

# HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL



## Family Handbook and Directory 2015-2016

We hope that the information in this book will help make your year at Hilltown informed and enjoyable. Please come in at any time to clarify or to ask questions. Translations of this or any other school document are available for families who need it.

*(Si usted desea una copia de este manual - o de cualquier otro documento de la escuela - en español, por favor comuníquese con Amy Aaron, Coordinadora Administrativa.)*

**The text of this handbook and related material is also available on our website:**  
**[www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org)**

In 1993, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an education reform act that included provisions calling for the development of charter schools. Five local parents, artists and educators from the rural communities of Hampshire County, set out to create a partnership of teachers, students, families, and community members to establish a creative learning environment for elementary school children. A child-centered approach, focusing upon the needs of individual children and following their creative impulses was the backbone of the educational philosophy alongside a commitment to governance by a consensus-model parent cooperative.

Support for the vision was overwhelming as many talented community members offered their expertise for the project and joined the founding coalition. On Dec. 9, 1994, the Massachusetts Secretary of Education granted Hilltown a five-year charter to begin operation in Williamsburg in September 1995 and the school opened its doors in the Brassworks building in Haydenville MA with 3 classrooms and 40 students.

We have now moved to our own building in Easthampton and grown to 12 classrooms with 210 students - adding the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in 2000 and 2001 respectively. The state reviews of the school have been most favorable and in 2015 we received our fourth charter renewal.

Congratulations Hilltown for twenty successful and creative years!

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## HILLTOWN PERSONNEL 2015 – 2016

### **Teachers**

Bill Farkas, Blues (K-1)  
Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Indigos (K-1)  
Nan Childs, Greens (2-3)  
Paula Yolles, Yellows (2-3)  
Kate Saccento, Oranges (4-5)  
Alec MacLachlan, Reds (4-5)  
Paula Ingram, Purples (6)  
Peter Kennedy, Purples (6)  
Beth Adel, Prisms (7-8)  
John Van Beckum, Prisms (7-8)  
Rachel Merrell, Prisms (7-8)  
Joanna Morse, Prisms (7-8)  
Laurel Loomis, Atelier (K-6)  
Marguerite Durant, Music & Movement K-6  
Cait Florschutz, Special Education  
Gaby Blaustein, Special Education  
Kelly Melanson, Special Education  
Felicia Mednick, Reading  
Shelley Greenstein, Spanish  
Sadie Graham, Phys. Ed. / Kids Club

### **Teaching Assistants, Instructors and Specialists:**

Grace Mrowicki, Technology Coordinator  
Joy Kinigstein, Prisms Visual Art/ Atelier TA,  
Aidan Talbot, Prisms Music Teacher/ Music TA,  
Hannah Dancer, Indigos TA (graduate intern)  
Beth Dirks, Blues TA  
Seana LaMothe, Greens TA  
Penny Giguere, Yellows TA  
Jason Goebel, Oranges TA  
Kate Kamins, Reds TA  
Laura Tisdell-Andrus, Special Ed TA  
Sam Mayers-White, Special Ed TA  
Zach Collura, Special Ed TA  
Nicole Grinaski, Special Ed TA  
Alana Fichman, RISE Americorps member  
Lindsey White, RISE Americorps member

### **Student Support Team**

Deb Haas; Nurse, Health Ed.  
Emilie Woodward, School Counselor  
Amy Linnell, Speech Therapist  
Jeanne Schubmehl, Occupational Therapist  
Margaret Chappuis, Physical Therapist



### **Administrative Staff**

Dan Klatz, Education Coordinator  
Deirdre Arthen, Community Coordinator  
Amy Aaron, Administrative Coordinator/  
Civil Rights Coordinator  
Monique Bourgeois, Administrative Assistant  
Carla Clark, Bookkeeper/ Purchasing Agent

### **Board of Trustees**

Susannah Howe, *President*  
Scott Remick, *Vice President*  
David Starr, *Treasurer*  
Penny Leveritt, *Clerk; chair, Governance Comm.*  
Charles Wiemeyer, *chair, Site Committee*  
Steve Hoyt, *chair Personnel Committee*  
Jesse Belcher-Timme  
Andrea Porter

### **Friends of Hilltown Board**

Andrea Porter, *President*  
Dianne Hobbs, *Vice President*  
Ronna Kullberg, *co-Treasurer*  
Melissa Casinghino, *co-Treasurer*  
Kathy Elsea, *Clerk*

## MISSION

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School was founded in 1995 as a Massachusetts Public Charter School. Our mission is:

- **To engage students in a school which uses experiential, hands-on activities, the arts, and interdisciplinary studies to foster critical thinking skills and a joy of learning.**
- **To sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program.**
- **To cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us.**

## PHILOSOPHY

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS) was founded in 1995 as Massachusetts Public Charter School. Inspired by the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, our educational approach is grounded in knowledge of children's development and in a commitment to teaching creative, critical thinking skills and strong basic skills.

At HCCPS, we believe that children construct their understanding of the world through direct experience with teachers serving as guides and resources. We create an engaging and joyful learning environment using an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum. Emphasis is placed on asking children and adults to reflect on and document the learning process. The expressive arts play a critical role in the academic and social curriculum, and create a common language that brings our community together in meaningful ways.

HCCPS welcomes and relies on family involvement. Children, families, school and community form an integrated, interdependent system, which operates through an inclusive, consensus-based governance structure. Beyond the academic curriculum, children learn essential life skills through participation in an intimate, whole school cooperative. Involvement in the local environment and its communities inspires learning and encourages social and civic responsibility as well as stewardship for the earth.

Parents and teachers help children to care for and respect themselves and each other. We strongly believe that cultivation of each individual voice within a community leads to inclusion of and respect for differences and multiple perspectives.



*Buddy Classes on the first day*

## **ADMISSIONS**

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School is a public K-8 school and is open to all children of appropriate grade levels from any Massachusetts town, on a space available basis with priority given to siblings of current students and applicants from Hampshire and Franklin counties. No tuition or application fee is required. Charter schools are funded by the per pupil expenditure from each student's home school district. Hilltown does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language, or academic achievement. Our enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year is 210 students, kindergarten through grade 8, in twelve mixed-age classrooms.

In January each year the school advertises and holds an open Informational Meeting and then conducts an admissions lottery in February to assign students to a waiting list for the following September. As openings occur, the top person on the list is offered the slot. Following the admissions lottery, parents are notified of acceptance or waiting list status. Parents of prospective students should contact the school for an application or download one from our website: [www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org). Once a student is enrolled at Hilltown s/he has a secure space for subsequent years and all siblings gain admission priority. School meetings orient families to the cooperative structure of the school and help welcome them into the school community.



## **THE COOPERATIVE**

The Hilltown School is structured as a cooperative. We believe that education is enhanced by strengthening the ties between school and home, so parental involvement is an essential factor in the school. Parent contributions also help us to keep costs down and allow a flexibility, richness and diversity in the school which we might otherwise not achieve.

### **Membership**

All members of the school community are considered members of the Cooperative. Parents, staff and outside community members who invest an average of at least 4 hours of volunteer work per month to

benefit the school as a whole are eligible to vote on by-law changes at the annual meeting and to elect the school's Board of Trustees. Parents are strongly encouraged to become "Voting Members" in order to become more actively involved in their children's educational environment and for the good of the school as a whole. Parents serve on all major decision-making bodies of the school, including the Board of Trustees, all policy-making committees and on the board of The Friends of Hilltown (see below).

**CO-OP meetings** are held at least twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend both meetings. These meetings are a chance for members to talk with each other, the Board of Trustees and the school administration about current happenings at the school and relevant community issues such as school culture, structure, location and educational philosophy. Elections of new Board of Trustees members occur at the spring meeting.

**Educational Forums** are also held twice a year as a vehicle for the teaching staff to share important elements of the HCCPS curriculum with parents. It can be a great place to get answers to curriculum or pedagogical questions.

### **Volunteering at school**

We encourage every parent to volunteer for the school in some way, and almost everyone meets that expectation. There are a wide variety of ways in which parents can meet the 4-hour work requirement for voting membership either in school or at home. All parents are asked to complete individual Coop-Member Resource forms. These give us information about the resources available to the school and your own preferences about how you would like to be included in this community. The staff has access to this information and uses it to find the help they need. Parents who want to spend time with students in the classroom or driving on field trips must give permission for a state CORI check as well.

