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(202) 545-0515

2017-2018 Bridges Public Charter School Bullying Policy
Amended: 11/30/16

I. Policy Statement

Bridges Public Charter School is committed to providing a safe and nurturing school environment that values diversity and commonality. Bridges is also committed to fostering a climate where individuals are valued and their safety and rights are protected. To that end, the Bridges prohibits acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation because they compromise the learning environment and well-being of students, staff, and community. Bridges recognizes that school staff must be knowledgeable regarding bullying and victimization in order to promote an environment where opportunities for bullying do not occur.

II. Code of Conduct

Bridges PCS expects youth to behave in a way that supports Bridge's objective to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all students, staff, and community members. Students who are part of the Bridges community are expected to:

1. Treat all members of the Bridges community with respect;
2. Respect the property of Bridges, its staff, and other youth connected to Bridges and it's families;
3. Respond appropriately to instructions from Bridges staff;
4. Make safe choices when concerning self and others at Bridges.

III. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish expectations for maintaining a safe and respectful school climate or workplace where bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation are not tolerated. It also provides standards for identifying and preventing bullying behavior, as well as intervening and supporting students and staff who are exhibiting bullying behavior or who are targets/victims of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation.

IV. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Bullying – any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

1. May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an interfamily offense, place or residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
2. Can reasonably be predicted to:
 - a. Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;
 - b. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or
 - d. Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by an agency, educational institution, or grantee.

Cyberbullying – Harassing, humiliating, intimidating, and/or threatening others on the Internet or via cell phones and other electronic communication (e.g., emails, web pages, instant messaging).

Harassment – A sufficiently severe action or persistent, pervasive pattern of actions or statements, directed at an identifiable individual or group, that is intended to be, or which a reasonable person would perceive as, ridiculing or demeaning.

Intimidation – Subjection to intentional action that seriously threatens and induces a sense of fear and/or inferiority which adversely affects one's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational or work setting.

Retaliation – The act or process of threatening or otherwise penalizing 1) the victim of bullying; 2) a witness of bullying; 3) a person who reports an alleged violation of policy and/or; 4) a person with reliable information that a person has been subject to bullying.

V. Prohibition Against Bullying

Acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation and retaliation are prohibited on school grounds, on transportation offered or sponsored by the school, at school-sponsored activities and events, or outside of school grounds and activities if the act creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, cause harm to the victim, or materially and substantially disrupt the school environment. Cyberbullying includes electronic communication occurring on school property, with borrowed school property (e.g. if student borrows a laptop and/or tablet and uses it to bully outside of school), and to the extent that it interferes with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and/or privileges that Bridges provides.

VI. Prevention Procedures

Elementary classroom education teachers will implement preventative strategies to students in pre-kindergarten through grade five by teaching the Social and Emotional Curriculum (i.e. Second Step). School Social Workers, PRIDE team, and Curriculum Coordinators will develop

Bull Prevention Week activities in October of each school year that will be completed within each classroom. Staff will receive training on promoting bully prevention and receive a review of the policy at the beginning of each school year.

VII. Reporting Procedures

Staff Reporting

Responsibilities of BPCS Employees and Contractors, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

1. Intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved;
2. Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Behavior Intervention Lead (BIL) or Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours;
3. Cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the BIL;
4. Empower students and/or witnesses to report information that would be helpful in the investigation.

Student/Parent Reporting

1. When a student reports that he/she is currently the target/victim of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, the staff member will respond quickly and appropriately to intervene and report the incident to the Behavior Intervention Lead (BIL) or designee.
2. If a student wishes to discuss the incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation with a staff member, the staff member will make an effort to provide the student with a practical, safe, private, and age appropriate way of doing so.
3. Student reports will be documented using the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form. The form will be visible in all classrooms, administrative offices, and front desks locations. A student may request assistance from a staff member to complete the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form at school. It can be completed by the student independently or with the assistance of any staff member to whom the students reports to.
4. The student, parent or close adult relative should complete and submit the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form to the BIL or designee in person or by mail. The form may be submitted anonymously provided no formal response will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

VIII. Investigation Procedures

1st Person of Contact

Initial Investigator:

Steven Tilghman, Behavior Intervention Lead (BIL)
T 202-545-0515

Email: rharris@bridgespcs.org

Assistant Designee:

Shayna Sargent, School Social Worker (SSW)

T: 202-545-0515

Email: ssargent@bridgespcs.org

Assistant Designee:

Rob Harris, Counselor

T: 202-545-0515

Email: bbarnes@bridgespcs.org

2nd Person of Contact

Appeal Investigator:

Kristine Rigley, Principal

T: 202-545-0515

Email: krigley@bridgespcs.org

Assistant Designee:

Danette Dicks, Assistant Principal

T: 202-545-0515

Email: ddicks@bridgespcs.org

Notification:

Once a Bullying report has been received the Behavior Intervention Lead (BIL), or designee, will notify the parents or guardians of victims, bullies, and if appropriate, witnesses to an incident of bullying behavior, about the nature of the incident and the procedures and steps in place for responding to it. Notification will be undertaken solely to ensure that services are provided to victims and bullies and to protect victims from further or sustained victimization. Bridges will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those who report bullying incidents.

