BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN
Neighborhood House Charter School  
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Neighborhood House Charter School ensures that all of our students have the right to a safe and healthy school environment. In concert with our eight school values of respect, responsibility, cooperation, courage, caring, justice, effort and trustworthiness, we are committed to providing a compassionate, non-threatening, atmosphere in which each and every student can achieve and succeed. Our no-tolerance policy against bullying means that bullying of any sort is deemed unacceptable within our school. If bullying does occur, all incidents will be addressed quickly, and fairly.

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PRIORITY STATEMENT

The Neighborhood House Charter School is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free of bullying and cyber bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment or teasing. The school will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports or complaints or reports of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the targets sense of safety.

We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultations with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The Headmaster is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- 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;
- through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school
- 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, 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.

DEFINITIONS

**Aggressor** is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

**Bullying** is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- 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.

**Hostile environment** 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.

**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.

LEADERSHIP

Our Leadership team consists of the Headmaster, Heads of Lower and Middle Schools, Dean of Special Education & Student Support, Director of Student Affairs, Director of Human Resources, and the school social worker. The team at all levels plays a critical role in our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote a positive school climate. Our school leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. School leaders are
responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

School leaders, with input from families and staff will periodically assess the adequacy of current programs; review current policies and procedures; review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assess available resources including curricula, training programs and behavioral services. Based on these findings, our school will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

The Director of Student Affairs under the supervision of the Headmaster is in charge of safety and discipline at the school and meets regularly with the Headmaster, the Heads of the Middle and Lower Schools and the Student Support Team.

Planning and oversight: The Director of Student Affairs, under the direction of the Headmaster, is responsible for:

- receiving reports on bullying;
- collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to access problems and to measure improved outcomes;
- creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors;
- planning for ongoing professional development;
- planning supports that respond to needs of targets and aggressors;
- choosing and implementing the curricula that the school district will use;
- developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the plan, including an internet safety policy and designating key staff to be in charge of implementing them;
- amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct;
- leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials;
- reviewing and updating plan each year, or more frequently.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NHCS will provide ongoing professional development for all staff. Six topics will be included in professional development. These topics are:

A. **Annual staff training on the plan.** Annual training for all school staff on the plan will include an overview of the steps that the Director of Student Affairs will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and training in the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school. This training will be conducted during the mandatory Annual Staff training. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school based training during the school year in which they are hired unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable comparable program within the last two years.

B. **Ongoing professional development.** The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. The content of schoolwide
and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between an aggressor, target, and witnesses to bullying;
- research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities. The potential for bullying and/or retaliation will be considered when developing students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), with a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development includes:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention policies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

**ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

The school supports the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Action steps include the following:

- Continue the Second Step violence prevention program K-6
- Continue to implement the Responsive Classroom curriculum in the Lower School
- Continue the pre-referral process that includes a grade level team of teachers, counselors, and administration to address student behavioral and emotional problems.
- Implement the Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders: Thinking and Acting to Prevent anti-bullying programs in grades 7-8
- Add anti-bullying to assemblies for parent/guardian and students

Counseling and other services. We provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school. We link with community service agencies including Community Service Agencies
(CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, staff and service providers will develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. These staff members include classroom teachers, Director of Student Affairs, school social worker, school psychologist, administrators, and nurse.

The Neighborhood House Charter School uses behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula to address issues related to bullying.

When the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Referral to outside services.
There is an established referral process for referring students and families to appropriate and timely services. It is the responsibility of SST to make these referrals. All referrals comply with relevant laws and policies. The current local referral protocol is periodically evaluated and revised as needed.

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES
Bullying prevention curricula are informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students’ skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Second Step Curriculum
The Second Step curriculum draws on life lessons which are universal to childhood experiences and helps them to understand the social–emotional skills which are so crucial to their well-being and development. The format of the Second Step program incorporates age appropriate photographs, stories, and group discussion. The program is designed to cover three different topics which are interrelated. The topics cover EMPATHY, which will help children understand the feelings and perspective of others; IMPULSE CONTROL and problem solving so that children are better able to think before acting and resolve problems in a more thoughtful way; and ANGER MANAGEMENT to help children learn that they can have angry feelings, but can express them in ways which are not hurtful to others.
Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders
The school social worker, with input from the bullying prevention committee, is looking into two possible curriculums for use in the middle school. Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders curriculum uses a THINK FIRST model to help prevent violence from escalating, role play, and group discussions to address various roles which contribute to bullying. The curriculum addresses how we can understand the dynamics which can contribute to bullying and what students can do to intercede and prevent situations from escalating.

