

APPENDIX B

Springfield International Charter School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

SICS is committed to providing all of our students equal educational opportunities in a safe and respectfully learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. SICS expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

Our 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. SICS will take specific steps 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, intimidation, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school building, on school grounds, or in school related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore everyone's sense of safety.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to address bullying and cyber-bullying. SICS is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The Schools' Director and Administrative staff are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan.

SICS recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. SICS works to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. The School's Plan affords all students the same protection, regardless of their status under the law.

This commitment is essential to the School's vision of educational excellence, and is further strengthened by Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) c. 71, §370, Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, prohibiting all forms of bullying and retaliation in all Massachusetts public and private schools. In accordance with this legislation, SICS has developed the following Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Definitions

In developing the Plan and related policies and procedures, SICS will utilize the following definitions.

1. **Aggressor:** is a student or staff member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach and advisor who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation towards a student.
2. **Bullying:** as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is 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 victim that:

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

3. **Cyber-bullying:** Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but not be limited to, 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 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 (1) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying 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 person, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (1) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.
4. **Hostile Environment:** as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, 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 a student's education.
5. **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.
6. **School Staff:** includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers/monitors, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.
7. **Target:** is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.
8. **School grounds:** School grounds are the property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school, or collaborative school for a school-sponsored activity, function program, instruction or training.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, each school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school and collaborative school shall develop, adhere to and update a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. The plan shall apply to students and members of the school staff, including but not limited to educators, administrators, school nurses.

School personnel at all levels of the SICS will play a critical role in implementing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. All school personnel have a role in teaching students, directly and by example, to

be civil to one another and promote an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. The Administrative team is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. The Administration will involve representatives from the greater school and local community in further developing, implementing, and evaluating the Plan.

Planning and Oversight will be the responsibility of the Director/designee and will include:

- Receiving all reports on bullying.
- Collecting and analyzing school data on the prevalence of bullying and developing measures to assess problems and to measure improved outcomes.
- Improve the school's process for recording and tracking incident reports, for collaborating with law enforcement when needed, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors.
- Planning and implementing supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors.
- Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school will use.
- The Director, with the assistance of the Administrative Team, will be responsible for developing new policies, or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of the implementation.
- The Administration will be responsible for amending the Student/Parent and Staff Handbooks and developing parent information materials.
- Reviewing and updating the Plan each year or more frequently if needed.

At least once every four years, SICS will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in the school. Additionally, the school will annually report bullying incident data to the Department.

Training and Professional Development

The Plan must reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c.71, §370 to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurse, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. The law lists the following six topics that must be included in professional development:

1. Developmentally (or age) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying.
2. Developmentally (or age) appropriate strategies form immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents.
3. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying.
4. 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.
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying.
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Existing and annual training for all staff includes, but is not limited to the following: Students Records and Confidentiality, FERPA-20 U.S.C. 1232G, IDEA-20 U.S.C. 1400, Civility Policy, Anti-Hazing Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy and the Physical Restraint Policy. Additional training and professional development will be provided based on needs and concerns identified by the Administration.

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 (IEP). This will include a focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional topics may be identified by the school leadership as they consider the unique needs of the school community.

The school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan and sections of the Plan related to staff duties will be included in the Employee Handbook. The staff shall be trained annually on the Plan.

Access to Resources and Services

A key aspect of promoting positive school climate is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The Plan describes strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the school's capacity to prevent and respond effectively to bullying, services should reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors and their immediate family members.

Bullying prevention and intervention is a collective effort and priority for all staff. Students who may be either targets or bystanders are taught to seek help from a trusted adult, therefore, training for all personnel in the identification and response to bullying is the first step in ensuring that available resources are made available to targets, aggressors, witnesses and others impacted by bullying behaviors. Key staff includes Principals, school nurses, guidance and adjustment counselors, Special Education staff, paraprofessionals, support staff, teachers and administrators.

School Counselors are trained to assist in the delivery of universal prevention and social competency programs such as Second Step, Aggressors and Victims, Bystanders, and behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups and individually focused curricula. The School Psychologist and School Adjustment Counselors are trained in more intensive interventions. The Administration has and will develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation. They will provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. When appropriate, interventions may include collaboration with other community agencies and service providers in support of students with more targeted needs.

For students with disabilities, as required by M.G.L. c. 718, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of the student's 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.

When necessary, the school will refer students to outside mental health services. Linkage protocols have been developed with the Behavioral Health Network/Child Guidance Clinic, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Children and Families to improve access to community-

based services when appropriate. There is an understanding between the School, Local Law Enforcement and the Hampden-County District Attorney's Office that establishes protocols for cooperation and sharing of information.

Appropriate family members of targets and aggressors will be encouraged to meet with one of the schools' Counselors or Administrative Staff, who have been trained to assist in the delivery of universal prevention and social competency programs. Family members may also be referred to outside/community based agencies based on their assessed needs.

Academic and Non-Academic Activities

The law requires that SICS provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's curricula. Curricula will be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development. For specific bullying prevention approaches the Director/designee will research curricula that 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 cyber-bullying, 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. Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. General teaching methods that will be used at SICS to support the bullying prevention efforts are as follows:

- 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 responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline.
- Using positive behavioral supports.
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students.
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors.
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development.
- Using the Internet safely.
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

The Director/designee will review the Plan yearly or as needed with all students in age appropriate settings.

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. While reports may be made anonymously, no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

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 **Bullying Report Form** that will be available in the Main Offices, the nurses' offices, the school counselors' offices, and on the school's website www.sics.org. The Bullying Report 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 and support 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/Designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Director/Designee 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 may, 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 witnesses 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 has implemented 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 (SEPAC).

Each year the School will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used, the dynamics of bullying, and how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the Plan. 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 c. 71, §370, nothing in this Plan requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the school's policies, 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 race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or 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. Nothing in the Plan prevents SICS 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 SICS' policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§3711 or 37H1/2, other applicable laws, or the Schools' policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior

Massachusetts Statutes: Student Behavior and Discipline

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/discipline-compendium/Massachusetts%20School%20Discipline%20Lawe/020and%20Regulations.pdf>

Problem Resolution System

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of SICS may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That

information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the main office.

For complaints involving federal civil rights laws, parents/guardians may contact:

The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights
5 Post Office Square 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02109-3921
(617) 289-0111