Southbridge Public Schools

2021-2022
Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook

www.southbridgepublic.org

In the Southbridge Public Schools, ALL students will experience a world-class education, and will graduate as engaged citizens who demonstrate the essential skills required for success in college and career.

The Southbridge Public Schools Student and Parent/Guardian Handbook is designed to provide information about instructional programs, support services, and expectations regarding student behavior. This handbook is not intended to replace the actual policies, rules, regulations, and practices established by the School Committee, the Receiver, or school administrators. If a policy, rule, regulation or practice is abbreviated or in error, the contents of the District's official policy manual will take precedence. The School Committee, the Receiver, and the school administration, as needed, reserve the right to develop, revise, and eliminate policies, rules, regulations, and practices as they deem appropriate. Students and their parents will be notified through their schools of changes that affect them.

It is the policy of the Southbridge Public Schools pursuant to Federal and Massachusetts laws not to discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, homelessness or disability, the administration of its educational programs, activities, or employment policies

PLEASE REVIEW THIS HANDBOOK AND ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT, AND RETURN THE STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM (PAGE 22) TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL.

District Information

What is Receivership?

Following the Southbridge District Review conducted in October 2015, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education made the strong recommendation that Southbridge be named a "chronically underperforming" (Level 5) district, allowing the leadership and governance of the district to be directed by a Receiver. This recommendation was accepted by a vote of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in January 2016.

A Receiver has the authority of both the superintendent and the school committee, and reports directly to the Commissioner. The Receiver for Southbridge Public Schools is Jeffrey A. Villar, Ph.D., appointed in February 2018.

	GRADE LEVEL	SCHOOL INFORMATION
ELEMENTARY	Grades PreK-1	Eastford Road School 120 Eastford Road Southbridge MA 01550 508.764-5460
	Grades 2-5	Charlton St. School 220 Charlton Street Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5475
	Grades 2-5	West St. School 156 West Street Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5470
SECONDARY	Grades 6-12	Middle High School 132 Torrey Road Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5440
	Grades 6-12	Southbridge Academy 25 Cole Avenue Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5414, X 405

Family Welcome Center / Student Registration	Southbridge Public Schools Central Office Superintendent/Student Services/ Human Resources/Finance
25 Cole Avenue Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5414, extension 405	132 Torrey Road Southbridge MA 01550 508-764-5450

2021-2022 School Year Calendar

The most current school year calendar may be found on the district website: www.southbridgepublic.org

SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR ~ 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Dates subject to change based on guidance from the Commonwealth of MA

- First Day of School
- Wednesday One Hour Early Release
- No School - Holiday/Vacation
- Professional Day (PD)/No School
- Half Day Early Release Day
- Snow Make-up Day

August 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	18-20 - All Staff Report/PD
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	23 - First Day of School (Grades 1-12)
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	tbd - First Day of School (K Only)
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	tbd - First Day of School (PreK Only)
29	30	31					

September 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4	6 - No School/Labor Day
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	24 - No School/PD Day
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30			

October 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
					1	2	11 - No School/Columbus Day
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	29 - Quarter 1 ends (MHS)
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
31							

November 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	11 - No School/Veteran's Day
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2 - Trimester 1 Ends (Elementary)
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	24-26 - No School/Thanksgiving
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30					

December 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	24-31 - No School/Winter break
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30	31		

January 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
						1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	14 - No School / PD Day
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17 - No School/MLK Day
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	13 - Quarter 2 ends (MHS)
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30	31						

February 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	21 - No School/President's Day
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	22-25 - No School - Feb vacation
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28						

March 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
		1	2	3	4	5	4 - Trimester 2 Ends (elementary)
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	18 - No School/PD Day
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	25 - Quarter 3 ends (MHS)
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31			

April 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
					1	2	15 - No School/Good Friday
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	18 - No School/Patriots Day
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	19-22 - No School/April Vacation
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	27 - No School/PD Day
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	30 - No School/Memorial Day
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
29	30	31					

June 2022

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
							tbd - Quarter 4/Trimester 3 Ends
			1	2	3	4	tbd - High School Graduation
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	10 - Early Release/Last Day (tentative)
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	13-17 - Snow Make-up Days
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	20 - Juneteenth holiday (observed)
26	27	28	29	30			

School Open House Dates
ERS: 9/14/21, 5 p.m.
CSS: 9/8/21, 5 p.m.
WSS: 9/9/21, 5 p.m.
MS: 9/16/21, 5:30 p.m.
HS: 9/23/21, time tbd
SA: 9/23 , 4 p.m.

Parent Teacher Conference Dates
ERS: 11/2/21 & 2/8/22
CSS: 11/3/21 & 2/9/22
WSS: 11/4/21 & 2/10/22
MS: 11/9/21 & 3/8/22
HS: week of 10/13 & 10/14/2021; and 3/9 & 3/10/22
SA: 11/4/21

School Hours for Students
On Wed. students are released one hour early
ERS/CSS/WSS: 8:15 - 3:00
MS/HS: 7:15 - 2:15
SA - High School: 7:15 - 2:15
SA - Middle School: 7:45 - 1:45

School Hours for Teachers
ERS/CSS/WSS: 8:00 - 3:30
MS/HS: 7:00 - 2:30
SA: 7:00 - 2:30

Updated 8/20/21

VISIT US ONLINE AT SOUTHBRIDGEPUBLIC.ORG www.facebook.com/southbridge.public

Procedural Matters

COVID-19 Requirement:

Students, Staff and all building visitors are required to wear masks at all times while in school buildings. The district will notify families and staff of any changes to this state required directive.

No School/Delay/Early Release

During severe weather watches or warnings, Southbridge Public Schools work closely with administrations, local authorities, and neighboring school districts to monitor conditions and make decisions about the start, close or early release of students. Our goal is to make the decision prior to 5:00 a.m. in order to notify radio and TV stations, make automated calls to staff and families, and post the decision on our website.

School delays are typically for two hours. This gives snow/ice a chance to melt as well as gives maintenance and road crews time to clear school sidewalks and parking lots. **School closures** are necessary when inclement weather creates a daylong concern for students and staff safety**. Early release** would be considered in rare circumstances when unexpected weather conditions warrant the need to send students home early.

Withdrawals and Transfers

Parents/Guardians or an agency with legal custody, (i.e. Department of Children and Families) must ensure students who withdraw/transfer from the Southbridge Public Schools are in fact enrolled in another school before a student is released from Southbridge Public Schools. No withdrawal or transfer will take place without proof of enrollment in a new district.

