

Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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Preface

Parker prides itself on being a community where all students are known well by adults and where a tone of decency and respect is the foundation of our daily interactions. Parker is committed to teaching all students the skills they need to respond appropriately when they see a need to stand up for themselves or others, and we support students with appropriate and effective educational and disciplinary responses.

The Parker School strictly prohibits the bullying and harassment of students. Individuals found to have engaged in bullying, harassment or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary consequences including, but not limited to long-term suspension from school and, in the case of a school staff member found to have engaged in bullying, harassment or retaliation, termination of employment.

I. LEADERSHIP

Public involvement in developing the plan

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, many different constituencies were involved in the development of this Plan. Parker's principal, dean of students, wellness faculty, school nurse, school counselor, the director of special education, the school leadership team and the Board of Trustees contributed to Plan development. Additional input was obtained from the parent community and the public through public forums and a public comment period relative to this Plan.

Assessing needs and resources

Parker has taken the following steps to assess current needs:

- The school's leadership team has reviewed data from annual family and student surveys to assess the safety of the school's climate
- The Wellness team has reviewed the current curriculum
- The principal and the student government has reviewed current policies in the student handbook
- The principal, school counselor, and leadership team has reviewed current procedures for response and intervention
- The principal, dean of students, and school counselor will regularly review incident report data to determine patterns or trends that require response and intervention
- The principal will reaffirm the Parker School's partnership with the Massachusetts State Police on Devens

Planning and oversight

The principal is responsible for:

- Receiving reports of possible bullying
- Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports
- Leading the development or revision of current policies and procedures
- Designating key staff to be responsible for implementation of the plan
- Amending or updating the student handbook

The school's leadership team is responsible for:

- Updating the annual survey to gather relevant data for analysis
- Reviewing the plan annually

The wellness team and school counselor are responsible for:

- Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by law

- Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school will use

The principal, the dean of students, and school counselor are responsible for:

- Planning supports that will respond to the needs of targets and aggressors, in partnership with faculty and families

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Parker will provide annual staff development to the entire staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to support them in providing a safe environment for student learning.

- A. Vulnerable Students: The Parker School 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. The following training and professional development incorporates the specific steps the Parker School will take to support these vulnerable students and provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies they need to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.
- B. Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Several school staff members have been trained by the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) to serve as presenters in these training activities. The contents of annual staff training shall meet the requirements set forth in M.G.L. c.71, §370. 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 and comparable program within the last two years.
- C. 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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - (iv) 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;
 - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
 - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include 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 include:

- 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 strategies;
- 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.

D. Written notice to staff. The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Identifying resources

Parker provides all students with access to a school counselor, a school psychologist, and a school nurse, all of whom maintain extensive contacts with resources in the region. This team, along with the school principal, annually assesses the changing needs of the student body.

Counseling and other services

A full range of counseling and other services are provided to students at Parker. See Appendix B for a list of all services provided through the counseling office.

Students with disabilities

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or be 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

The counseling office and the school nurse maintain an extensive list of regional agencies for referrals. The protocol for determining the need for a referral begins with a needs assessment/clinical interview with the school counselor, and when a referral may be needed, a consultation with the family follows. Every effort is made to individualize the whole process, taking into consideration town of residence, insurance needs, etc.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Specific bullying prevention approaches

The Wellness curriculum at Parker includes a unit each year dedicated to teaching students how to interact with each other in positive and healthy ways. Each year, students in grades 7-10 receive instruction in one of two formal units of study: Violence Prevention and Emotional Health (See Appendix C for the description of these two curriculum units). Review of these units shows that Parker should incorporate instruction around cyberbullying, but that other aspects of a solid program are already in place, including instruction in:

- Using role plays to develop communication and decision making skills
- Empowering students to take action on behalf of themselves and others, including seeking adult assistance
- Enhancing students' skills for respectful and effective communication
- Enhancing students' respect for diversity and difference;
- Emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;
- Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference;
- Ensuring students are knowledgeable of a safe reporting system of suspected incidents of bullying and cyberbullying; and
- Understanding of consequences when bullying has been identified

Students in grades 11 and 12 participate in a speaker series that includes information about health and wellness. Bullying prevention, cyberbullying and internet safety curricula for the Parker School will be provided to all students. Specific programming has been determined by the available materials and resources, along with what school and community data indicate is needed.