### **Sharing volunteer hours**

If a parent would like to be a Voting Member but is unable to meet the work requirement due to unusual personal or work constraints, the extra hours of other cooperative members may be shared. Couples in a family often share hours like this and we are always willing to help find partners for other parents in this position. Talk with Deirdre, the Community Coordinator.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Good communication among parents, staff and the Board is essential. In the main entryway, a **white board** and **monthly calendar** list upcoming dates or events of note and there are also **mailboxes** there for each family (see below). In the Family Corner and outside the Coordinators offices there are **bulletin boards** where announcements and minutes from board and committee meetings are posted. Recent memos are posted outside the **Coordinators' Office**.

The **Hilltown Newsletter** is published once a week. It contains an updated calendar, information about various classes' activities, meeting summaries from the Board of Trustees, and other announcements and articles from the school. The Newsletter is sent by e-mail but may also be delivered on paper in your mailbox if you request it.

Please be sure to give the main office any address, e-mail or phone number changes throughout the year so that we can stay in touch with you. A **Family Directory** is distributed in the Handbook at the beginning of the year to help parents and students stay in touch with one another by phone and e-mail. ***This information is confidential and must not be passed along to anyone outside the school or used for group mailings.*** We will pass along address changes to the school community via the newsletter.

## Communication with Teachers

While teachers welcome greetings during drop-off and pick-up times they are generally unable to discuss individual concerns with parents at this time. A written message left in the teacher's office mailbox, an e-mail or a phone call is a better way to set up a time for uninterrupted discussion. Please include your telephone number and the times you are most easily reached. The teacher will contact you to discuss the issue or set up a time to meet, if necessary. If you call the school to leave a message for a teacher, please be aware that they may not check their messages until the end of the day. Leave all urgent or time-sensitive messages with the Administrative Assistant to pass along in person.

## Communication with Students

During the day you may leave messages for students in the office and they will be delivered when time allows. Students will be called from class only for emergencies. No student cell phone use, text or voice, is allowed between 8:00 and 4:30. (see policy below)

## Family Mailboxes

Mailboxes are located in the main entryway and parents are expected to check them at least twice a week. Although much communication is done through email, many important notices are distributed here, sometimes with short notice of upcoming events or changes in plans. You may miss something if you are not on top of your mail. The mailboxes are for official school communications only. *Please do not use the mailboxes for distributing invitations or non-school-related information.*

## Addressing Concerns, Getting your Voice Heard

We encourage everyone in the school to go directly to the person involved to resolve problems as they arise. Classroom concerns should first be addressed with the teacher involved.

The **Community Team**, a group of active parents and staff members, can be a good resource when you have questions or concerns. They host parent gatherings and morning coffee hours which are open to all and can be a good place for informal conversations. Times will be publicized in the Newsletter. Parents with questions about the school and its policies may also turn to the **Community Coordinator**. She will do her best to provide an answer and can also schedule a Coop Meeting to discuss particular issues when needed.



*Students carding wool at Old Deerfield*

## **SCHEDULES AND DAILY LOGISTICS**

Massachusetts General Laws require children to attend school regularly. Parents and guardians are essential to good attendance and are responsible for ensuring that children attend school regularly and on time. The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School expects students to attend school daily to receive the maximum benefits of our program. Our attendance policy is included in the Appendix, please look at it to familiarize yourself with the limits on absences and tardiness.

### **Arrivals and Departures**

**School begins at 8:15.** It is critical that all children arrive on time. Students who need to be dropped off early may arrive any time after 8:00 and wait in the Family Corner until 8:15 when classes begin. (See attendance policy in appendix) **Attendance is taken at 8:20 and timeliness is key.** Straggling arrivals and departures create disruption, distraction and chaos in the classroom.

Young children should not walk alone in the parking lot at any time.

The school's main entrance, which is the only one that will be unlocked for entry into the building, is at the center of the building facing Industrial Parkway. It has a designated drop off lane in front of it where no parking is permitted. Please follow the marked parking and traffic pattern to prevent accidents. **Drop off is permitted at the main entrance only.** We prefer that parents walk young children into the school. Please use the sidewalk from the parking lot to the front door. Doors are locked between 8:20 am and 2:45pm and no child may leave without an adult or written permission.

The school day ends at 3:00, except on Wednesdays when grades K-5 end at 12:30 and only the Purples and Prisms (6-8<sup>th</sup> grades) continue until 3:00. Please be prompt at pick-up times and make your way out of the building as calmly and quickly as possible. All students K-5 must be signed out by an adult as they leave their classrooms at the end of the day. With written parental permission, students may leave school on their own to walk home, or take the PVTA bus.

### **Late Arrivals**

If a child arrives after 8:20, she will be tardy and will find the door to her classroom closed. Before entering, she will need to sign in and pick up a "Late Pass" from the office in order to be admitted. 5 "tardies" equal one unexcused absence. (See Attendance Policy in appendix) Persistent tardiness will result in a telephone call from a teacher or an administrator and may necessitate a meeting between parents and the administration.

**Absence and Illness:** If your child will be absent due to illness or for any other reason, a parent must call the school by 8:20am and speak with our school nurse (Deb) or leave a message on the attendance voice mail 413-529-7178 option 2. See Attendance Policy on page 22 for more information.

Children with a fever over 100 degrees should stay home until there is no fever for 24 hours without fever medication. Children with one event of vomiting or diarrhea should stay at home until at least 12 hours have passed without any further events. Children diagnosed with strep throat must be treated with antibiotics for 3 doses and be fever free before returning to school. *Strep throat* may be present without a fever and may include symptoms of headache and stomach ache.

If your child is not feeling well in the morning and stays home from school, but seems better after a few hours, please call and check in with the nurse before bringing the child in late.

### **Early Pick-up**

In the event that you need to pick a child up from school early, please inform both the Administrative Assistant and the teacher in advance and check the child out in the office when you leave. It is important that we have an accurate count of students actually in the building in case of emergency.

## **Carpools and play-dates**

Please be sure that the office has an accurate schedule for your carpool. If you need to make an early pick-up or if a child is leaving with a friend's parent, please fill out an Attendance/Pick-up memo in the main office. Students may not use office phones or personal cell phones to make social plans. Please arrange play dates ahead of time and keep us informed.

## **Snow Days**

Parents may listen to TV, radio, check our website: [www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org) or call the school at 413-529-7178 to find out about school closings due to weather. Only in extraordinary circumstances will an emergency phone-tree be initiated. We will also be listed on the "closings" page at [www.wwlp.com](http://www.wwlp.com) (channel 22) or [www.wggb.com](http://www.wggb.com) (channel 40).

## **A FEW SCHOOL POLICIES**

### **Visiting the School**

Parents are welcome at Hilltown at any time except during active test hours. We have parents in the building almost all the time. Many other visitors come as well, including educators, grandparents and community volunteers, so students are used to seeing many adult faces throughout the day. Family visitors wear a special sticker, available in the classrooms and office, when they are here at other than drop off and pick up times so that staff and students can recognize that you belong here. Other visitors sign in at the main Office and wear a Visitor Pass while they are in the building.

### **Cell Phones and IPODs / MP3 players**

Cell phones and iPods may not be used by students between 8:00 am and 4:30pm. Neither outgoing nor incoming calls or texts are permitted. Should you need to get a message to your child during the day, please call the main office and we will either relay the message or, in an emergency, connect you with your child's classroom. Students who need their phones for after-school communication must leave them turned off and in their backpacks between 8:00 am and 4:30pm. Any cell phone or iPod found in use will be taken to the Coordinators' office and may be retrieved from there at the end of the day.

### **Lost Book Replacement**

In most classes, students will be issued at least one text or workbook and will often borrow reading books from the class library. These books are costly and are important to the program. If a student loses them, that student and his or her family are expected to pay at least ½ of the cost of replacing it.

### **Pet Policy**

Due to student and staff allergies and health concerns, family pets are not allowed in the school at any time unless pre-approved by staff for educational purposes.