- Only Parents/Guardians or an agency with legal custody can request that a student be withdrawn/transferred from the Southbridge Public Schools.
- Parents/Guardians or an agency with legal custody must notify the school's office in advance or as early as possible concerning the withdrawal/transfer of a child to another school.
- Parents/Guardians or an agency with legal custody must provide the school's office:
  - A completed/signed withdrawal/transfer form from the child's current school. (withdrawal/transfer forms can be picked up from the school the student is currently attending and must be completed and returned to the same school's office).
  - A completed/signed records release form (record release forms can be picked up from the school the student is currently attending and must be completed and returned to the same school's office).
- Parents/Guardians of students leaving the United States must provide official documentation to Southbridge Public School that the student is leaving or has left the country (i.e. plane ticket, stamped Visa, consulate paperwork).

Prohibited Items

The following items are considered disruptive to the educational process in Southbridge Public Schools and are not allowed in school:

- Tobacco Products (including hookahs)
- E-Cigarettes (vape)
- Lighter/Matches
- Other Items or Devices deemed inappropriate by the Principal

Students displaying and/or using these devices will have the device confiscated and may receive disciplinary action including suspension.

Ear Buds/Head Phones

Students must be able to hear the intercom and directives from staff at all times to ensure safety. For this reason students are not allowed to wear ear buds in school. Ear buds will be confiscated and not returned until the end of the school year or until a parent/guardian comes in to collect the article. Exceptions to this prohibition apply to teachers who allow the use of ear buds in the classroom for educational purposes, or for students who have accommodations or earned incentives, but

the ear buds must be put away before exiting the classroom.

Proper Dress

It is expected that all students in Southbridge Public Schools will be appropriately attired while in school. In keeping with the preceding, dress that tends to disrupt the class or contributes to a safety hazard in class is prohibited. In the spirit of maintaining an orderly and safe learning environment, students are prohibited from wearing any article of clothing or carrying any backpack or other accessory which is lewd, which promotes violence or hate for any individuals or groups, or which degrades the beliefs of others. Also prohibited is the wearing of studded accessories, jewelry or chains, which could be utilized as weapons.

Students who violate this policy will be directed to remove the offensive or unsafe items before being allowed to remain in school. Students are also prohibited from wearing any apparel that hinders identification. Students who refuse to adhere with this policy will be in violation of school rules and penalized accordingly.

Subject to the discretion of the Principal, students are not permitted to wear the following:

- Any apparel that hinders identification to include all head coverings. This includes but is not limited to: hats, hoods, bandanas, wave caps, doo rags, skull caps. (Exceptions will be made for documented religious or medical reasons or identified disabilities.)
- Gang-related clothing, articles, symbols, or visible gang tattoos
- Clothing or jewelry that relates to drugs, alcohol, or has a sexual connotation
- Sunglasses
- Jewelry that could cause injury
- Any other dress that distracts, disrupts, intimidates, or provokes can be deemed inappropriate by the Principal or his designee.

Cell Phones

Cell phones have become the normal means for parents/guardians to coordinate after- school activities, schedules, and transportation issues. Recognizing this reality but also needing to ensure that the educational process is not disrupted and the integrity of testing is not compromised, the following policy will apply to the issue of cell phones within the school:

- Cell phones and other electronic devices must be off and put away while in school except as itemized:
  - Cell phones and other electronic devices may be used in the cafeteria during lunches. Silent cell phone use may occur in the hallways during class changing time. Silent cell phone use is allowable for students' individual communication needs; photography and videography are prohibited in the halls without prior permission. This privilege must not interfere with students arriving to class on time and the phone must be turned off before entering class. This right can be taken away at any point if so determined by the Principal
  - At Principal discretion, cell phone use is allowed in the classroom for teacher directed educational purposes only. No cell phone is to be used in the classroom without explicit direction from the teacher. Substitute teachers are not authorized to allow cell phone use by students during the class period being covered.
- Any student using a cell phone in class without prior permission from the teacher (text messaging, phone conversations, checking messages or the time, or using as a calculator) will have his or her phone confiscated and may face disciplinary action to include detention and/or suspension. Use of the cell phone in unauthorized ways to include inappropriate picture taking and harassing and bullying behavior or a complete disregard for the policy could result in more serious disciplinary actions. Any student who repeatedly violates this policy will have his or her privilege to carry a cell phone in school terminated and face other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate.
- Cell phones that have been confiscated may not be returned directly to the student. The parent/guardian may collect the cell phone from the school office.
- Though the school will secure the phone, the ultimate responsibility for any loss or damage remains with the student who violated this policy.
- Parents are requested not to contact their child during the school day via cell phone. Any parent who feels the need to reach his/her child during the school day is asked to call the school office. In the case of an emergency, students can be reached very quickly.

Gym Bags and Backpacks

Building administrators reserve the right to search all gym bags and backpacks brought onto school property at any time. This right to search also applies to all visitors to Southbridge Public School.

Child Image Release Form:

It is the practice of the school to give permission for school personnel and the media (e.g., cable television, newspapers, commercial television, radio, and the world wide web) to develop and present to the public, (print, pictures, and voice) information related to school programs and students for the purposes of public relations and the dissemination of non-confidential information. Southbridge Public Schools give permission once parents/guardians have signed the *USE OF STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHS* section of the handbook acknowledgement form.

Lost Books, Instructional Materials or Other School Property

Books, instructional material, uniforms, etc., when issued to students are done so on a loan basis. Students are solely responsible for the safeguarding and protection of such items. If items are lost or stolen, the student must make full payment. Restitution must also be made on damaged items and property. All payments must be made no later than the last day of school in June of that academic year.

If such items are not returned or restitution is not made students may be prohibited from participating in school functions or activities including but not limited to the senior prom, graduation ceremonies, and athletics.

Students shall be excused from making restitution for stolen textbooks provided that the student reports that his or her textbook has been stolen within 24 hours of the theft and a member of the administrative staff has satisfactorily investigated the complaint.

Conduct and Behavior

Code of Discipline

The Code of Discipline will be read consistently with Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012 and the following General Laws: M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 37H ¾; M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 37H; M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 37H ½; M.G.L. Chapter 76, Sections 16 &17.

Major Violations Listing

All major violations warrant suspension at the discretion of the Principal depending on the seriousness of the offense or the frequency of the violation. Any major and/or minor violations of the Discipline section could result in the removal of a student from any academic or other specialized program (academies, clubs, sports, etc.) along with any other appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to expulsion.

