

## **BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY**

**Prohibition of bullying and cyberbullying** - Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, on a vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school district or 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 a school district or school, if the bullying 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.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited.

**Definition of bullying and cyberbullying** - Bullying is the repeated use 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 of damage to his 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. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. Targets and aggressors can be students or adults, including faculty and staff. The definition of faculty and staff includes but is not limited to teachers, administrators, the school nurse, counselors, school lunch staff, maintenance staff, bus drivers, coaches, advisors, tutors, and paraprofessionals.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including: any transfer of 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. Cyber-bullying also includes the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates a hostile environment. Cyber-bullying also includes 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 a hostile environment.

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.

**Vulnerable students** - SSCPS 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, 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 or more of these characteristics. SSCPS has taken steps to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. These supports include, but are not limited to, adoption of bullying prevention curricula, the implementation of social-emotional learning, social skills training, and counseling services. Nothing in this plan prevents the school from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school policies.

**Procedures to report bullying or retaliation** - Anyone can report an instance of bullying. To report an incident of bullying or retaliation the reporter must fill out a Report of Alleged Bullying Form and give it to the Principal or Assistant Principal. The form can be found in the Student and Family Handbook, on the school website, and is available at the front desk in both buildings. The form may also be completed digitally by following [this link](#). The reporter's name may be left off of the form to allow for anonymous reporting. No disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

**Reporting by staff** - All faculty, staff, independent contractors or school volunteers who become aware or have a reasonable belief that bullying or retaliation has occurred shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation orally or in writing, to the principal/designee(s). The requirement to report to the principal or designee

does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

**Procedures for responding to and investigating bullying** - Following receipt of a Report of Alleged Bullying Form the Principal or Assistant Principal will promptly conduct an investigation and complete a Bullying Investigation and Determination Form.

The Principal or designee investigates, promptly, all reports of alleged 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. The investigation may include an interview with the student, parent/guardian, staff members or community member who filed the complaint, the student alleged to be a victim of bullying or retaliation, the student(s) or staff member(s) alleged to have committed the bullying or retaliation, witnesses to any alleged incidents or others as necessary. The Principal or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful, and that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the Principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate.

To the extent practicable, and given his/her/their obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or designee will also take steps to implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation, a student who has reported alleged bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed alleged bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of alleged bullying or retaliation of or by a student. Any student who reports suspicion of bullying from a member of the school staff is extended protections during and after the investigation. This may include but is not limited to a safety plan, access to school counseling, schedule adjustments, and access to a safe space for support throughout the school day as needed. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation using the Bullying Investigation and Determination Form. Procedures for investigating reports of alleged bullying or retaliation by school staff are consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations of other alleged misconduct by staff.

The Principal or designee makes a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee 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 Principal or designee will:

- A. Determine what remedial action is required, if any, and
- B. Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal or designee may choose to consult with the appropriate personnel, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, if the aggressor is a student, 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. In addition, it is determined if a referral needs to be made to the Civil Rights Officer. The Principal or designee promptly notifies the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor, if the aggressor is a student, about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further such acts and restore the student's sense of safety. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student and personnel records, the Principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a No Contact Contract or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations

**Range of student disciplinary actions** - In cases where bullying is found to have occurred, the following disciplinary actions may be taken following a hearing:

<b>Consequences K-8:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> offense: suspension of one (1) to ten (10) days
	2 <sup>nd</sup> offense: suspension of one (1) to ten (10) days

3<sup>rd</sup> offense: suspension of one (1) to ten (10) days

**Consequences 9-12:**  
1<sup>st</sup> offense: suspension of (1) to (10) days  
2<sup>nd</sup> offense: suspension of (3) to (10) days  
3<sup>rd</sup> offense: suspension of (5) to (10) days

Additional disciplinary measures may include but not be limited to those listed below:

- Separation of students, including class change
- Change in physical locations such as lockers and assigned seats
- Increased supervision
- Loss of privileges, such as unsupervised trips off of the Level and free seating
- Implementation of a No Contact Contract
- Temporary or permanent removal from a bus route