### **Recess Snow Rules**

All students K-5 must wear boots and snow pants at recess if there is snow on the ground. If they don't wear these then they are restricted to the black top. This is non-negotiable. While we don't advise it, Prisms students are exempted and can suffer with wet clothes if they want.

### **Things to leave at home**

Hilltown policy prohibits electronic games and equipment, pocket-knives and weapons of all kinds – toy or actual (see weapons policy in appendix). The limitations of our space require that yo-yos only be used outdoors. Skateboards and bikes are only permitted when used as transportation to and from school.

## **SCHOOL PROGRAMS and ACTIVITIES**

### **Snack / Lunch**

Most children bring their own snack and lunch each day. We encourage you to pack plenty of healthy low-sugar items. It is a long day and snacks are essential. Please use re-closable, re-usable and non-glass containers as well as silverware that can be taken home and washed. No refrigeration or warming facilities are available for students. Students will bring home all trash and uneaten food.

We have a popular hot school lunch program that is provided by Riverside Industries. Order forms can be picked up at school or found on the website and dropped off with payment in advance. Those eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches can get applications from the "Blank Forms" file box in the Main Office.

On Fridays, we offer students pizza for \$1.50 per slice as a fundraiser. One time orders must be submitted by Thursday afternoon and full-year order forms are available in the main office.

### **Community Service Learning**

Hilltown has had a successful ongoing relationship with Highview – a long term care facility in Leeds. This year, we will begin to develop new partnerships in Easthampton, and the K-4 students will continue to spend time visiting Highview and engaging in projects with the residents there. In years past projects have included writing and producing books about the residents' lives, visual art, yoga, internet usage, singing, and also studies about science, local history and geography.



### **Field Trips**

Parents of new students are asked to sign a blanket permission slip at the beginning of their first year here authorizing their child to participate in local field trips during their time at Hilltown. At the beginning of each year families are asked to contribute a modest sum to cover fees for field trips for the entire year. Subsidies are available for those who need them. The Prisms and Purples classes both take an overnight field trip each year which are funded separately by the school, parents and by student fundraising efforts. Parents are notified in advance of upcoming trips and sometimes are required to sign an additional form for a specific trip.

### **English Language Learners**

Hilltown has an instructional program in place for students at all levels who have a primary language other than English. The school uses standardized assessments to identify these students and then provides the necessary services.

### **Lost and Found**

The main lost and found is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor stair landing. During the winter it quickly grows out of control. ***Please label children's clothing***, especially outerwear, and check the lost and found frequently. Every couple of months, a volunteer will put out a notice, bring out the contents and display all unlabeled items in the all-school space for four school days. After those four days, unclaimed items will be donated to charity.

## **SCHOOL-WIDE ACTIVITIES**

*All activities at the school, except where restricted by age, are open to all students regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.*

### **Lunchrooms**

Each month K-6 students are assigned to a new lunchroom where they eat with students from all the other K-6 classes. This way they get to know students of all ages. Children are expected to sit and eat for 15 minutes, after which they can participate in quiet activities. If a child wants to request a special “lunch buddy” for the coming month, he may make a written request to the Administrative Coordinator one-week before the start of the new month.

### **Recess**

All students have 30 minutes of recess daily, outside whenever possible. Two classes generally go out together. We go out in all kinds of weather, and appropriate clothing is essential. Boots, gloves and snow pants are required during the winter and sturdy shoes are recommended all year. It is important that young children keep an extra set of clothing and socks stored in their cubby at school.

### **Mini-courses**

Mini-courses are a wonderful opportunity for students to explore an activity in depth with students of all ages and with an adult other than their own teacher. All students select from the options offered by teachers, parents or community members. In the past, choices have included play writing, drumming, mural painting, nature studies, newspaper production and yoga. Mini-courses take place several times a year on Thursdays from 1:30 – 2:50. They generally run for 4 weeks and are often followed by presentations to the school community at All School. If you are interested in teaching or helping with a mini-course, get a proposal form from the Community Coordinator.

### **“All-School”**

Hilltown supports the sense of school community by holding weekly gatherings of all classrooms each Friday. Content varies from week to week and involves some combination of singing, announcements, birthday celebrations and sharing of something learned during the week. Parents and families are encouraged to attend whenever they can. The times for All-School are listed in the school calendar on the website and on the Google calendar. Specifics will be published in the weekly newsletter.

### **“Il Teatro”**

Several times a year, students are encouraged to share music, poems that they write or love, skits or other self-initiated creative performances with the entire student body. These productions are rehearsed outside of school hours and the performances are greatly anticipated within all of the classes. Parents are invited to attend or perform with their children. Teatro dates are listed on the school calendar posted on the website and on the Google calendar. Due dates for proposals, screening schedules and performance times are included in the newsletter.



## Celebrations / Holidays

Hilltown holds three special school-wide celebrations: The Welcoming Ceremony at the beginning of the year, a Winter Celebration just before break in December and a Summer Celebration just before the break in June. Other than these, and the recognition of Martin Luther King Jr Day and Earth Day, the school does not celebrate holidays in any formal way, although classroom discussions of diverse family traditions are encouraged.

## Birthdays

Birthdays are special occasions and are celebrated by the whole community with a song at the "All-School" closest to the actual birth day. Summer birthdays are celebrated during the month of June. Some classes permit a birthday child to bring in a special snack to share with the class. Please check with the teacher and keep food sensitivities in mind. Please keep invitations and conversations about birthday parties outside of school and be sensitive to the feelings of children who aren't invited when transporting groups from school to a party.

## Special Events

School-wide events that include whole families are one of the ways that our community grows and stays strong. They are a great opportunity to make connections with other parents and get involved in the school community. The **Winter Fair**, an annual family event including craft-making tables, performances and a book sale, is held at the beginning of December. **Art Spark**, in the spring, is an all-adult event, usually featuring performances, an auction and always great food. The **Prisms Coffeehouse** with dinner and student performances, a **Science Fair**, **Grandparents' Day**, the spring **Music Festival** where all of our students perform, and **8<sup>th</sup> grade Graduation** round out the year's big events.

Community events of all sorts are scheduled at least once each month. Look for: classroom orientation meetings, potlucks, parties, dances for older students, games nights, movie nights, parent workshops, student performances and the coop meetings.



At the Science Fair

During school events outside of normal school hours, the school's basic policies regarding student behavior - no running, shouting, climbing or going outdoors without an adult - remain in effect. **Staff members are not on-duty after hours. Parents are responsible for supervising their children at all times.** In the event that students' behaviors become dangerous or distracting during an event, the activity will be stopped and parents will be asked to re-establish order before it resumes.

## **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS**

Hilltown offers several after school enrichment or childcare options for a minimal fee. Some ongoing programs like chorus or running club cost a flat fee for a semester's participation; others, like Kids' Club (see below), charge by the session and offer discounts for multiple children. All of the specifics and sign-up forms are available both on our website and in the Main Office. Families entitled to free or reduced lunch may be entitled to fee reductions or waivers. Talk with Administrative Coordinator.

### **Kids' Club**

The HCCPS Kids Club Program is a daily after-school offering for students of all ages, running from 3:00-5 (Mon, Tues, Thur., Fri) and 12:30-5 on Wed. It is a combination of indoor and outdoor activities including snack, games, arts and crafts, cooking, theater, music, and quiet, supervised space for home work or reading. Registration forms are available in the main office or online and prepayment is required. Same day- sign up is possible on a space available and pre-pay basis.

### **Chorus**

The Hilltown Chorus, for students in grades 2-5, meets in semester sessions on Wednesdays, from 12:30 - 2pm with time for lunch. All children must bring or order a lunch on chorus days. Enrollment forms will be distributed at the start of each semester with pertinent dates and fees. The fall session is for grades 3-5; the spring session is for grades 2-5.

### **Hilltown Harmonies**

This vocal group for Purples and Prisms students has a focus on a cappella, popular and world music and will be led by Prisms music teacher Aidan Talbot. There will be two semester sessions that will meet on Wednesdays from 3:15 – 4:30. Enrollment forms will be distributed at the start of the year with pertinent dates and fees. Please send students with extra snacks for the afternoon.