The violations listed below are considered major violations and could result in a suspension/expulsion hearing:

1. Aiding or abetting an unauthorized access to school
2. Any action, which tends to endanger the health and safety of the offender, other students, or staff members, impedes the teacher-learning process or disrupts the orderly operation of the school
3. Assaulting and/or battering students
4. Assaulting and/or battering school personnel
5. Bullying
6. Causing personal or public property damage
7. Cheating and/or knowingly using and/or copying the academic work of another and presenting it as one's own; plagiarism
8. Drugs and/or alcohol: sale and/or possession and/or transfer and/or being in the presence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol and/or under the influence
9. Fighting
10. Harassment, including verbal abuse and inappropriate jokes, including inappropriate and/or offensive racial, cultural, religious verbal statements/behavioral conduct on school grounds or during school activities (including class assignments) and/or that materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
11. Harassment (sexual), including verbal abuse and inappropriate jokes, or use of offensive material in a class assignment
12. Hazing
13. Improper and/or unauthorized use of any medication
14. Inappropriate use/abuse of computer software/hardware

15. Intervention Safety Plan violation
16. Leaving school grounds during school hours
17. Misuse of fire equipment, fire alarms, and 911 calls
18. Non-compliance with school rules during safety drills
19. Other-any violation not listed-including major and repetitive violations
20. Possession and/or use of a dangerous weapon, including but not limited to a gun or knife
21. Possession and/or use of any implement, which is a reasonable facsimile of a dangerous weapon, including but not limited to a gun or knife
22. Possession of any incendiary devices including but not limited to lighters and matches
23. Profanity, use of in any manner to include oral presentations and papers and extending to shows and plays and other events.
24. Repeatedly and intentionally defying/disrespecting the valid authority of supervisor, teachers, or administrators
25. School bus infractions
26. Stealing (Over $250 is a felony)
27. Tampering with school documents or providing false information
28. Threatening another student
29. Trespassing on the grounds of another public school where the student is not enrolled, or of his or her own school when under suspension
30. Unauthorized and/or illegal use of technology including but not limited to cell phones, cameras, recording devices, lap tops, iPads, etc., either school owned or privately owned on school grounds
31. Violation of law-local, state, federal

Other School Violations

Other school violations typically, but not always, involve infractions that are not listed as major violations. Some of these violations are handled by the Principal or Assistant to include smoking, cutting classes and truancy. Other violations are handled by the classroom teacher to include tardiness to class, disturbing classroom work, missing assignments, talking in class, not returning progress reports or not bringing class materials. A classroom management plan will be located in each classroom and only when no improvement is shown, will the student be referred to the Principal or Assistant for further discipline. However, exceptions may be made to this procedure as warranted and authorized by the Principal.

A school wide education service plan is in place to ensure that regardless of what disciplinary action may be taken, that all students will be provided the opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

Habitual School Offender (M.G.L. Chapter 119, Section 21)
School officials have the authority to file a Habitual School Offender with the courts for a child who repeatedly fails to obey the lawful and reasonable commands of the school.

Major and Other Violations; **In-School Suspensions; Short-Term Suspension; Emergency Removal; Long Term Suspension** (not to exceed 90 school days)(M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 37H ¾)

In-School Suspension

"In-school suspension" means removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not from the school premises, for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions during the school year. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. In-school suspension for ten (10) days or less, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year, shall not be considered a short-term suspension under these regulations. If a student is placed in in- school suspension for more than ten (10) days, consecutively or cumulatively during a school year, such suspension shall be deemed a long-term suspension for due process, appeal and reporting purposes.

The Principal/Designee may impose an in-school suspension for a disciplinary offense provided that the Principal/Designee follows the due process set forth within this paragraph and provided that the student has the opportunity to make academic progress.

The Principal/Designee shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the Principal/Designee determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Principal/Designee shall

inform the student of the length of the student's in- school suspension, which shall not exceed 10 days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the Principal/Designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The Principal/Designee shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. This meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the Principal/Designee is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent of the in-school suspension.

The Principal/Designee shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the Principal/Designee, if such meeting has not already occurred. The Principal/Designee shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal/Designee and the parent.

Short-Term Suspension

"Short-term suspension" means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive school days or less. A Principal/Designee may, at his or her discretion, allow a student to serve a short-term suspension in school. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days.

The Principal/Designee may not impose a suspension as a consequence for a disciplinary offense without first providing the student and the parent oral and written notice, and providing the student an opportunity for a hearing on the charge and the parent an opportunity to participate in such hearing.

The Principal/Designee shall provide oral and written notice to the student and the parent in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall set forth in plain language:

a. the disciplinary offense;
b. the basis for the charge;
c. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
d. the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the Principal/Designee concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent to attend the hearing;
e. the date, time, and location of the hearing; and
f. The right of the student and the student's parent to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate.

The Principal/Designee shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. To conduct a hearing without the parent present, the Principal/Designee must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent. The Principal/Designee is presumed to have made reasonable efforts if the Principal/Designee has sent written notice and has documented at least two (2) attempts to contact the parent in the manner specified by the parent for emergency notification.

Written notice to the parent may be made by hand delivery, first-class mail, certified mail, or email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal/Designee and parent.

The purpose of the hearing with the Principal/Designee is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction. At a minimum, the Principal/Designee shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the Principal/Designee should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate. The Principal/Designee shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal/Designee should

consider in determining consequences for the student.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the Principal/Designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, what remedy or consequence will be imposed.

The Principal/Designee shall notify the student and parent of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.

If the child is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the Principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

Emergency Removal

The Principal/Designee may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the Principal/Designee's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The Principal/Designee shall immediately notify the superintendent in writing of the removal and the reason for it, and describe the danger presented by the student. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the Principal/Designee shall:

(a) Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, and which meets and complies with the notice and due process requirements of short-term suspension.

(b) Provide written notice to the student and parent which meets and complies with the notice and due process requirements of short-term suspension;

(c) Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the Principal/Designee that complies with the notice requirements of short-term and long-term suspensions, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the Principal/Designee, student, and parent.

(d) Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets and complies with the notice and due process requirements of short-term and long-term suspension.