The BIL will determine if parents of guardians should be informed prior to or in rare cases, after the investigation of the incident. In most cases, parents and guardians will be notified prior to the investigation. However, the BIL should consider whether the student might want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied about his/her sexual orientation, the BIL shall not disclose such personal information to the parent/guardian of either the target or the alleged bully without the targeted student's permission. Parents will only be invited to be present during an investigation if the BIL deems in necessary or if the parent requests to be present.

The alleged bully will be informed that retaliation against the target/victim, witness, person reporting the bullying incident, or anyone else with reliable information on the bullying incident is strictly prohibited and that progressive consequences will occur if the activity continues.

VIV. Enforcement Protocol:

Timeline for Investigative Process and Consequence:

1. Staff members that witness bullying have to report the incident within 24 hours.
2. The Behavior Intervention Lead (BIL) will notify the Principal, School Social Worker, and Parents of both, or all, children involved prior to the investigation, unless deemed inappropriate by the BIL.
3. The School Social Worker (SSW) or designee will meet with the alleged victim within 24 hours of notification to assess any emotional harm that may have been caused and provide crisis support if needed.
4. The initial investigation shall begin within 48 hours of receiving the Bully, Harassment, and Intimidation Form and will include the following:
 - a. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged child and target. The alleged child and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews shall also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders.
 - b. Identifying and conducting interviews with any witnesses.
 - c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and whether the target's education was affected.
 - d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety, and with the assistance of the School Staff, assigning school staff to create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety for the target and other students who have been impacted.
5. In consultation with SSW, the BIL will render a final decision on whether it meets the legal definition of bullying, as indicated above, and the consequences if applicable within 30 days of beginning the investigation.
6. The BIL will notify the target and alleged child's parents of the final decision that was made and document the decision in writing.
7. Any party not satisfied with the end result of the investigation has 30 days from the day the consequence is handed down to appeal to the Principal or designee (See Appeals section below for further information).

Standard Consequences

All consequences must be targeted to (1) appropriately correct the bullying behavior; (2) prevent the bullying behavior or retaliation to reoccur in the future; and (3) protect the target of bullying. Further, consequences identified must be flexible in method and the severity must be based on the following: nature of the incident, developmental age of the person bullying, and any history of problem behavior from the person bullying.

The following **list of possible consequences** is presented in no particular order and is provided as a guide that by no means limits Bridges administrators from implementing other additional consequences:

- Time Out
- Loss of a privilege
- Verbal reprimand
- Parental notification

- Detention
- Reassignment of seats in class, cafeteria, or bus
- Reassignment to another mode of transportation
- Completion of letter of acknowledgement of action, with apology, to victim (after review by staff and not in a case of sexual harassment)
- Reparation to victim in the form of payment for or repair of damage to possession
- In-School suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Extended suspension
- Referral to law enforcement
- Expulsion
- Referral to Remedial Services

Referral to Remedial Services: A referral to the School Social Worker can be made by the BIL as a response to the accused bully. Remedial services to which students are referred are not designed to be punitive and will never be noted in a student's records as such. Remedial Services provided to the accused bully are designed to be correct the thinking patterns, behaviors, and skill deficiencies that led to the incident, turning a bullying incident into a teachable moment. Remedial services provided to the victim and witnesses are designed to restore a student's sense of safety and to empower them to address bullying incidents in a constructive and non-violent manner.

If the target is a student with a disability or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the BIL or SSW shall ask the student's IEP Team to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying. In cases where the target or the student engaging in bullying behavior has a disability, the BIL shall comply with all laws regarding consequences for students with disabilities.

X. Appeal:

The person accused of bullying, a target of bullying, and any other party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the Principal within 30 calendar days of the conclusion of the school's initial investigation. A secondary investigation will be completed by the Principal within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the appeal unless:

- Circumstances require additional time to complete a thorough investigation
- The additional time is not to exceed 15 days
- Reasons in which the additional time is needed is put forth in writing

The Principal shall render a final determination in accordance with the timeline and procedures set out in the anti-bullying appeal guidelines established. The Principal shall notify the party requesting the appeal of the decision and shall document that notification in the Incident Report. Those filing an appeal shall be informed of the right to seek further redress to the Office of Human Rights.

Office of Human Rights Person of Contact:

Suzanne Greenfield| Director, Citywide Bullying Prevention Program

District of Columbia Office of Human Rights

Main: 202.727.4559

Direct: 202.727.0455