The second curriculum under consideration is titled “Let’s Get Real”. This curriculum incorporates the voices of young people about issues that middle and high school students struggle with in their day to day lives. This program makes the link between prejudice and bullying and emphasizes honest dialogue to encourage empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

Peacemakers
Peacemakers is an NHCS program which promotes peace, positive role models, and compassion in lower school students. Students are chosen by staff to receive the peacemaker award. The “peacemaker” is awarded a medal during a special ceremony as part of our lower school town meeting and becomes part of the Peacemaker Club. The “peacemakers” participate in a festive celebration in addition to participating in two peacemaker parties during the school year.

Town Meeting
Town Meetings are an NHCS tradition. They are weekly gatherings for the lower and middle school. The town meeting promotes community building, reinforces school values, and fosters student pride through shared art work, performances in dance and drama, and presentations about their academic work.

General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts.
The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely;
- supporting students’ interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

At the beginning of each school year, the school provides the school community, including administrators, staff, 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 Director of Student Affairs is incorporated in student and staff handbooks, and on the school’s website.

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 staff member is required to report immediately to the Director of Student Affairs and the Headmaster any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school staff members, may be made anonymously. The school has a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to:

*a voicemail box – Neighborhood House Charter School (617) 825-0703 ext.3286
*a mailing address – Neighborhood House Charter School
   21 Queen Street
   Dorchester, MA 02122
   Attention: Ms. Kimenker
*email address – jkimenker@thenhcs.org
*an Incident Reporting Form

The school includes a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians. The form is also available in the school’s main office, the school nurse’s office, and is posted on the school’s website. The Incident Reporting Form is available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

Reporting by Staff

A staff member reports immediately to the Director of Student Affairs when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Headmaster or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school’s policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The school 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 Director of Student Affairs.
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 are provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION

Safety
Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Director of Student Affairs 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. The Director of Student Affairs 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. 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 Director of Student Affairs will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

Notice to parents or guardians.
Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Director of Student Affairs will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Director of Student Affairs contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation.

Notice to Another School.
If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Director of Student Affairs 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.

Notice to Law Enforcement.
At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Director of Student Affairs has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Director of Student Affairs after consultation will notify 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 Director of Student Affairs 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 aggressor.
Investigation.
The Director of Student Affairs will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the Director of Student Affairs will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Director of Student Affairs will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Director of Student Affairs or other staff members as determined by the Director of Student Affairs, 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 Director of Student Affairs will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Director of Student Affairs will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Director of Student Affairs will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determinations.
The Director of Student Affairs will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Director of Student Affairs 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 Director of Student Affairs 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 Director of Student Affairs may choose to consult with the students’ teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target’s or 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 Director of Student Affairs 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. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Director of Student Affairs 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.

Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building
Upon the Director of Student Affairs determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school uses a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Skill-building approaches that the Director of Student Affairs may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school’s/district’s anti-bullying curricula;
- 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 a special education evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Director of Student Affairs decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Director of Student Affairs, 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 code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which will be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the Director of Student Affairs 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 Director of Student Support 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 Director of Student Affairs 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 Director of Student Affairs 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 Director of Student Affairs will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent Education and Resources
Neighborhood House Charter School will offer education programs and resources to parents and guardians that are focused on ways that families can support bullying and cyber-bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Programs and resources will be offered in collaboration with
the Parent Council and Special Education Parent Advisory Council. NHCS will provide resources for parents on the school web site, including specific information about online safety and the potential threat of cyber-bullying.

**Notification Requirements**
The school will inform parents and guardians about the curricula being used that address anti-bullying. NHCS will also make available information for parents that are provided in the various curricula already in use. Written notice will be sent home each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention Plan, along with the school’s Acceptable Use policy for the Internet. These will be provided in languages other than English, as needed. The complete Plan will be posted on the school’s web site.

The NHCS Family Handbook will include relevant sections of this Plan.