The Principal/Designee may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

Long-Term Suspension and Appeal Process under M.G.L. 37H 3/4

"Long-term suspension" means the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. A Principal/Designee may, in his or her discretion, allow a student to serve a long-term suspension in school. Removal solely from participation in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events, or both, shall not count as removal in calculating school days. Except for students who are charged with a disciplinary offense set forth in subsections (a) or (b) of G.L. c. 71, §37 H, or in section 37H ½ of G.L. c. 71, no student may be placed on long-term suspension for one or more disciplinary offenses for more than ninety (90) school days in a school year beginning with the first day that the student is removed from school. No long-term suspension shall extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension is imposed.

The purpose of the hearing is the same as the purpose of a short-term suspension hearing. At a minimum, in addition to the rights afforded a student in a short-term suspension hearing, the student shall have the following rights:

- In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the Principal/Designee may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
- the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/parent's expense;
- the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so;
- the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;

- the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the Principal/Designee, and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent requests an audio recording, the Principal/Designee shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

The Principal/Designee shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal/Designee should consider in determining consequences for the student.

Based on the evidence, the Principal/Designee shall determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The Principal/Designee shall send the written determination to the student and parent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal/Designee and the parent. If the Principal/Designee decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall:

- Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
- Set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the Principal/Designee;
- Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school;
- Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as provided in 603 CMR 53.13(4)(a);
- Inform the student of the right to appeal the Principal/Designee's decision to the superintendent or designee, but only if the Principal/Designee has imposed a long-term suspension. Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information stated in plain language:
  a) the process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that
  b) the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the Principal/Designee's determination on appeal.

If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

A student who is placed on long-term suspension following a hearing with the Principal/Designee shall have the right to appeal the Principal/Designee's decision to the Superintendent.

The student or parent shall file a notice of appeal with the Superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension, unless an extension is requested (see 5-above). If the appeal is not timely filed, the Superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in his or her discretion, for good cause.

The Superintendent shall hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, in which case the Superintendent shall grant the extension.

The Superintendent shall make a good faith effort to include the parent in the hearing. The Superintendent shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if he or she has made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and Superintendent to participate. The Superintendent shall send written notice to the parent of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

The Superintendent shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence shall be. The Superintendent shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or parent upon request. The Superintendent shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student

and parent upon request.

The student shall have all the rights afforded the student at the Principal/Designee's hearing for long-term suspension.

The Superintendent shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which meets the requirements of the law. If the Superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the Principal/Designee, but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the Principal/Designee's decision.

The decision of the Superintendent shall be the final decision of the school district, charter school, or virtual school, with regard to the suspension.

Major Violations – Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion

(M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37H)

The following violations may result in a hearing before the Principal to determine whether or not the student should be suspended or expelled:

Assaulting and/or battering school personnel

1. Any student, who assaults a Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, Teacher's Aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored events, including athletic games, may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the school or school district by the Principal. (This rule also pertains to school buses.) *Threatening violent acts on school personnel can/could be classified as an assault.
2. Possession or use of a dangerous weapon or a reasonable facsimile of dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to a gun or knife. 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 or a reasonable facsimile including, but not limited to, a gun or knife, may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the school or school district by the Principal.
3. The sale of and/or possession and/or transfer of controlled substance
   Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the school or school district by the Principal.

Hearing Leading to Suspensions or Expulsions (Due Process)

Any student who is charged with a violation of any of the above mentioned items shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the Principal. After said hearing, the Principal may, at his discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the Principal to violate any of the above-mentioned items.

Appeal Process for a Suspension or Expulsion under M.G.L. 37H

Any student who has been suspended or expelled from a school district pursuant to 37H shall have the right to appeal to the Superintendent. The suspended or expelled student shall have **ten days** from the date of the suspension or expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his or her appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent if the student so chooses. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

Student Charged with or Convicted of a Felony and Appeal Process under M.G.L. 37H1/2

(M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37H1/2)

Upon the issuance and/or conviction of a criminal felony charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the Principal may expel or choose to suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by the Principal if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a *substantial detrimental effect* on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect.

The student or the student's parent/guardian shall have the right to appeal the suspension or expulsion to the superintendent and may bring counsel if the student so chooses. The student or student's parent/guardian shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than **five calendar days** following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three

calendar days for the student's request for an appeal.

Exclusions

(subject to and must be read consistent with M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 37H ¾) (M.G.L. Chapter 76, Sections 16 &17)

The Principal or the Receiver may legitimately discipline students for misconduct even if the misconduct is not specifically described in these disciplinary rules. Such action will be in accordance with due process requirements and shall not be exercised arbitrarily or capriciously. This may also be applied to activities that are also off school grounds and that the offender knew his or her conduct was seriously wrong and contrary to school policy.

Off-Campus Status

Rules pertaining to student behavior are also in full force and effect for students while in off-campus status during school hours and after school hours and non-school days as part of a team, club, field trip, errand, school transportation, or as a participant or spectator of any other school sanctioned activity in or around the site of the activity (including parking areas.)

Disciplinary action can also be taken for ***on or off campus behavior***, including but not limited to cell phone postings and/or photos, texting, and Internet postings and/or photos that are reasonably foreseeable to come to the attention of school administrators and create a risk of material and substantial disruption to the work and discipline of the school.

Suspensions

A student on suspension is not allowed on the school premises nor allowed to participate in or be a spectator or attendant at school functions, ceremonies, and extra-curricular activities.

Students who are suspended will be provided the opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress consistent with the school wide education service plan. It is the student's responsibility to complete the work in the time period indicated by the service plan.

Transmittal of Expulsion Records

When a student is expelled or suspended under the provisions of this section, no school or school district within the Commonwealth shall be required to admit such student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion:

- Students must complete all assigned work.
- Students are responsible for returning all work to appropriate teachers.
- Any student who leaves the room without permission, or leaves with permission but does not return to the in-house suspension room, will be automatically suspended and must return with a parent on the next school day to meet with the Principal. The student will complete the original in-house penalty.