### **Team Sports**

The school's **Ultimate Frisbee** team will be co-coached by our Physical Education teacher Sadie Graham and Aidan Talbot and also relies heavily on the parents of the players for support during the spring season. We may not win all our games, but we are known for winning "Spirit of the Game" awards because of our good sportsmanship. Students from the Prisms, Purples, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders may participate.

**Running Club** serves the grades 4-8. It meets in the fall on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and competes in some local meets. Be on the lookout for enrollment forms with pertinent dates & fees.

### **Instrumental Ensembles**

This year the school will help arrange rehearsal time for a classical chamber group for more advanced players led by parent Anne Werry. There may be an instrumental jam group as well. Information will be in the Newsletter and registration forms will be available in the main office.

Any parent-sponsored or other after-school clubs or programs, such as Environmental Club, Chess Club, Math Club, Fiber Arts or Scrabble Club, will be announced as they are scheduled.

*The children of parents who volunteer weekly in an after-school program may participate in the program for no fee. See the Community Coordinator to get involved.*

## **FUNDRAISING**

Friends of Hilltown, our affiliated 501-c3 non-profit organization, coordinates fundraising for the school with a special focus on the Annual Fund. Our major yearly events include a family **Winter Fair** family craft-making and book sales in early December and **Art Spark**, an adult evening event in the spring including an auction. Hilltown also participates in ongoing school-wide efforts including monthly *Dean's Beans coffee sales*, and *Box Tops for Education*.

Friends of Hilltown organizes an annual fundraising appeal to raise money both for operating expenses and to fund a rolling arts grant program available to teachers throughout the year.

The Purples & Prisms classrooms also organize fundraising projects during the school year if needed for overnight field trips.

All fundraising ideas must be vetted through the Community Coordinator to avoid conflicts.



*Captain Citrus promotes sales for the Prisms*

## **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

### **A Healthy School Environment**

**No smoking** by adults or students is permitted in or around the school building. Hand sanitizers are on the walls inside each classroom and we encourage everyone to use them frequently. In addition, we ask that community members **refrain from using "added scents"** at school and at school functions in deference to those with chemical sensitivities and allergies. Please also **turn off your vehicle** in the parking lot and when waiting in the pick up line at the end of the day. Exhaust fumes can enter the building through the windows and Massachusetts law limits vehicle idling to no more than five minutes in most cases.

### **Health and Immunization records**

All new students, as well as every kindergarten, 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup> grade student needs to have an updated physical exam form (any date after 3/01/14) and immunization record on file at the beginning of the school year. In accordance with Massachusetts Law, your child must have written proof of required immunizations as part of their school health record in order to attend school.

The only exemptions from this regulation are if you choose to not vaccinate your child for religious or medical reasons. A medical exemption must be documented by your health care provider. The letter for a religious exemption only needs to be written once and it will remain in the student's file. *If there is an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease such as chicken pox or measles, then students who have not been vaccinated may need to be excluded from school for a certain period of time.*

### **Medication**

Students may not carry any sort of medication (including homeopathic, over-the-counter, herbal or prescription) with them at school. The school nurse may dispense prescription or over the counter medications to children during the school day only if a specific permission form has been filled out by the parent and the prescribing physician. These forms are available in the office or from the nurse. Medications must be labeled and in their original packaging and must be left with the nurse. They can be kept refrigerated if needed. We ask parents to adjust medication schedules, if they can, to avoid the need for their administration during school. The only medications that students are permitted to carry are inhalers. Health care provider and parent consent forms must be on file in the nurse's office to allow students to carry inhalers.

## Screening

Regular state mandated screenings are conducted as follows:

Parents will be notified in writing of any problems.

- 
- Vision – K-7th
- Hearing – K - 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>
- Heights and Weights including BMI– K, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>
- Postural screening for scoliosis 5<sup>th</sup>-8th

## Life-Threatening Food Allergies

There are some students that have severe peanut, tree nut, or other food allergies. Strict avoidance of these foods is the only way to prevent a life threatening allergic reaction. Since we do not have a cafeteria and the students rotate lunch rooms we have put in place strict guidelines so that our community remains safe for allergic children.

These guidelines include:

- No sharing of food whatsoever is permitted.
- Hand washing will occur before and after eating snack/lunch.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided in every classroom.
- A peanut-free/allergen-free table will be established in applicable classrooms.
- We encourage that food for class celebrations/community events be nut-free. If not, then all ingredients must be listed and the food will be placed in a separate area.
- There will be no eating on the play structure.



## Lice Protocol for Parents

Lice are a fact of life in most schools these days. We do our best to avoid problems and prevent stigmatization of children that have lice via education. If a child is found to have lice while at school, a parent will be called to bring the child home for treatment. The nurse will perform a head check on the student's classmates. Prior to returning to school, the child will be checked by the nurse for any lice or nits. The parent and child should report to the nurse for this check before heading to the classroom.

If lice remain, the child will be sent home again for further intervention. If only a few nits remain, the child will be admitted back to school. The nurse will notify parents, via email or letter if lice are present in the school.

There is much overlap of children in our community with carpools, integrated lunch rooms and siblings. It is incumbent upon parents to communicate with the school nurse, as well as with other parents. This is the only way that we control the problem.

Feel free to discuss this further with the nurse or your health care provider. The nurse is happy to demonstrate how to check for lice/nits and how to get rid of them upon request.

## Infectious Diseases Protocol

The school nurse will notify parents in writing if an infectious disease is found in a classroom, i.e. strep throat, pink eye, ringworm. If there are numerous cases in the school, an all-school alert will be sent via email. If your child has an infectious illness it is a courtesy to let Deb know so that she can inform parents of other children in the classroom and thus the parents will be able to monitor their children for symptoms and follow up as necessary.

## **COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS**

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School is built on a strong sense of community and the success of our efforts has been consistently remarked upon in state reviews. All members of the school -- students, teachers, staff, parents, and community members - are encouraged to develop strong communication skills and respect for each other. From this community base children learn to respect their peers, teachers, and school environment. Treating others as they want to be treated and taking care of "our" school helps children, parents and teachers define appropriate behaviors that meet those ends. We expect relations between adults within the community – parents, teachers, staff and volunteers – to be respectful and provide a model for the students.

HCCPS is an inclusive and non-discriminatory community. If you feel that you have been discriminated on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability you should contact our Civil Rights Coordinator, Amy Aaron.

### **Community Compact**

Each year parents, students, teachers and administrators at Hilltown are asked to sign the Community Compact (see appendix), which puts into simple language our expectations for each member of our school community. This is a formalization of the commitment that we have to one another to build an environment for learning filled with respect, responsibility and openness. The Compact, along with clear definitions for students of its language and meaning, is reviewed by teachers in each classroom at the beginning of the year and is revisited throughout the year.

If there a substantial lack of adherence to the Compact on the part of a student or family, the school administration will call a Compact Meeting to gather all constituents for a problem solving conversation.



*Parents and a visiting food truck at our 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party*

## **Student Behavior**

In our classrooms, regular meetings provide forums for students to identify problems, work to resolve conflict in a positive manner, and develop strong listening and speaking skills. Teachers and children identify behaviors that foster a safe and productive school. As with the curriculum, many of the rules and expectations emerge from the school community.

Group discussions and talking with children at the time of difficult incidents help children identify alternative solutions to problems. In some situations a neutral third party is needed to peacefully resolve a conflict. The goal at Hilltown is to empower students to mediate such conflicts whenever possible. Such incidents are used as learning opportunities for clear communication of feelings and handling conflict in a safe way. Maintaining the self-esteem of each child is paramount. Under no circumstances is it permissible for any student to intentionally harm any other person in the school.

At the beginning of the school year teachers and students discuss the Community Compact and our "Code of Cooperation", pointing out the ways that they make the school a safe place. When necessary they remind each other of the rules and the reasons behind them and request that they be followed.

Guidance is consistent and based on the needs and development of each child and the group. If a child behaves in such a way that is disruptive or disrespectful, teachers will provide logical consequences that bring behavior back within safe limits and may send the child to the Coordinators office.

Parents will be asked to come to school mid-day and meet with the Coordinator and any child who has been intentionally violent toward any other person in the school. Consequences for serious behavioral issues may also include suspension or ultimately, expulsion.

