

# **Bullying Prevention and Reporting Policy**

**Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School  
Approved by Board of Trustees 11/21/22**

The Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School (CCLCS) is committed to creating a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all students and staff and strictly enforces a prohibition against bullying, including without limitation, cyberbullying, of any of its students or staff by anyone and also strictly enforces a prohibition against retaliation of any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses, or has reliable information about bullying. Site based initiatives, developed collaboratively between school administration and personnel, students, families and community members will seek to: (1) help students of all ages and abilities stay safe, act wisely, and believe in themselves; (2) help all staff and adults stay safe, act wisely; and (3) help adults respond effectively to students' reports and their own observations.

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, CCLCS will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, CCLCS will annually report bullying incident data to the Department. Similar tools to the student survey will be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs. This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic, status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. CCLCs will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

## **A. Definitions**

**Bullying** is defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as 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 target/victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target/victim or damage to the target/victim's property; (ii) places the target/victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to his/her property; (iii) creates a hostile

environment at school for the target/victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target/victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For purposes of this policy, bullying shall include cyberbullying.

**Cyberbullying** is further defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer or signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. **Cyberbullying** shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. **Cyberbullying** shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

**Aggressor or Perpetrator** is defined as a student or a member of 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, school volunteer or a vendor, contractor or other person working under a contract with the school who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

**Hostile environment** is defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as 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 defined as 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** is defined to include, 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.

**School** is defined to include the school, school grounds, travel to and from school and/or school sponsored events or functions, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school sponsored or school related activities, functions, programs whether on or off school grounds (such as social events, trips, sports events, or similar school sponsored events and functions), at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, on the way to and from school or through the use of technology or an electronic

device owned, leased or used by the school and at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, if the act creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim or witnesses, infringes on the rights of the victim or witnesses at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Target** is defined as a student or an adult against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **B. Prohibition**

Bullying of students occurring in schools is prohibited by law and will not be tolerated by CCLCS. Bullying can take many forms and can occur in any setting. Bullying can include, but is not limited to, intimidation such as name calling or threatening; social alienation such as shunning or spreading rumors; or physical aggression such as assaults on a student or attacks on a student's property. Bullying can create an atmosphere of fear for all members of the school community. It also can create unnecessary and unwarranted anxiety that affects the ability of a student to attend school, learn in school, walk in school corridors, eat in the school cafeteria, play in the school yard or recreation areas, participate in or attend special or extracurricular activities or travel to and from school. Bullying behaviors that are not addressed can lead to devastating consequences for young people, including depression, drops in school performance and attendance. The failure to address bullying behaviors also gives other students the message that it is permissible to engage in negative behaviors.

Consistent with state law, CCLCS recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including: race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, housing status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one (1) or more of these characteristics. CCLCS has safeguards in place to monitor the safety of students who may be more vulnerable to bullying because of these factors.

In accordance with M.G.L.C. 71B, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, all IEP Teams must consider whether eligible students have a disability that possibly affects social skills development and has the skills and proficiencies to respond to or avoid teasing, bullying or harassment in the school setting. When IEP Teams determine that this is the case for an eligible student, they will include specific supports in the IEP that may include, but are not limited to, accommodations, modifications, goals and/or services that will address student needs to provide all the student with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

## C. Reporting

**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 will be recorded in writing. Staff members are required to report immediately to the associate director and/or executive director any instance of bullying or retaliation that the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians or other individuals who are not staff members may be made anonymously. CCLCS will complete the bullying incident report form for all suspected reports of bullying or retaliation. The school phone number and all staff emails are published in the school handbook and easily accessed on the school website.

- 1. Reporting by Staff**--A staff member will report immediately to the associate director or executive director when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the associate director/executive director does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with CCLCS policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.
- 2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others**--CCLCS expects and encourages students, parents/guardians and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the associate director and/or the executive director. 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/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 teacher, the school psychologist, the school nurse, the associate director, or the executive director.

## D. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

- 1. Safety**---Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the director 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 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 will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The director will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person (student, parents, guardians, etc.) who has reported bullying or retaliation, a person (student, parents, guardians, etc.) who

has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a person (student, parents, guardians, etc.) who provides information during an investigation, or a person (student, parents, guardians, etc.) who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

## **2. Obligations to Notify Others**

- a. Notice to parents/guardians**---Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the director will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor of the incident and explain the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the director contacts parents/guardians prior to any investigation.
- b. Notice to Another School or District**--If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, the director or designee 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.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement**--At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the director has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the director will notify the Harwich Police Department. 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 shall contact the Harwich Police Department if there is a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressors.