General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts

The advisory program at Parker reinforces the expectations taught in Wellness, and promotes deep relationships between adults and students that enable adults to know students well and intervene quickly when needed. Advisories deliberately teach students how to build community and get along with others. General practices in advisories and classrooms at Parker include:

- Emphasizing the development of positive and respectful relationships with students
- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, regardless of difference
- Creating clear community norms and expectations
- Engaging students in dialogue and problem solving when norms are violated
- Supporting and promoting healthy risk-taking
- Reflecting on the state of the classroom/advisory/school community
- Committing to the PACT (Parker Alliance for Community Tolerance, a yearly commitment to community tolerance discussed and signed in each advisory)
- Referring conflicts to the Justice Committee (JC) for conversation and mediation before a pattern develops
- Involving families in regular conversations about their children's social and emotional development and well-being
- Building relationships among students with the peer mentor program, interdivisional activities, and school-wide events
- Supporting the work of the student GSA (Gay-straight alliance)

- Incorporating themes throughout the academic program that address social justice and appreciation for diversity
- Focusing on education and conversation in disciplinary situations, not just punishment, particularly in their areas of strength.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Reporting bullying or retaliation

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by students, staff, parents or guardians, or others who see a concern, and may be done verbally, via email, or in writing. Oral reports made to a staff member are recorded by that staff member on an incident report. Staff members are required to report immediately any instance of bullying of which they become aware. Reports from non-staff members may be made anonymously although an aggressor may not be disciplined based solely upon an anonymous report. Incident reporting forms are available in the school office and on the school's website (See Appendix A for a Parker Incident Report form).

The Incident Report form is commonly used throughout the Parker community by students and faculty for a variety of violations of community norms. All incident reports are reviewed by the principal or designee to determine the appropriate response and to document the incident. This documentation also allows for effective tracking of patterns or recurrences. A description of this process is provided in the student and parent handbooks, and a copy of the form will be made available online and in the handbooks.

Reporting by staff

Parker staff members are required to report any instances of suspected bullying or retaliation, and are also expected to intervene appropriately in the moment. Even if the staff member believes the situation was appropriately addressed, the documentation is critical to determining whether there is a larger pattern or problem to address.

Reporting by students

Students may make a report either for themselves or on behalf of others. They may request assistance from a staff member to write a report, or they may report verbally to an adult who writes on their behalf. Reports may be made anonymously, but no formal disciplinary action can be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint. Any reports to the school will require Parker to conduct an investigation of the incident, and will be documented.

Reporting by parents, guardians, or others

Parker believes members of our community who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying will want to take action to keep our students safe. Reports can be made verbally or in writing to any staff member whom the witness feels comfortable contacting, and can be anonymous, although no disciplinary action can be taken on the basis of an anonymous complaint. Any reports to the school will require Parker to conduct an investigation of the incident, and will be documented. Reporters need to understand that while we will follow up with any report, strict confidentiality laws prevent Parker from revealing information about students to adults other than their parents.

Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

Safety

The first priority in responding to an incident will be to restore a sense of safety and protect the alleged target from any further incidents while the circumstances are investigated. Steps taken may be as simple as notifying teachers and advisors to be on increased alert or may include specific actions such as altering student schedules, where warranted. Parker firmly believes that students who speak up to protect themselves or others deserve the support of the school community, and the principal and staff will implement appropriate strategies to protect students who witness and/or report bullying or retaliation.