## **LEARNING**

HCCPS has created a document called Critical Elements of Classroom Practice. It describes our educational perspective and classroom approach. It is included in the Appendix and we encourage you to read it.

### **Curriculum**

As a public school we are obligated to integrate the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks with our pedagogy. We balance this requirement with our core philosophy to create our own approach to curriculum. (*See Critical Elements of Classroom Practice in the Appendix*) These elements come together in the integration of arts across all subjects; strong parent involvement; careful documentation of students' work and processes and projects that draw from the interests of the students.

Whenever possible, Hilltown students explore subjects in depth using a particular theme as a point of departure for an integrated curriculum. They develop skills in art, math, science, reading, writing, problem solving, and critical thinking as they work with central themes. Through teaching problem solving and critical thinking strategies that can be applied in all disciplines, problem solving becomes a thread that weaves all subject areas together. It creates a standard for questioning and seeking answers whenever a new topic is approached.

The curriculum also includes the social aspects of life. A cooperative environment is created out of mutual respect and problem solving when differences arise. Skills are explored and practiced to achieve these goals.

### **Learning Challenges**

If you are concerned that your child may have a disability that is affecting his or her ability to make progress in school, you can first speak with the classroom teacher. As you speak with the teacher, explain your concerns and ask the teacher to share his or her concerns. As part of your conversation, it may be decided that a Child Study Team will be convened to discuss your concerns, and plan classroom accommodations to address concerns for a short period of time.

If your child continues to have difficulty with schoolwork, you may, at any time, make a request in writing to the Education Coordinator for a special education evaluation. This evaluation involves a range of testing and assessments conducted by our special education staff. When complete, the results of the evaluation are distributed to the relevant parties and are discussed at a TEAM meeting, which includes the parents, where a plan is developed collaboratively.

### **Classroom Assignment**

Classes at Hilltown are mixed age in nature and students stay in the same classroom for two years except for one year in the transitional sixth grade. The process for placing students entering 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and Grades is as follows: each spring Coordinators and educational staff meet to discuss each student individually and plan the make-up of each classroom for the following year. This is a thoughtful, time-consuming process, which includes input from parents. If after serious consideration of all factors, the wishes of parents and the judgment of the Education Domain differ and resolution is not possible, the Education and Administrative Coordinators make final decisions. Only in very rare circumstances, will the staff consider moving a student to a different classroom for the second year in a two-year sequence.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation of a student's progress is multi-faceted. Teachers use observation and discussion, in combination with developmentally appropriate assessment, to identify student strengths and next steps. Photos, videos, note taking, student-created work, and recordings have all been used to measure growth and development in addition to paperwork. Teachers share detailed narratives about each student and review samples of their work at parent/teacher conferences. The school uses its own developmental academic competency standards and performance based assessment system in addition to an externally developed reading assessment. Third through eighth graders take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in language arts and math and participate in the MCAS as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Progress Reports go home 3 times a year and parent conferences happen twice a year.

### **Teaching Staff**

We are fortunate to have a strong, stable and highly qualified teaching faculty at Hilltown.

Half of our teachers have been here over 5 years and their collective experience shows in the quality of their work. Parents may request to see information about any teacher's credentials at any time by asking Dan Klatz, the Education Coordinator.



*Alumnus Daniel Dietz at the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party*

## **GOVERNANCE BY DOMAINS (or... who is in charge of what)**

The governance and management of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter School are arranged into realms of responsibility, called “Domains”. All of these groups work together – seeking input and participation from each other in most decision-making processes. The school employs three Coordinators, who work together to ensure that the school is viable and stays true to its mission.

**The Education Domain** is responsible for the educational program at Hilltown and includes the work of the teachers, teaching assistants and the Education Coordinator. The Education Coordinator supervises and develops all aspects of this domain including coordinating the hiring committees for teaching positions. **Dan Klatz** is the current Education Coordinator

**The Administrative Domain** covers the day to day operation at school. The Administrative Coordinator manages the facility, admissions procedures and school finances and hires and coordinates office staff, the school nurse, custodial staff and the bookkeeper. The Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper are responsible for staffing the office and answering the phone, and coordinating the day to day procedures in the school office. **Amy Aaron** is the current Administrative Coordinator, Monique Bourgeois is the current Administrative Assistant, Carla Clark is the current Bookkeeper.

**The Community Domain** is responsible for ensuring full community participation in the school’s functioning and governance and for maintaining both the “sense of community” within the school and a school connection with the local community. The Community Coordinator administers this domain, coordinating Community Service Learning for the students, developing systems to serve and include parents and other volunteers, overseeing our partnership with 2 Americorps programs, facilitating meetings of the Cooperative, and coordinating the school’s event and fundraising calendar. The Parent Representatives to the Management Team work with the Community Coordinator to ensure that parent voices are heard in decision-making processes. **Deirdre Arthen** is the current Community Coordinator.

**The Board of Trustees (BOT)** is responsible for the school’s overarching philosophies, direction and policies and is accountable for all legal and fiscal issues affecting the Hilltown School. It operates using a consensus model and makes decisions on the hiring of Domain Coordinators, and contractual relationships. Members of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter School elect the Trustees at their annual meeting held each May. Trustees serve a three-year term and do not need to be parents at the school. The school’s three coordinators attend Board meetings as speaking but non-decision-making members. Schedules of BOT meetings, agendas, and minutes are available for parents to review on the bulletin board by the Coordinators offices and on our website. All BOT meetings are open to the school community and the general public

**Domain Council** meets bi-weekly and is made up of the three Coordinators and the President and one other member of the Board of Trustees – usually the Vice-President. These Board members serve as the supervisory team for the Coordinators, and in these frequent meetings, have many opportunities to work closely with the Coordinators and evaluate their work. Domain Council is responsible for proposing the annual budget, reviewing the agenda for BOT meetings and making policy recommendations to the Board as well as for addressing any emergency needs.

**The Community Team** is composed of two staff members, the Community Coordinator and several parent volunteers. It is responsible for helping to maintain the strong sense of community that is so important at Hilltown. Team members foster the community feeling in the school by hosting morning coffee hours and other special events to help families make connections with each other, by acknowledging and recognizing the contributions that individuals and groups make to the school, and by increasing communication through outreach to parents and staff to engage around current topics of interest or concern.



*Parents are always welcome to contribute their expertise.*

### **Long Range Planning**

In 2014 the Board of Trustees completed a strategic planning process to set goals and guidelines for the school for the next 10 years. A committee of staff, parents and trustees, with input from the entire community, engaged in a year long process and the resulting document is available on the website, in the Family Corner or from the Community Coordinator.

## APPENDICES:

### APPENDICES INCLUDED:

Homework Guidelines  
Critical Elements of Classroom Practice at Hilltown  
Attendance Policy  
Grade Placement Policy  
The Community Compact  
Harassment Policy  
Weapons and Controlled Substances Policy  
State and Federal Education Laws  
Bullying Prevention Plan

### OTHER DOCUMENTS YOU MAY WANT TO READ

Available on our website:  
[www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org)

Annual Reports  
School By-laws  
Long Range Plan for 2014-24  
Charter Renewal Application 2014  
Hilltown Accountability Plan  
Suspension/Expulsion Policy  
Ed. Materials selection policy  
Physical Restraint Policy  
Grievance Procedure  
Complaint Procedure  
Board of Trustees officer and committee descriptions  
HCCPS Internet Acceptable Use Policy  
HCCPS Consensus process description  
HCCPS Consensus-process articles



*Guest speaker motivates at All School*



## Home Study Guidelines

Teachers recently reviewed our practice regarding homework and modified our homework requirements. Students in the younger grades are expected to read or be read to every night for at least twenty minutes. Classroom morning meetings will offer students the opportunity to share some aspect of what they are reading with their peers. We see this as a way to develop good habits as readers, which is a major goal of the primary grades.

Beginning in fourth grade, students will continue with nightly reading, however specific books will be assigned. These will be the books the students are reading as part of their literature study. In addition, students will have one or two math problems every night, Monday-Thursday.

Middle School age students will have more regular, systematic assignments. Sixth graders can expect up to one hour per night, and seventh and eighth graders can expect between sixty and eighty minutes per night.