Discipline Of Students With Disabilities

The following procedures apply to suspension of students with disabilities when suspensions exceed 10 consecutive schools days or when a pattern has developed for suspensions exceeding 10 cumulative days. These procedures include the responsibilities of the team and the responsibilities of the district.

a. A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive school days or a series of short-term suspensions that exceed 10 school days and constitute a pattern of removal and are considered to constitute a disciplinary change in placement.
b. Prior to a suspension that would result in a disciplinary change in placement of a student with a disability, the building administrators, the parents and relevant members of the student's IEP/504 Team will convene to determine whether the violation for which the student is subject to a disciplinary change in placement was caused by or directly and substantially related to the student's disability or was the direct result of a failure to implement the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.
c. If the Team determines that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the disability, the student may be disciplined in accordance with the policies and procedures applicable to all students except that students eligible for special education services shall be entitled to a free appropriate public education as of the eleventh (11th) day of disciplinary exclusion in the school year.
d. If the team determines that the behavior IS a manifestation of the disability, then the district will conduct a functional behavior assessment or review any existing behavior intervention plan and takes steps (with the consent of the parent)

to revise the IEP, the placement, or the behavior intervention plan and the student will not be suspended for the violation found to be a manifestation of his/her disability.

e. Regardless of the manifestation determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative setting (as determined by the Team) up to 45 school days if:
   - The student is in possession of a dangerous weapon on school grounds or at school- sponsored events;
   - The student is in possession of or using of illegal drugs on school grounds or at school- sponsored events;
   - The student engaged in solicitation of a controlled substance on school grounds or at school-sponsored events; or
   - The student inflicted serious bodily injury to another at school or at school-sponsored events.

   The interim alternative setting must enable the student to participate in the general curriculum, progress toward the goals in the IEP, and receive the special education and related services contained in the student's IEP. The interim alternative setting must also provide services and modifications designed to address the behavior giving rise to the removal and to prevent the behavior from reoccurring. At the conclusion of the forty-five (45) school day period, *the student shall be returned to his/her previous placement* unless the parent (or student if 18+) consents to an extension of the interim alternative setting or an Order is obtained from the Bureau of Special Education Appeal authorizing the student's continued removal.

   If the conduct does not involve a dangerous weapon, controlled substance, or serious bodily injury. In such a case, the school may remove the student to an interim alternative setting for 45 days only: 1) with parental consent *or* 2) by obtaining authorization from a court or BSEA Hearing Officer. In order to obtain an order from the court or BSEA Hearing Officer, the school must prove that maintaining the student's placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others.

f. The parent shall have the right to appeal the manifestation Team's determination, the imposition of a disciplinary change in placement, and the student's placement in an interim alternative educational setting. The student will remain in the disciplinary placement imposed by school authorities pending a decision on the appeal or until the expiration of the disciplinary sanction, whichever comes first.

Safety

Safety Drills

The safety of your child and all children in our schools, and the safety of school staff, is a priority. In order to maintain a safe environment, we practice emergency and crisis response plans by having drills. Students and staff receive training on how to react to four types of emergencies: **Fire, Lockdown, Shelter-in-Place** and **Evacuation**. Each drill is explained below:

FIRE DRILL

The school will conduct several fire drills during the school year. This is required by the Southbridge Fire Department. We want each student to understand and be aware of the importance of this drill and to not be afraid when the fire alarm is sounded. By practicing, they will know what to do and how to do it.

LOCKDOWN DRILL

Each school will conduct one or more lockdown drills. This type of drill will secure the school building and safely shelter all students, staff and visitors inside the building. The purpose of this drill is to keep the students safe from any danger outside or inside the building. During a lockdown drill, all of the doors to the school building will be locked until the drill is completed. To enable everyone to remain safe, no one will be allowed to enter the building or leave the building until authorities authorize such a release.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE DRILL

The purpose of this drill is to be prepared to move to a safe location within the building in case of severe weather or another emergency occurring outside of the school building.

EVACUATION

Evacuation occurs in the event a building can no longer be safely occupied and all occupants must leave the building.

Emergency Announcements

In the event of an incident such as a lock-down, shelter-in-place, or evacuation at any of the Southbridge Public Schools sites, families will receive **two messages** through the OneCall system, by voice, by text, or both. Messages will be repeated in English and in Spanish so please stay on the line or read to the end of the message each time.

The **first message will be brief due to the developing nature of incidents**. It will be sent out soon after an incident begins. The purpose of this message is simply to inform you that an incident has occurred while we execute our Emergency Response Plan to keep students and employees safe. Please understand that we are dedicating our resources to the situation at hand and will provide more information in a timely manner.

A second message will be sent out with confirmed facts related to the situation. The time that passes between the first and second messages will vary according to circumstances as we focus on keeping staff and students safe. We can assure you that during this time, we are busy securing the situation, gathering information, and keeping all students and personnel safe, in collaboration with local law enforcement or other relevant agencies.

Families can also receive messages and alerts through the district mobile app, which is available by searching for "School News by Edlio" on your mobile device.

We ask that you **do not call or visit a school during an active incident because all phone lines, resources, and personnel must be available to focus solely on the safety of our students and the resolution of the incident.**

In the case of an incident or emergency of this nature, information will also be available on our website (www.SouthbridgePublic.org) and on our official Facebook page, (facebook.com/Southbridge.Public.).

Attendance

Massachusetts General Laws require compulsory attendance for school age children. Regular attendance is given a high priority at the school and in the state. Attending school daily is very important to your child's learning and success in school. If absences become excessive, chronic or frequent, it is our responsibility to contact you to resolve the problem.

Responsibility - Attendance of Students

A parent/guardian is responsible for the child's attendance at school. The school must be notified either prior to or in the morning of the absence. If the school is not notified of a student's absence, a wellness call will be made to the student's home. Therefore, it is important that parents/guardians provide their current contact information to ensure proper notification can be made. Please note: a parent phone call does not excuse your child's absence.

Parents are encouraged to plan vacations around regularly scheduled school vacation days. Family vacations taken during school time are absences. Classrooms provide an ongoing, integrated, and active learning environment for our children.

School Attendance Guidelines

All absences, dismissals and tardiness will be considered "unexcused" except for the following. The following absences are defined as **excused** absences at the school:

- **Illness covered by a physician's note:** The district reserves the right to request medical documentation in case of chronic absenteeism. If your child is going to have an extended absence due to medical reasons, please notify the school nurse and principal.
- **Hospitalization:** The parent/guardian needs to submit to the school release papers from the hospital documenting the student's hospitalization.
- **Religious holy days**: The student's religion requires that the student does not attend school on the specific holy day or that school attendance would interfere with required religious observances. The parent/guardian notifies the school in writing before or after the absence.
- **Death in the family:** The parent/guardian notifies the school in writing before or after the absence.

Secondary School Only

- **Mandated court appearance**: Required documentation from the court
- **School sponsored activities**

Any other absence will be considered unexcused. Unexcused Absence is defined as a day of missed school without permission or a valid reason. If a student is tardy, a parent must accompany the student to the main office.

