

POLICIES/PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING/RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, SICS has established policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff members, students, parents and others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals who are not school members, may be made anonymously. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the Director/designee.

The school staff member is required to report immediately to the Director/designee any instance of bullying or retaliation he/she becomes aware of or witnesses. The requirement to report to the Director/designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respect to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

The School will ensure that a variety of school-based reporting resources are available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form that will be available in the Main Offices, the nurses' offices, the school counselors' offices, and on the school's website www.sics-sabis.net. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents/guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, SICS will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents/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/designee, will be included in the Student/Parent and Staff handbooks.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Director/designee will take steps to access 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, 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. SICS expects anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Director/designee immediately. The Director/designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Director/designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting 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. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the

Director/designee will promptly notify the parents/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/designee contacts parents/guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00. See student handbook for more specific information regarding student safety.

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school; the Director/Principal first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Director/Principal of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Director/designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Civil Rights Administrator will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with 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/designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

The Director/designee will investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so; will consider all available information known. During the investigation, the Director/designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. Whoever is conducting the investigation will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witness that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. The Director/designee will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with the school's policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Director/designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation. After the investigation, if bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Director/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 Director/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 notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Director/designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent/guardian unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

In response to bullying, the SICS will utilize an array of skill-building strategies and/or individualized interventions to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation. Upon the Director/designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred; the School will use a range of responses that

balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, §370(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Director/designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school'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 non-academic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals
- meeting with parents/guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills
- making a referral for evaluation

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. If it is determined that disciplinary action is appropriate, it will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's Student/Parent Handbook. (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.)

The Director/designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to restore the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. Within a reasonable period of time, the Director/designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the bullying and whether additional supportive measures are needed.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The School is developing strategies to engage and collaborate with families in order to increase the awareness of bullying and cyber-bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. Parents/guardians will be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents/guardians. The School will offer educational programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the components of the anti-bullying curricula. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the Parent Connection (PC), Booster Club and Special Education Parent Advisory Council.

Each year the School will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about cyber-bullying, online safety and the School's Internet Safety Policy. All notices made available to parents/guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents/guardians. The School will post the Plan and related information on its website.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, §370(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (i) 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; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school; and
- (ii) 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 district or 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 someone who reports bullying provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or who has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, §370, nothing in this Plan requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.