*At the Music Festival*



*Studying angles with Springfield College students*



*Grandparents' Day*

### Homework expectations by class

#### **Blues, Indigos, Greens and Yellows:**

At least 20 minutes of reading or being read to reach night.

**Oranges and Reds:** Up to 30 minutes of reading nightly, plus one or two math problems

**Purples:** 60 minutes each night, M-Th plus occasional weekend assignments.

**Prisms:** 60-80 minutes each night plus some weekend work on major projects.

## **Critical Elements of Classroom Practice at Hilltown**

### **Creation of a safe, nurturing, classroom community**

- Value of learning to be a member of a community
- Necessary to the academic success of all students

### **Students' ideas, questions and interests are a part of curriculum and classroom community**

- Spark of interest coming from students in context of the classroom community
- Shared experience which fires the imagination and builds community
- Sharing expertise and inquiry
- Kids authentic questions – looking at learning from their perspective
- Choices and options in student learning

### **Teachers engage in substantial collaboration with one another**

- In small groups and teams
- As a whole staff
- In cross age groups

### **Students engage in substantial collaboration with teachers and other students**

- Learning about the process of consensus
- Partners and small groups in the classroom/school

### **Teachers are flexible in their use of time**

- Schedule changes are required for in-depth studies
- Flexibility is necessary based on the needs of different groups

### **Skill building**

- Students need to develop basic skills as a means of communicating ideas, opinions, etc.
- Some students require skills as a means of participating

### **Cross age experiences**

- Multi-age classrooms
- Experience throughout the school which mix ages

### **Arts integration/interdisciplinary/project based**

- Importance of understanding the interconnected nature of what they learn
- Importance of hands-on projects
- Value of the arts as a means of expression

### **Using our community resources (parents, local community, environment, etc.)**

- Parents as classroom volunteers/resources
- Connecting children with local community and environment

### **Importance of understanding and utilizing different learning styles**

- Every child is a learner
- Adapting our practice to meet various ways of learning
- Multi modalities of learning are valued
- Classrooms must have a materials rich environment

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Regular school attendance is the foundation for a student's school success. With regular attendance, students develop a sense of belonging, build strong friendships, and benefit from daily experiences and support in the classroom.

Irregular school attendance can be the beginning of a pattern. The more students miss school, the less they learn. Frequent absences affect not only the individual child but the entire class. Hilltown's project oriented program requires students to work in small collaborative groups and every member is vital to the success of the group. When several children miss school at different times and for different durations, it has a ripple effect on the pacing of the entire curriculum.

This policy details the necessary steps to be taken by parents when attendance is not possible, and the consequences of chronic absences. The school day begins at 8:15 AM. An arrival after 8:20 AM is 5 minutes late and is officially considered tardy unless there is a specific medical appointment. Five tardys (after 8:20 AM), not related to a disability or medical appointments, will constitute one unexcused absence.

*Students who are absent for non-disability related reasons, whether excused or unexcused, may not participate in any after-school or other extra-curricular activity on the day they are absent.*

### **Excused Absences**

- Illness or chronic health problem
- A death in the immediate family or other significant family crisis
- Court appearances
- Religious Holy Days
- Suspension from school
- Absence related to an ADA defined disability

*(If you believe that your child has a defined ADA disability, please contact the school's 504 Coordinator, Dan Klatz)*

Family vacations are not considered excused absences.

### **In the case of illness/significant family crisis/disability:**

1. Parents are expected to call in by 8:20 a.m. to inform school of illness or family emergency. If we have not heard from a parent we will call the home at 9:00 a.m. If we do not hear back from a parent/guardian the absence will be considered unexcused.
2. HCCPS may request from the parent documentation from a health care provider if the student is ill for more than five (5) consecutive days.
3. When a student has excessive illness related absences (non-consecutive but frequent) that begin to interfere with a student's education, the appropriate staff will contact the parents/guardians. We will work together to clarify the medical situation, request medical documentation and make reasonable accommodations to provide appropriate supports if consistent attendance is not possible. Parents/guardians will be expected to help with make-up work. Significant interference to a student's educational progress may result in grade retention. Students with disability-related absences shall be allowed the opportunity to make up missed work prior to grade retention or summer school.

### **Religious Holy Days:**

Parents/guardians must inform the school in advance.

Failure to provide such notice will result in the absence being deemed as unexcused.

## Unexcused Absences

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School strongly discourages unexcused absences. Family vacations resulting in student absence from school creates significant disruption to the educational process. Unexcused absences have consequences for the student, the class and the teacher and create additional responsibilities for parents/guardians. In the event of a planned, unexcused absence parents/guardians must understand and comply with the following:

1. Parents should inform teachers and administration, in writing, at least two weeks in advance of a planned unexcused absence.
2. Teachers are not required to provide make up work for unexcused absences. Parents/guardians are responsible for overseeing the student's educational progress during the unexcused absence.
3. All parents/guardians are informed of their child's attendance record on each progress report.
4. If unexcused absences (more than 5) occur one or more of the following steps may be taken.
  - Phone call to parent
  - Community compact meeting with parents/guardians
  - Referral for counseling
  - Grade retention
  - Summer work
  - Exclusion from any or all afterschool and extracurricular activities

In extreme cases where these steps have not been successful HCCPS may, in its sole discretion, pursue the following actions:

- File a "Failure to Send" complaint with the District Court
  - File a "Child Requiring Assistance" complaint with the District Court
  - File a 51 A with Department of Children and Families
5. In rare circumstances when a parent/guardian is required to be out of the immediate Pioneer Valley area for career related purposes, parents/guardians may formally request absence from school for up to 20 school days. HCCPS will consider, among other things, the following:
    - The impact on a student's academic progress.
    - Duration of the absence.
    - Frequency of previous absences, especially unexcused absences.

Requests in writing must be submitted to the Administrative and Education Coordinators at least one month in advance. The Coordinators, following consultation with teachers, will make decisions within ten (10) calendar days of the request. The Coordinators retain sole discretion to make the determination and their decision is not subject to further review.

If approved, the family will be responsible for developing a school work plan. The family will take responsibility for overseeing their child's educational progress.

If the request is not approved and the family removes the child from school, the absence will be considered unexcused.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees, 7/29/2015*

# **GRADE PLACEMENT**

## **Overview:**

We generally believe it is appropriate for students to follow the typical K-8 sequence of grades and the accompanying curriculum through the school. Children vary considerably in their academic, social, physical, and emotional development. Therefore our instructional program in each class is adjusted to meet the needs of all students. However, under some circumstances, it may be appropriate to consider repeating or skipping a grade. In these cases, we will use a combination of factors to consider grade placement including chronological age, academic achievement, and social and emotional maturity.

## **For teacher initiated requests:**

Teachers will complete a Request to Change Grades Form, and then discuss issues regarding grade placement with the Education Coordinator. If the teacher and Education Coordinator agree, these questions will be shared with parents before January 31.

## **For parent initiated requests:**

Parents requesting a change in grade placement for the following year should complete a Request to Change Grades Form and return it to the Education Coordinator before the February vacation. The form asks parents to address the needs that are not currently being met, and why a change in grade placement would help meet these needs. Forms are available of the school office

## **Process:**

Following the initial request, the Education Coordinator will form a staff committee comprised of the classroom teacher, Education Coordinator, one other teacher who works directly with the student, and a teacher who does not work directly with the student. The Committee will meet with the family to discuss issues related to the child's grade placement. Staff and parents will have the opportunity to comment on specific aspects of the child's academic, social, emotional, and physical development, which relate to questions of grade placement. The committee will review all academic records including progress reports, standardized test results, internal assessment results, any related special education documentation or other relevant materials, if available. The committee will also speak with the previous year's teacher when possible. If deemed appropriate by parents and staff, a staff member will meet directly with the student to discuss relevant issues, and obtain feedback from the student.

The committee will present information from the parent meeting at a subsequent staff meeting. The purpose will be to allow all staff to ask questions and share insights related to the student and the grade placement.

Following the staff meeting, the committee will meet with the parents to share information obtained in the process. Parents will have the opportunity to discuss this information, as well as provide additional information, ideas, and opinions. This will be the last meeting before the committee makes its decision. Parents will have up to 14 calendar days following the meeting to provide any additional input.