See Handbook supplements for Elementary and Secondary Schools for details regarding process and consequences for unexused absences.

Additional Policies

Technology Acceptable Use Policy

The School Committee recognizes that Internet resources and various electronic tools including, but not limited to, laptop and tablet computers, Chromebooks, cellular phones, and digital cameras change how information may be created, accessed, communicated, and transferred. The School Committee supports the use of the district's network and electronic tools by both students and staff for educational purposes and it recognizes that the District must assure that students develop the skills that are necessary to appropriately and safely analyze, evaluate, and utilize such resources. It is expected that staff will blend thoughtful use of such information and tools throughout the curriculum and provide guidance and instruction to students in the appropriate use of both, including adherence to copyright and cyber-bullying laws.

The Southbridge Public Schools shall not be liable for individual user's inappropriate use of electronic resources or violations of copyright restrictions, users' mistakes, or negligence or costs incurred by users. As electronic tools and the Internet are constantly changing and the rate of change is increasing, this policy will be regularly reviewed to assure currency with new tools or Internet services.

Prohibited Behaviors

The School Committee charges the Superintendent or his/her designee with establishing, promoting, and adhering to regulations that maintain legal, ethical, and responsible use of the district's electronic tools and network, and assuring that use conforms with Massachusetts and federal law and regulations, as well as the policies of the Southbridge Public Schools. The district's network or electronic tools may not be used for the following:

- Harassment, discrimination, or bullying. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language or images that harass and discriminate against a protected class or constitute cyber-bullying.
- Posting of personal information. No student or staff member may use the network to post personal addresses, telephone numbers, or personal email addresses of oneself or others without express prior consent of the principal and parents.
- Sharing of email accounts. Staff and students will take reasonable precautions to maintain the
- security of email or other accounts provided by the district by keeping passwords confidential,
- Plagiarism. Text, graphics, video, or other content must be used in accordance with copyright law and properly cited,
- Copying district-purchased and/or copyrighted software,
- Accessing confidential information. No one may gain unauthorized access or intentionally seek information on, obtain copies of, or modify files, other data, or passwords for which the person has not been given access, or misrepresent other users on the network, and
- Illegal activity of any type.

The following uses are generally prohibited, with very limited exceptions:

- Commercial or for profit purposes, including advertising. Students may not use the district network to offer, provide, or purchase products or services. However, a staff member may use the network for these purposes as their job requires,
- Accessing inappropriate material. Although the district network is filtered in accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act, it may be possible to access material that is profane, obscene, or pornographic, that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence or discrimination towards other people. Such use is prohibited unless a teacher approves a specific, special exception for a student to conduct research,
- Political lobbying for candidates. The network may be used, however, within the rights of free speech to communicate with elected representatives and to express opinions on political issues,
- Uploading or downloading unauthorized software on any district electronic device. The Director of Technology may authorize downloading of software for district devices.

Social Networking

No staff member of the Southbridge Public Schools shall:

- Fraternize with students using social networking sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram and similar Internet sites,
- Contact students via cell phone, text, or instant message except in emergency or previously approved situations.
- Make contact with students except through the district's computer and telephone system, unless there is an emergency or if approved as described above.
- Give out private contact information without prior approval. Private information includes staff or students address, date of birth, grades, attendance, web browsing history, discipline history, or medical records.
- Make inappropriate contact with staff, students, or parents including:
- Sharing items with sexual content,
- Bullying,
- Harassing, or
- Exhibiting or advocating use of drugs or alcohol.

Use of District Devices and Electronic Network

All data stored or transmitted to or from any district electronic device or transmitted from any device on the district network may be monitored, retrieved, downloaded, printed, copied at any time and without notice by administration, as staff and students have no right to privacy with regard to such data. Please note that this includes information that originates on ANY device (district-owned or otherwise) that is connected to the Southbridge Public Schools network.

The use of the district's network and electronic tools is a privilege, not a right. Access to network services will be provided to students and staff who demonstrate continual adherence to this policy.

Nondiscrimination

Public schools have the responsibility to overcome, insofar as possible, any barriers that prevent children from achieving their potential. The public school system will do its part. This commitment to the community is affirmed by the following statements that the School Committee intends to:

1. Promote the rights and responsibilities of all individuals as set forth in the State and Federal Constitutions, pertinent legislation, and applicable judicial interpretations.
2. Encourage positive experiences in human values for children, youth and adults, all of whom have differing personal and family characteristics and who come from various socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups.
3. Work toward a more integrated society and to enlist the support of individuals as well as groups and agencies, both private and governmental, in such an effort.
4. Use all appropriate communication and action techniques to air and reduce the grievances of individuals and groups.
5. Carefully consider, in all the decisions made within the school system, the potential benefits or adverse consequences that those decisions might have on the human relations aspects of all segments of society.
6. Initiate a process of reviewing policies and practices of the school system in order to achieve to the greatest extent possible the objectives of this statement.

The Committee's policy of nondiscrimination will extend to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; No person shall be excluded from or 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, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. If someone has a complaint or feels that they have been discriminated against because of their race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, homelessness, sexual orientation or disability, their complaint should be registered with the Title IX compliance officer.

Equal Educational Opportunities

In recognition of the diversified characteristics and needs of our students and with the keen desire to be responsive to them, the School Committee will make every effort to protect the dignity of the students as individuals. It also will offer careful consideration and sympathetic understanding of their personal feelings, particularly with reference to their race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or physical and intellectual differences.

To accomplish this, the Committee and its staff will make every effort to comply with the letter and the spirit of the Massachusetts equal educational opportunities law which prohibits discrimination in public school admissions and programs. The law reads as follows: No child shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender

identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.Fdirecto

This will mean that every student will be given equal opportunity in school admission, admissions to courses, course content, guidance, and extracurricular and athletic activities.

Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

No school shall sponsor or participate in the organization of outside extracurricular activities conducted at such schools which restrict students' participation on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation or national origin. 603 CMR 26.06(1) does not prohibit School Committees from allowing use of school premises by independent groups with restrictive membership.

A school may establish separate teams for males and females for interscholastic and intramural compensation in a particular sport, provided that the requirement of 603 CMR 26.06(8) are satisfied.

Team comprised primarily or solely of persons of one sex shall be granted equal instruction, training, coaching, access to available facilities, equipment and opportunities to practice and compete as teams engaged in a similar activity comprised primarily or solely of persons of the opposite sex.