\* *In the case of an aggressor employed by SSCPS, disciplinary procedures follow the protocols outlined in the personnel policy.*

#### **Disciplinary action for knowingly making false accusations:**

Knowingly making a false accusation of bullying will be treated as a Group C offense as stated in the SSCPS Code of Conduct and may result in the following disciplinary action following a hearing:

#### **Consequences K - 8**

- First Offense: First Suspension – from one (1) to ten days
- Second Offense: Second Suspension – from one (1) to ten days
- Third Offense: Third Suspension – from one (1) to ten days
- Fourth Offense: Fourth Suspension – from one (1) to ten days

#### **Consequences 9 -12**

- First Offense: First Suspension – from one (1) to ten days
- Second Offense: Second Suspension – from two (2) to ten days
- Third Offense: Third Suspension – from three (3) to ten days
- Fourth Offense: Fourth Suspension – from four (4) to ten days

**Procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a target and assessing that target's needs for protection** The physical and emotional safety of the target of bullying is the primary concern of SSCPS. To ensure the target's safety, the school Administration of SSCPS may implement any or all of the following actions:

- When there has been a report of bullying, the school will take immediate action to monitor the situation to prevent a recurrence.
- Counseling from the school's psychologist or adjustment counselor will be recommended to the target (with the parent/guardian's consent). Regardless of the finding of the investigation, continued counseling will be offered.
- All appropriate staff will be informed of the nature of the report including the identity of target(s) and aggressor(s).
- Additional staff may be placed as needed particularly during less structured times.
- The physical locations of desks, lockers, seating, and/or dismissal will be changed whenever possible to minimize contact between target and aggressor.
- If necessary a period of separation between target and aggressor will be instituted. The length of this time period will depend on the emotional needs of the target.
- Parents will be encouraged to inform afterschool programs, town sports, bus drivers, etc., where the target and aggressor may come in contact outside of school.
- A concrete safety plan will be developed for the target.

**Procedures for parent/guardian notification** - If the Principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee will promptly contact:

- the target's parents/guardians
- the aggressor's parents/guardians
- law enforcement in cases where criminal charges may be pursued against an aggressor.

The parts/guardians of the target shall be notified of action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

**Counseling referrals** - An SSCPS Referral Form for Counseling Services will be completed and attached to the Bullying Investigation and Determination Form and submitted to the adjustment counselor. The adjustment counselor, or school psychologist, will meet individually with the target and individually with the aggressor to determine the need for counseling services at school and/or counseling services outside of school. The adjustment counselor, or school psychologist, will seek written permission from a parent or guardian in order to provide further counseling services. Referrals for outside counseling services for the student and/or family will be made by the adjustment counselor or school psychologist, as needed.

**Curricular Support** - SSCPS uses the PATHS/Emozi curriculum in grades K-8 to provide students with social-emotional competency training. In grades 9-12 a comprehensive advisory system addresses the social and emotional needs of students.

South Shore Charter Public School is committed to engaging and collaborating with students' families and the to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. Each year, parents and guardians are informed of the bullying prevention efforts of their student's school, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyberbullying, the potential consequences that can occur if a student or member of the school staff engaged in bullying and the process for reporting complaints of bullying or retaliation. In addition, SSCPS offers education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and social competency curricula so that they can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school's efforts.

**Professional Development** - All SSCPS faculty and staff receive training in this policy at the start of the school year. School lunch personnel, bus drivers, custodians, coaches, tutors, and paraprofessionals are included in this training. Additionally, SSCPS provides training for teachers to help them address bullying in school. Teachers in grades K-8 are trained in the implementation of PATHS/Emozi while 9-12 teachers work collaboratively to implement and improve the advisory curriculum.

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Review** - The Plan is reviewed on an annual basis by a committee of faculty members, parents/guardians, and students.

**Data Collection** - In addition to the collection of bullying data which is reported annually, at least once every four years the School will administer a Massachusetts DESE student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools.

**Problem Resolution System** - Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the school 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 are also available at the front desks of each building.

Approved by BOT July 12, 2023