Obligations to notify others

- *Notice to parents or guardians*

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of each student involved, and will share with them Parker's procedures for responding. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

- *Notice to other schools*

If the reported incident involves students from other schools, public or private, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) 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.

- *Notice to law enforcement*

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the state police on Devens. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and Parker's established agreements with the state police. 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 principal or designee 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 principal or designee will promptly investigate reported incidents. This will include conversations with students, staff, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. During these conversations, all will be reminded that any further incidents or any act of retaliation may result in disciplinary action. To the greatest extent possible, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigation. A written record of the investigation shall be kept. The school may seek legal counsel, as needed.

Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon the preponderance of evidence obtained through the investigation. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps aimed at preventing recurrence while ensuring that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. Actions will include both educational/therapeutic steps aimed at preventing future occurrences and disciplinary action as appropriate. In most cases, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s), advisor, the

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 principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and what action is being taken. All notices 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 principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about disciplinary action taken against an aggressor unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The bullying determination notice to the parents or guardians of the target shall include information about the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ("DESE") problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. The parents or guardians of the target shall be provided with the following contact information: Program Resolution System Office, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906, Telephone: 781-338-3700; TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370.

The principal or designee will collaborate with special educators, guidance counselors, counselors and/or school adjustment counselors to provide counseling or appropriate referrals for services for targets, aggressors, and families.

If, at any time during the bullying investigation and determination process, the principal or designee determines that potential discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected class may have occurred, the principal shall follow the school's policies and procedures for applicable discrimination or harassment investigations.

Responses to bullying

Parker is a deliberately small school where students are known well by many adults and where education is personalized to the maximum feasible extent. The responses taken in any situation where it is determined that bullying has occurred will necessarily be highly tailored to the particular needs of the student(s) involved.

For the targeted student(s), the highest priority will be promoting a sense of safety and personal strength and resilience. Depending on the circumstances, the student may have schedule adjustment or may receive coaching and practice in how to face future challenges.

For the aggressor(s), the response will seek a balance between discipline and education/intervention, as required in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(d)(v). Disciplinary responses will vary with the severity of the situation and the circumstances surrounding the incident. Interventions may include required counseling sessions, referrals for evaluation, behavior contracts, or classes to teach social skills as well as possible disciplinary action including, but not limited to, long-term suspension from school and, if the aggressor is a school staff member, termination of employment.

Once a reasonable amount of time has passed, the principal or designee will follow up with the students.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent education and resources

Every family at Parker has regular communication with their student's advisor as a first point of contact, and the school is in the habit of regular communication about both the academic and the social/emotional development of the student. Additionally, the school offers regular parent forums to provide information, resources, and support to parents as they navigate the challenge of adolescence. Education, resources, and outreach regarding bullying will be directed through these existing channels. Finally, Parker conducts an extensive survey of families each year, providing them with an opportunity to voice concerns and provide feedback.

Notification requirements

Each year Parker will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used through the annual publication of the wellness curriculum. The parent handbook will provide written notice each year about the student-related sections of the plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. Also included will be information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and posted on the school's website.

VII. 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; or 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 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 a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided by the DESE and M.G.L. c. 71, § 370:

Aggressor: A student or school staff member who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying: 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 that:

- (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to the target's property;
- (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Cyberbullying: 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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment: 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: 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.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of Parker School, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or disability. 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 or district policies. In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H1/2, 37H3/4, or other applicable laws, or school policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the plan covers the behavior.