Participation in extracurricular activities shall be actively encouraged by each school for both boys and girls and for racial and ethnic minorities. When offering extracurricular programs, schools shall take into consideration the ethnic traditions of the student body. Criteria not related to skill levels which act to exclude members of one six or any racial, religious, or ethnic group represented in the school from participation in specific athletic or other extracurricular activities cannot be permitted.

No Smoking Policy

Smoking, chewing or other use of any tobacco/ nicotine products including e-cigarettes or devices that contains or disperses nicotine or any other controlled substances within the school building, school facilities, on school grounds or in school busses by any individual, including the general public, school personnel and students, is prohibited at all times. In addition, tobacco/nicotine use by students is banned at all school-sponsored events, even though this use does not take place on school grounds. Student athletes will be punished in accordance with MIAA regulations.

Alcohol And Use Of Illegal Drugs Policies And Procedures

The use of alcohol and illegal drugs in school is both a violation of law and harmful to the educational purposes of our schools. It is the policy of Southbridge Public Schools that the schools will respond to the use of alcohol and illegal drugs through education, medical/health assistance and discipline. An educational/ medical/health approach will be the first step in an attempt to help children decide not to use alcohol or illegal drugs to assist students who are involved. Every effort will be made by teachers and counselors to educate students about alcohol and drugs and to create an atmosphere of knowledge, confidence and trust that will encourage young people to seek help in overcoming problems in substance abuse.

The use of any alcoholic beverages, tobacco or tobacco products, or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited on school grounds, at school functions or on school buses. The rule regarding alcoholic beverages applies to all students, regardless of age. The success of this policy depends, in part, on creating a link between the educational community and the local law enforcement agencies. To this end the Southbridge Public Schools and the Southbridge Police Department agree to coordinate their efforts to prevent and control student drug/alcohol use and to respond effectively therein to incidents in and out of school and at school-sponsored events. **At no time will a student be allowed to be in possession of illegal substances and or alcohol.**

Possession Or Use Of Weapons

It is the policy of the Southbridge Public Schools to maintain a positive, safe, secure learning and working environment. Accordingly, all weapons (including those instruments which have the appearance of a weapon) used in potentially dangerous or threatening manner, are prohibited within all school environments, and at any school sponsored activity except as provided by Massachusetts Statute**s** governing licensed peace officers.

In addition, students and non-students, including adults and visiting youths, are forbidden to possess a weapon in school, on school grounds, at school activities, at bus stops, on school buses or school vehicles, or upon entering or departing from school premises, property, or events. This prohibition applies to all school owned, leased or controlled buildings and grounds, and all school owned, leased, or contracted vehicles. This prohibition applies at any school sponsored event and to any vehicle brought to school grounds or school related events.

Harassment and Bullying

Southbridge Public Schools will not tolerate Harassment and Bullying. Please refer to Appendix A for the Southbridge Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Student Complaints And Grievances

The School Committee recognizes that there may be conditions in the school system that are in need of improvement and that students should have some means by which their concerns may be effectively expressed, considered, and dealt with fairly. Such means, if well-conceived and understood in advance, can do much to maintain harmonious relationships among the schools and the students and community.

Appeals of individual disciplinary cases will be required to follow the district's policy on student discipline. Any applicable provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws or federal law will be followed by school officials in conducting hearings and reviews of student grievances. In general, procedures will begin with the authority imposing the penalty (for example, Principal or teacher) and may ultimately be referred to the Superintendent and on to the School Committee if a policy needs to be developed or changed.

Student Records

A school may release the following directory information: a student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, dates of attendance, weight and height of members of athletic teams, class, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, degrees, honors and awards, and post high school plans without the consent of the eligible student or parent; provided that the school gives public notice of the types of information it may release under 603 CMR 23.07 and allows eligible students and parents a reasonable time after such notice to request that this information not be released without the prior consent of the eligible student or parent.. Such notice may be included in the routine information letter required under 603 CMR 23.10.

Physical Restraint

- 603 CMR 46.00 is promulgated by the Board of Education pursuant to M.G.L. c. 69 §1B and c. 71,§37G
- The Southbridge School Committee has acknowledged the state laws/regulations; and in its willingness to ensure that the Southbridge Public Schools complies with the Regulations to the extent required by law, has adopted a Physical Restraint of Students policy/guideline (JKAA, adopted January 9, 2002)
- The purpose of regulations and local policy is to ensure that every student in a Massachusetts public program is free from unreasonable use of physical restraint and to dictate that physical restraint shall only be used in emergency situations, with extreme caution, and only after other less intrusive alternatives have been tried and failed or been deemed inappropriate.

Physical restraint is defined as "The use of bodily force to limit a student's freedom of movement.

Physical escort is defined as touching or holding a student without the use of force for the purpose of directing the student.

Difference between the two is force and movement.

- Southbridge Public Schools staff may only use physical restraints when non-physical intervention has not or would not be effective and the student's behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious, physical harm to self and/or others.
- Physical restraints may not be used as a means of punishment or as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with school rules or staff directives, or verbal threats that do not constitute imminent, serious, physical harm to the students or others.
- Only school personnel who have received training shall administer physical restraint on students. Whenever possible restraints should be witnessed by at least one adult who does not participate in the restraint. A person administering the restraint shall only use the amount of force necessary to protect the student from injury.
- It is recommended that once a situation is under control/calm, that all parties involved be checked for potential injuries
- Building Principals are encouraged to ensure that the appropriate staff (e.g. social worker, teacher, school psychologist, etc.) process and review the event/incident with the student, if possible and appropriate, in an effort to address the

behavior that precipitated the restraint

Restraint Training

- Principals are required to arrange training regarding Southbridge's policy to occur in the first month of each school year, and for staff hired after the beginning of the school year, within a month of their employment.
- Each building Principal will identify specific staff to serve as a Crisis Team/School-Wide Resource to assist in ensuring the proper administration of any physical restraints. These staff members will participate in an in-depth training program in the use of physical restraint, which the department recommends be at least 16 hours in length.
- Building Principals should request that the building's Safety Care trained team members attend the annual training, be identified as a resource to the staff, and provide the staff with tips and techniques to assist with de-escalation that may preclude the need for restraint