## **Decision:**

After all above steps have been completed, the committee will decide on the grade placement of the student for the following year. This decision should be made no later than April 15. The committee will make the decision by consensus, and this decision will be final. If the committee is unable to reach consensus, the Education Coordinator will make the final decision.

# Community Compact of Understanding

At the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School we believe that education works best as a cooperative process among teachers, staff, parents, students and the community at large. Parents' involvement in their children's education contributes greatly toward their success and this school relies on its cooperative structure to create the innovative and alternative educational environment that is at the core of its mission. This compact of understanding is a way of clearly stating our common commitment to collaboration in creating a learning community that nourishes and supports all of its members. If a situation ever arises in which the spirit or words of the compact is consistently not being met, all involved parties gather for a Compact Meeting to discuss and plan solutions. It is through this level of commitment and cooperation that we are able to successfully fulfill the school's mission.

## The Student pledges to:

- do my best to learn while in classes and when doing the home-study I am assigned.
- show respect, through my words and my actions, for myself, my school, my teachers, other people, and materials.
- be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.
- take responsibility for my actions and my safety.
- believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, Student, will do my best to keep this agreement. **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## The Parents pledge to:

- read the school handbook and abide by the policies and guidelines set out in it.
- to the very best of my ability, give 4 hours of volunteer service per month, or 40 hours per year, that will benefit the school and help my child and others learn.
- ensure that my child arrives at school on time (8:15 am), rested and ready to learn.
- ensure that my child comes to school dressed appropriately for the weather and with a nutritious lunch and snack.
- help my child take responsibility for completing home-study assignments in a timely manner.
- keep myself informed and up to date about events and issues at school by reading the notices in my mailbox, newsletters, e-mails and posted announcements.
- attend *at least* two individual parent/teacher conferences and one classroom meeting per year.
- help strengthen the school community by participating in events and discussions whenever possible.
- show respect and support, through my words and actions, for my child, other students, the staff and the school.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (and \_\_\_\_\_),  
Parent(s)/legal guardian(s), agree to do my best to follow through with the responsibilities listed above.

## The Administration and Staff of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter School pledge to:

- provide a safe, cooperative and respectful environment for learning.
- believe that all students can succeed and learn.
- nurture each child's innate creativity and encourage his/her self-expression using many modalities.
- communicate and work with each family to support their child's learning.
- have challenging expectations for students and staff.
- seek out and value parent participation and input in all areas of the school community.
- respect and honor the cultural differences of students and their families.
- seek to improve our program through an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and refinement.

We, \_\_\_\_\_, Teachers

and \_\_\_\_\_, Coordinator

Pledge the school staff's commitment to the above stated responsibilities and ideals. **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## What the Community Compact means for students:

### The Student pledges to:

- **do my best to learn while in classes and when doing the home-study I am assigned.**

*This means:*

No disruptive behavior in class: Interrupting, side conversations or physically distracting others  
No refusing assignments in or out of class

- **show respect, through my words and my actions, for myself, my school, my teachers, other people, and materials.**

*To show respect for:*

The authority of adults – respond to adult direction  
Each other– no teasing or put-downs  
Equipment – no stealing, throwing or damaging objects  
Our community – no vulgar language

- **be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.**

*This means:*

No threats or intimidation  
No hurting others – hitting, kicking, biting  
No exclusion

- **take responsibility for my actions and my safety.**

*This means:*

No lying  
No running indoors  
No leaving supervised areas  
No wrestling or inappropriate rough play

- **believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.**

We want everyone to try – just give it a shot, even if it's new.



## **Harassment Policy**

It is HCCPS policy to strive for an environment free of discrimination, which includes freedom from harassment of any kind. HCCPS prohibits harassment in any form, by anyone who may be present at the school. Respect for dignity is expected under all circumstances.

Specifically, no individual or group shall threaten or insinuate threats either explicitly or implicitly whether physical, verbal or electronic. This includes: slurs, jokes, or degrading comments of any nature. Such conduct will result in disciplinary action.

Any member of the community should report complaints to the Education or Administrative Coordinator who will conduct an investigation into the alleged offense. The investigator will gather all relevant facts by talking with the complainant and the accused party or parties, reviewing any relevant documents, and interviewing any witnesses. The process will be confidential except that information may be shared on a need to know basis. The investigation will be concluded as promptly as possible. The sanctions for harassment and discriminatory conduct are dependent on the severity and frequency of the conduct. Anyone engaging in harassment will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **Weapons and Controlled Substance Policy**

The HCCPS Weapons and Controlled Substance Policy conforms to state law: According to Massachusetts Law Chapter 71: Section 37H " Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

## **STATE AND FEDERAL EDUCATION LAWS**

### **No Child Left Behind Law**

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act defines new standards for teacher quality. Under NCLB, teachers must demonstrate subject matter competency in the areas they teach. NCLB standards apply to the subject matter taught by teachers. You may request information about the qualifications of their child's teacher and teachers:

- Whether your child's teacher has met State qualification for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether your child's teacher is teaching under an emergency license or waiver through which the State qualifications or licensing criteria have been waived.
- The baccalaureate degree major of your child's teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field or discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether your child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, give their qualifications.

If you would like to receive any of the information listed above for your child's teacher, please contact Dan Klatz, Education Coordinator.

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records.

- Parents have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. If you do not want your directory information shared, contact Amy Aaron, Administrative Coordinator.

### **Special Education Laws and Principles**

Special education is specially designed instruction and related services that meet the unique needs of an eligible student with a disability or a specific service need that is necessary to allow the student with a disability to access the general curriculum. The purpose of special education is to allow the student to successfully develop his or her individual educational potential. Along with providing services to the child, if necessary, services are provided to parents and to teachers for the student to benefit from special education. Special education is provided by the school district at no cost to parents.

In Massachusetts, the special education system is based on the federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in combination with the state's special education law (MGL c. 71B). These laws protect students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and guarantee them an Individualized Education Program (IEP) designed to meet their unique needs.

# Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS) created the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”) required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. The Plan’s format parallels the draft Model Bullying and Intervention Plan that was provided as a framework for schools by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

HCCPS believes that the value our school places on nurturing and sustaining our community is reflected in many of our daily activities, our school wide celebrations and the relationships we build throughout the year. We believe these efforts contribute to increased school engagement, understanding and respect for the rights of all individuals and groups and a safe, secure and positive school climate and culture. As such, we expect that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

HCCPS is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. 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.

We understand that, for a variety of reasons, certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. HCCPS 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, 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 the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and HCCPS 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.

## I. LEADERSHIP

At all levels, Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School School's Bullying Intervention and Prevention Team (BIP Team), which includes the administrative, education and community coordinators, school counselor and nurse, will play a critical role in creating and implementing our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan, in the context of other whole school and community efforts, is to promote a positive school climate. These leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and in promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and differences. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities.

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, this Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, students, parents, and guardians. Bullying prevention and intervention is on-going in the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School. In January, 2008, faculty and staff in the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School participated in a half day workshop discussing practices and problems regarding student behavior, including bullying, within our school. Meetings with staff, teachers and parents/guardians were held throughout the fall of 2010 for the purpose of hearing feedback to the proposed draft and hearing concerns that need to be incorporated into the final document. Parent meetings were held on October 21 and November 18, 2010, with notice provided in the school calendar distributed in the summer of 2010 and in weekly newsletters throughout the fall. Management Team (comprised of staff representatives, administration and parent representatives) gave input at its November and December meetings. Domain Council (comprised of 2 officers of the Board of Trustees and 3 administrators) were active in development of this plan throughout the fall of 2010. The professional development day, on November 12, 2010, involved the entire school staff in policy development. These meetings were all held before the Board of Trustees meeting on Dec 15, 2010 where the plan was adopted by consensus.
- B. Assessing needs and resources. Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School conducted a student safety survey in grades K–8 in 2007. The results of the survey informed decision-making related to professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. In order to continue to gather information related to school climate and school safety issues surveys will be administered to students on a bi-annual basis. The information will be collected and analyzed and specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying will be examined. This information will continue to help identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will continue to inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate anti-bullying curricula, and in-school support services. The student survey will be coordinated with the annual parent satisfaction survey, which constitutes another source of data.
- C. Planning and oversight. The BIP Team is comprised of HCCPS's 3 coordinators, the school counselor and nurse. The school's technology coordinator is adjunct and involved when addressing cyber concerns. The following positions are responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:
1. receiving reports on bullying- administrative or education coordinator ;

2. collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes- BIP Team ;
3. creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors- counselor and administrative or education coordinator;
4. planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law- education coordinator;
5. planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors- counselor and education coordinator;
6. choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use- counselor and education coordinator;
7. developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them- BIP Team;
8. amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct- 3 Coordinators;
9. leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials- Community Coordinator; and
10. reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently- BIP Team.

