discrimination?**

WPS works with both students and staff at all levels of our organization to prevent and address all forms of bias. The lessons implemented and professional development



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offered are age appropriate and seek to create school communities that are inclusive, respectful, empathetic, and kind. Examples of some of the preventive work we are doing to build a strong foundation of anti-bias culture in our schools includes the following initiatives and programs:

- 24/7 Respect (Secondary)
- Open Circle (Elementary)
- Equity Literacy (Administrators, Faculty/Staff)
- Anti-Defamation League Peer Leader training (Exploring this opportunity in SY20-21)
- Courageous Conversations Professional Development (Exploring this opportunity for Administrators in SY20-21)
- Culturally Responsive Practices and Racial Identity Development Professional Development (Administrators, Faculty/Staff)

If you have additional questions about how the Wellesley Public Schools responds to incidents of discrimination or bias, please feel free to reach out to your school principal or any district administrator. For more detailed information on how to report an incident, please visit this [link](#).