



BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

On May 3, 2010 Governor Patrick signed an *Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*. This new law prohibits bullying and retaliation in all public and private schools, and requires schools and school districts to take certain steps to address bullying incidents. Parts of the law (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O) that are important for students and parents or guardians to know are described below. These requirements will be included in the Boston Renaissance Charter Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("the Plan"), which was finalized in December 2010. The Plan includes the requirements of the new law, and also information about the policies and procedures that the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School (BRCPS) will follow to prevent bullying and retaliation, or to respond to it when it occurs. In developing the Plan, BRCPS consulted with school and local community members, including parents and guardians. The Boston Renaissance Charter Public School has a no tolerance policy against bullying. Bullying of any sort is deemed unacceptable within our school. If bullying does occur, all incidents will be addressed quickly, and fairly.

The Boston Renaissance Charter Public School is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. 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.

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: (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 to himself/herself or of damage to his/her 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. Bullying includes cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or any 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 the student's education.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is directed.

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.

Prohibition Against Bullying

Bullying is prohibited:

- on school grounds,
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
- at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, whether it takes place 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 that is owned, leased or used by a school district or school (for example, on a school computer or over the Internet using a school computer),
- at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic devices, 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 is prohibited.

Reporting Bullying

BRCPS expects students, parents, or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation to report it to the students' Homebase Teacher, Climate & Culture Specialist, Director or other staff member. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of a report. A Climate & Culture Specialist will fully investigate all reported incident(s) of bullying before rendering disciplinary action, consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical safe and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, Director or school designee. When the School Director or his/her designee receives a report, he or she shall promptly conduct an investigation. If the School Director or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he or she shall (i) notify the parents or guardians of the target, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation; (ii) notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor; (iii) take appropriate disciplinary action; and (iv) notify the local law enforcement agency if the school Director or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

BRCPS Procedure

The Bullying Prevention policy will prohibit bullying based on sexual orientation, along with other characteristics, such as race, religion, sex, gender, and physical appearance. Incidents of bullying may, in addition to being a violation of this policy, constitute a violation of civil rights laws including but not limited to Title II, Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504. Please see the anti-discrimination/harassment policies of the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School for further information.

Student(s) identified for bullying will receive consequences and incident reports of bullying will be documented in detail in iPass.

- 1st Offense of confirmed bullying will result in Detention for students in third through sixth grade. K1 through second grade students will receive a suspension warning
- 2nd Offense of confirmed bullying will result in 3 day Suspension followed by a meeting with parent upon return to school
- 3rd Offense of confirmed bullying will result in 5 day Suspension

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

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. BRCPS creates a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provides all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Climate and Culture Specialist 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 Climate and Culture Specialist 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 Climate and Culture Specialist will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The Climate and Culture Specialist 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. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Climate and Culture Specialist 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 Climate and Culture Specialist will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Professional Development for School and District Staff

A. BRCPS conducts annual staff training on the Bullying and Intervention Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the Director or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation. 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.

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. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school-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 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 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.

C. Written notice to staff and school community. The Boston Renaissance Charter Public School has posted the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on our website: www.brcps.org under Family Resources.

Learning Opportunities for Students

The Boston Renaissance Charter School adopted the Leader in Me Program in 2015. The Leader in Me is aligned with best-in-class content and concepts practiced by global education thought leaders. It provides a logical, sequential and balanced process to help schools proactively design the culture that reflects their vision of the ideal school.

Content from The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is a key component of the overall The Leader in Me process. The 7 Habits is a synthesis of universal, timeless principles of personal and interpersonal effectiveness, such as responsibility, vision, integrity, teamwork, collaboration and renewal, which are secular in nature and common to all people and cultures.

The Leader in Me is also aligned to many national and state academic standards. The process teaches students the skills needed for academic success in any setting. These skills include critical thinking, goal setting, listening and speaking, self-directed learning, presentation-making and the ability to work in groups.

*This plan is included annually in the Family Handbook and on the school website.