## II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School will provide on-going professional development as outlined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School recognizes the importance of providing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, and paraprofessionals.

- A. Annual staff training. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the administrative or education coordinator 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. 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:
  1. age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
  2. age-appropriate strategies for 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. 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; and

6. internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

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 may be identified by the school for professional development in the future. HCCPS will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by incorporating it in the Employee Handbook and posting it on the HCCPS website.

### **III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed.

A. Identifying resources. The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School has a number of in-house resources that are available to assist targets, aggressors and their families. Some Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School resources include but are not limited to the following:

School Counselor

School Nurse

Education Coordinator

Administrative Coordinator

Community Coordinator

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School process for identifying existing and needed resources will occur during child study meetings. Resources will be identified based on the individual needs of students.

B. Counseling and other services. Some tools that HCCPS uses as resources in assisting aggressors and targets may include but are not limited to: behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula or counseling.

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School also makes external referrals for students and families to outside services based on the individual needs of students. Families and students have access to counseling and service information via our in- school counselor. This assistance helps students and families access appropriate and timely services. Referrals may be made to the following list (not inclusive):

Northampton Children's Clinic

ServiceNet

REACH Program

James Levine Associates, PC

Additional resources are made available for use by school counselor.

C. 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 that the student may participate in or is 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.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

##### **A. Activities that build a respectful and cooperative school environment**

- Buddy classrooms which pair older and younger students
- Weekly "All School " gathering which reinforces our sense of community
- Mixed age recess and lunch rooms
- Mixed age "mini-courses"
- "Link families" for new families joining the school community
- Weekly community service project with elder nursing home residents

##### **B. Specific bullying prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:**

- Buddy classrooms which pair older and younger students
- 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;
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and providing relevant information about the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

##### **C. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These approaches underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:**

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all 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; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

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

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School has put in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

A. Reporting bullying or retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school member is required to report immediately to the administrative or education coordinator any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school staff members, may be made anonymously. Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School has made a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, mailing address, and an email address.

### 1. See Appendix A for Incident Reporting Form.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. HCCPS will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School will provide the school community, including staff, students, and parents or 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 administrative or education coordinator, will be incorporated in family and staff handbooks and on the school website.

### 2. Reporting by Staff.

A staff member will report immediately to the administrative or education coordinator when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the administrative or education coordinator does not limit the authority

of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

3. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others.

The school expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the administrative or education coordinator. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. 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 administrative or education coordinator.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

1. Safety.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the administrative or education coordinator 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. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom and at lunch; 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 administrative or education coordinator will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The administrative or education coordinator 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.

2. Obligations to Notify Others.

- a. Notice to Parents or Guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the administrative or education coordinator will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the administrative or education coordinator contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to Another School or District. 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 administrative or education coordinator first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the administrative or education coordinator 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.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the administrative or education coordinator has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the administrative or education coordinator 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 administrative or education coordinator 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. In making this determination, the coordinator will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school policies and procedures, consult with other individuals the administrative or education coordinator deems appropriate.

C. Investigation. The administrative or education coordinator will investigate promptly all reports of 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.

If a complaint involves either of the coordinators the investigation will be coordinated by the president of the Board of Trustees.

During the investigation the administrative or education coordinator will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The administrative or education coordinator (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the administrative or education coordinator or designee and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the administrative or education coordinator will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The administrative or education coordinator will maintain a written record of the investigation.

If necessary, the administrative or education coordinator will consult with legal counsel about the investigation. Parents/guardians of both the target and aggressor will be notified within 3 school days of the investigation results. If additional time is required to conduct the investigation, this will be communicated to the parent/guardian (s) and no more than two such extensions shall be permitted under this policy.

D. Determinations. The administrative or education coordinator will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the administrative or education coordinator 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 administrative or education coordinator will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the administrative or education coordinator may choose to consult with the student's teacher(s) and/or 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 administrative or education coordinator will promptly notify the parents or 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 will comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the administrative or education coordinator cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

#### E. Responses to Bullying.

##### 1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior through Skills-Building.

Upon the administrative or education coordinator determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that HCCPS use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v).

Skills-Building approaches that the administrative or education coordinator may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions;
- 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 nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying message and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills;
- making a referral for evaluation.

##### 2. Taking Disciplinary Action.

If the administrative or education coordinator decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the administrative or education coordinator, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with this Plan and with the school's code of conduct. If the administrative or education coordinator determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

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.

##### 3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others.

The administrative or education coordinator 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. One strategy that the administrative or education coordinator may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the administrative or education coordinator 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 administrative or education coordinator will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

- A. Parent Involvement. HCCPS's approach to bullying prevention starts with building and sustaining a respectful, inclusive community of families. As such parents are involved in all aspect of the school. Throughout the year families plan and participate in school wide community building activities and events. We meet as a community regularly to discuss educational and social issues, formally and informally. Two education sessions, specific to bullying, were held in the fall of 2010. In addition, the HCCPS Management Team composed of administrative, teaching, and parent representatives, meets monthly to address any issues that cross school and home and has reviewed this Plan.
- B. Notification requirements. Each year HCCPS will inform parents/ guardians of age- appropriate work being done in classrooms around social relations and anti-bullying. The school will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the HCCPS Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, that 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, 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, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## **VIII. DEFINITIONS**

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture, directed at a target that:

1. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
2. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
3. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
4. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
5. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying incidents must meet the following criteria:

1. There must be an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the targeted student.
2. The behavior is unfair and one-sided and involves a student hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose.
3. The behavior is usually repeated.

Bullying may involve direct (face-to-face) behavior, or indirect (behind-the-back) behavior. It includes verbal, nonverbal, written, and/or electronic communication and may involve, but is not limited to:

1. physical violence
2. unwanted teasing
3. name-calling
4. threatening or intimidating behavior
5. exclusion or shunning
6. gossiping/spreading rumors
7. stealing or damaging property
8. harassment
9. retaliation

Cyber-bullying is 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, § 37O for the legal definition of cyber-bullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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.

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.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

## **IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in this Plan prevents the school or district 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.

In addition, nothing in this 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, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or school policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

Approved/Adopted 2010 by:  
HCCPS Board of Trustees  
Mass DESE

APPENDIX A

**HCCPS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

1. Check whether you are the:  Target of the behavior  Reporter (not the target)

2. Check whether you are a:  Student  Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent  Administrator  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information/telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

3. If student, state your classroom: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

4. If staff member, state your position: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other

---

7. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

8. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

9. Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. INVESTIGATION**

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interviews:

Interviewed aggressor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed target Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed witnesses Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor?  Yes  No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?  Yes  No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION  Yes  No

Summary of Investigation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:  YES  NO

Bullying  Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_

Retaliation  Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Aggressor's parent/guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

Loss of Privileges  Detention  Suspension

Community Service  Education  Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe Safety Planning: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial & date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial & date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## **SNOW DAY ?**

Check the web: [www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org)

or

Check the school's recording: 413-529-7178  
or check local TV channel 40 or 22

## **ATTENDANCE**

If your child will be absent due to illness or for any other reason, a parent must call the school by 8: 20am and speak with our school nurse (Deb) or leave a message on the attendance voice mail: 413-529-7178 option 2.  
See Attendance Policy on page 22 for more information.

### **The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School**

1 Industrial Pkwy., Easthampton, MA 010

Phone: 413-529-7178, Fax: 413-527-1530

[www.hilltowncharter.org](http://www.hilltowncharter.org)

e-mail: [info@hilltowncharter.org](mailto:info@hilltowncharter.org)