## **E. Investigation**

The director or designee will promptly investigate 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 director or designee will interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. The director or designee 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 or designee, other staff members as determined by the director or designee, and in consultation with the school psychologist and/or school nurse, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, given the obligation to investigate and address the matter, the director or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The director or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

## **F. Determinations**

The director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the director or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school

activities. The director or designee will determine what remedial action is required, if any and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the director or designee may refer the students to the Student Support Committee to identify any underlying social or emotional issues that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for more social/emotional support.

The director or designee will promptly notify the parents/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 notices to parents/guardians must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding confidentiality of student records, the director or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent/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 director or designee 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.

*Per Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws:*

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: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>, 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 is also available at the Superintendent's office.

## **G. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The director, associate director and/or school psychologist will develop and keep updated on at least a biennial basis as required by law, a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention. Such plan shall, as required by law, be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians.

The Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will address training and professional development for staff and will also address sharing information with parents/guardians and students about bullying and sharing information with students about bullying, including information on prevention of bullying, reporting of bullying and the potential legal consequences of engaging in bullying. Additionally, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include specific steps that schools will take to

support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying and harassment.

## **H. Responses to Bullying**

**1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-building** -- Upon the director or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Skill-building approaches that the director or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's anti-bullying curriculum
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with the school psychologist, school nurse and health teacher.
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral support to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals
- meeting with parents/guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curriculum and social skill building activities at home
- adopting action/behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills
- using the Student Support Committee to address social/emotional/behavioral needs of students.

**2. Taking Disciplinary Action** -- If the director or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the director/designee, including the nature of the conduct and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent 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 should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline. This information is included in the Student Handbook.

If the director/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 director/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 director/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 (recess, seminar, off-campus events, transitions between classes).

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the director/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 director/designee will work with appropriate staff to implement them immediately.

## **I. Training**

Annual training in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying shall be provided for school employees and volunteers. Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all CCLCS students.

## **J. Publication and Notice**

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms. Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at CCLCS shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school. Relevant sections of the plan will be included in student and employee handbooks. The plan in its entirety shall be posted on the CCLCS website.

## **K. Resources and General Education**

**Access to Resources** -- CCLCS employs a full-time school psychologist, full-time school nurse and a full-time health teacher. CCLCS also partners with Gosnold of Cape Cod for individual counseling services for students in need. Students may also participate in social skills groups with the school psychologist, speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist and teachers.

At all IEP meetings, the team determines if the student's disability affects social skills development or if the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing. If the team determines that the student's disability does impact the above-mentioned items, the team considers what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

### **Academic and Non-Academic Activities**

- 7th and 8th grade students participate in a bullying/cyberbullying presentation from MARC (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center from Bridgewater State University).
- The policy on Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying is reviewed annually with the students at the beginning of each school year and again when students are given the student handbook.

- Bullying prevention and healthy relationship building are key components of the CCLCS Health curriculum.
- Bullying prevention and healthy relationship building are topics in several novels in the ELA curriculum and in the Social Studies curriculum.

**Bullying Prevention Curricula** - Bullying prevention curricula will be 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 cyber safety, 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.

**General Teaching Approaches** -- Some approaches that CCLCS actively promotes to maintaining a safe and supportive 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 reinforcement, even when students require discipline
- use of “think about it” sheets for students to identify, address and change their own behavior. Students then process the “think about it” sheets with an adult. Parents are notified when students complete a “think about it” sheet.
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students in and out of the classroom through cross-graded seminars and school clubs, such as Roots and Shoots, Student Government, Bird and Nature Club, Art Spark, etc.
- instruction and supervision of internet use and annual review and adherence to the CCLCS Responsible Use Policy
- establishing an environment for creating a culture of kindness by modeling positive, empathetic behavior in our everyday lives
- implementation of the EPIC model at CCLCS--CCLCS students are Engaged, show Personal Responsibility, Integrity, and are Considerate. Use of this model in grading students in all classes, including seminars.

- use of the Instructional Support Intervention Team (ISIT) process to address specific academic concerns for students
- student Support Committee that meets bi-monthly to address and monitor students with social/emotional learning needs
- partnership with Gosnold Counseling Center to provide individual counseling to students at CCLCS