APPENDIX A: Incident Report Form

FRANCIS W. PARKER CHARTER ESSENTIAL SCHOOL

& THEODORE R. SIZER TEACHERS CENTER

49 ANTIETAM STREET, DEVENS, MA 01434-2129

TELEPHONE (978) 772-3293 FAX (978) 772-3295 PARKERSCHOOL@PARKER.ORG

STUDENT BEHAVIOR INCIDENT REPORT

(submit completed form to Principal's office)

DATE: _____

NAME OF PERSON(S) REPORTING INCIDENT: _____

NAMES OF PERSON(S) INVOLVED IN INCIDENT: _____

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:

COURSE OF ACTION SUGGESTED BY PERSON REPORTING INCIDENT:

OUTCOMES/CONSEQUENCES:

COPIES OF THIS INCIDENT REPORT, REDACTED IF NECESSARY FOR CONFIDENTIALITY,
SENT TO:

APPENDIX B: Counseling Services Provided at Parker

General Counseling:

- Individual student counseling
- Group student counseling
- Scheduled student lunch groups
- Student mediations
- Guidance for teachers with professional practice concerns

Crisis Intervention:

- Referrals
- Communication with parents
- Liaison with outside agencies
- Communication with individual private therapists, psychiatrists, and mental health service providers

Education:

- Interface with wellness instructors
- Assist/teach wellness curriculum
- Implement Parker PACT annually
- Parent consultation meetings

Community Outreach:

- Parent forums
- Publicize local speakers and community resources
- Friday Announcements (Parker's weekly newsletter)

Gay/Straight Alliance:

- Facilitate twice weekly meetings and intermittent events
- Provide education and resources to members and allies

Additional services:

- Communicate concerns with teachers and staff members
- Case management
- Guest speakers and community resources
- Outside agencies
- Attend/facilitate IEP and 504 meetings

APPENDIX C: Wellness Curriculum Units

Unit: Violence Prevention

Skill areas addressed: Interpersonal Communication and Internal/External Influences

Objectives:

The foundation of the violence prevention unit involves teaching students skills and methods to prevent and avoid violence, while recognizing the contributions that individuals can make to violence prevention through good choices, acknowledging the rights of others and living peacefully. Division I curriculum will focus on friendships, cliques, bullying in all forms, harassment, and cyber bullying. Division II curriculum focuses on how external influences shape how men/boys and women/girls act, and how the popular culture supports behavior that may lead to violence. Students will learn to identify the social and emotional consequences of harassment, and give clear examples of strategies to reduce violence, resolve conflicts, communicate effectively, and demonstrate ways to reduce threatening situations.

Assessment for Division I: Students will complete online journal assignments each day of class, and the unit will conclude with a reflective writing assignment focused on personal experiences with bullying, harassment, peace-making,

Assessment for Division II: Students will design an artistic expression piece that will develop a message that reflects the external influences that may shape what boys/men and girls/women are expected to act like in order to gain status from their peers, and how the popular culture supports behavior that may lead to violence. They will also develop strategies to reduce violence and demonstrate ways to reduce threatening situations.

Reference texts:

"Owning Up" curriculum, by *Empower*

"Tough Guise" and "Killing Her Softly 4" and "The Codes of Gender" videos from the Media Education Foundation

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) Conflict Resolution Curriculum

Unit: Emotional Health

Skill areas addressed: Self-Management and Interpersonal Communication

Objectives: Students will participate in a unit-long "Behavior Change Project" working to identify behaviors that support their health, and identifying one behavior that they want to change to improve their emotional health. (examples include: exercising 1 hr/day, spending less time playing video games or watching television, eating more fruits/vegetables, meditating, etc...) They will practice strategy development, reflect on the change process, and connect this back to overall emotional health. We will also examine stress and its

connection to exercise. Students will have the opportunity to practice stress-reduction techniques (guided meditation, drawing, listening to music, exercise) in class. The unit includes a focus on signs of suicide, with a nationally recognized curriculum (SOS) that encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell).

Reference texts: *SPARK*, by John Ratey, *Quests and Quandaries*

Assessment for Division I and II: A three-part behavior change project, as described above, that focuses on choosing a behavior to change in order to improve emotional health. Much of the work will be done in-class, with some opportunities for students to practice observing their behaviors, developing strategies for change, and helping their classmate modify strategies.