Restraint Reporting

- Per regulation/policy, all staff must report to the Principal/designee instances where restraints last more than 5 minutes or where the restraint results in injury to a student or a staff member.
- Per regulation/policy, the Principal or Director/Coordination must maintain a record/log of all reported instances of physical restraint, which upon request shall be available to the Department of Education (DESE).
- Per regulation, Principals must verbally inform the parents/guardians of the restraint as soon as possible, and by written report no later than 3 school working days following the use of the restraint. The written report must be provided to the parent/guardian in the language in which report cards and other necessary school-related information is customarily provided. The report should also include information regarding opportunities for parents to discuss the restraint with school administration, and any disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed.
- In the event that a physical restraint lasts longer than 20 minutes or results in serious injury to the student or staff member the student must, within 5 school working days of the reported restraint, provide a copy of the written report to DESE along with a copy of the school's record of physical restraints covering the 30 day period prior to the date of the extended restraint.
- The Southbridge Public Schools presently supports the documenting/reporting of all restraints, no matter how slight, with a copy of such restraint be provided to both the Principal and to Staff Counsel for Student Services. The Principal/Designee has the duty to forward a copy to the parent/guardian.

  The Southbridge Public Schools uses the DOE Physical Restraint Reporting Form to document all restraints. If an extended restraint was not done (more than twenty (20) minutes), please place not applicable (N/A) in that section of said report. See Physical Restraint Guidelines.

Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds

No motor vehicle operator shall cause or allow any motor vehicle operated on school grounds to idle unnecessarily, except for any of the following reasons: traffic conditions; queuing at a school for the purpose of picking up or discharging students; turbo-charged diesel engine cool down or warm up; maintenance of appropriate temperature for school buses when accepting or discharging passengers not to exceed three minutes in any fifteen minute period or one minute in any fifteen minute period for other motor vehicles.

Annual Asbestos Notification

A copy of our Asbestos Management Plan is available in each school and in the Directors office for the schools which contain asbestos (West Street School & 25 Cole Ave) during regular schools hours.

The district continues to update and improve the AHERA Asbestos Management Plans. Any inquiries regarding the management of asbestos-containing materials in our schools should be directed to our district's AHERA Designated Person, Michael Comeau who can be reached at 11 West Street, and comeau@southbridgepublic.org and 508-764-5434.

Handbook and Policy Acknowledgement Form / 2021 -2022

The Southbridge Public School Student/Family Handbook and supplements are available on-line at www.southbridgepublic.org. English and Spanish versions are available; please contact your child's school if you require a copy in another language. Paper copies are available upon request. Parents/Guardians are asked to review the handbook information with their child(ren) Please sign and return this sheet by September 25, 2021 or within one week of your child's enrollment in Southbridge Public Schools.

Student Name [Please Print]:_____

1. **HANDBOOK**. Your signature confirms that you and your child have read and understand the contents of the handbook.

_____

Parent/Guardian and Signature and Date

2. **TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY** I acknowledge that I have received, read, and fully understand the Southbridge School District's Technology Acceptable Use policy outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook, and agree to abide by the policies within. I fully understand that use of the Southbridge School District's technology resources, which include but are not limited to district owned computers, tablets, printers and networks as well as district provided websites, cloud computing technologies, and internet access are provided for educational purposes only. I understand that any violation of the Southbridge School District's Technology Acceptable Use Policy may result in the restriction, suspension, or cancellation if access privileges and may result in, as appropriate, other disciplinary action, civil liability, or criminal prosecution by the appropriate authorities. I understand that if I choose to use my own devices on school property, I do so at my own risk and that the Southbridge School District is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices. I also understand that the district IT Department will provide no technical support or assistance for personal devices. Amendments and modifications to this policy may be approved by the School Committee from time to time and will be posted for viewing.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature and Date Student Signature and Date

3. **USE OF STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHS**. At times during the school year, photographs are taken of students, both during the school day and at special events. These photographs may be posted on the district website, displayed on bulletin boards, put in the school newsletter, or published in local newspapers. We ask that you indicate below whether or not the school has permission to publish photographs containing your child. If notification is not received by a parent/guardian, it is understood that the school district has permission to publish student photographs for the purpose of communicating educational practices only. You may change this agreement at any time by sending a letter to your child's principal and such changes will take effect upon receipt by the school. Select one of the following choices and sign below:

___ **WE GRANT** permission for a photo/image that includes this student, without other personal identifiers, to be published on the district's website. We also grant permission for a photo/image and first name to be used for displays and school publications as well as local newspapers.

___ **WE DO NOT GRANT** permission for our child's photo/image and name to be published in publications or on the district's website.

_____

Parent/Guardian Signature and Date

Appendix A

Southbridge Public Schools Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan

Introduction

The Southbridge Public Schools has a commitment to enhancing and sustaining a safe and healthy learning environment for all. As such we are committed to providing all students with a respectful environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying, where all school community members treat one another with respect and appreciate the rich diversity in our schools. A safe learning environment is one in which every student develops emotionally, academically, and physically in a caring and supportive atmosphere free of intimidation and abuse.

The Southbridge Public Schools goal of a safe and healthy learning environment is an integral part of our district's comprehensive efforts to promote learning and enable students to achieve their personal and academic potential. Our approach is to eliminate all forms of bullying and harmful behavior that can impede the learning process through a multi-tiered strategy that includes prevention, effective and compassionate intervention, and community-wide collaboration.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan incorporates a comprehensive approach for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The Southbridge Public Schools is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

Bullying is the use of power by one or more students or by a member of the school staff including, but not limited to an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or other school staff over another to intentionally cause harm. There are many ways that bullying can manifest itself in wrongful conduct at school and includes but is not limited to physical, verbal, and psychological harm. For participants and observers, bullying and harassment interfere with learning and healthy growth – both emotionally and academically.

Bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation are prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs (whether on or off school grounds), at bus stops, on school busses or other vehicles owned or operated by the Southbridge Public Schools or their contractors, or through the use of technology or electronic devices owned, leased or used by the school district.

Bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation are prohibited at any location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or electronic devices not owned, leased or used by the school district when the act creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim or witness, infringes on the rights of the target/victim or witness at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Leadership

District and school leadership at all levels in the Southbridge Public Schools will play a critical role in the ongoing development and implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. School leaders have a primary role in teaching students and staff to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. School leaders have a responsibility for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

The Office of Student Support Services will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Specific planning and oversight responsibilities will include

- Receiving reports on bullying
- Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets/victims and aggressor/perpetrator

- Collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes
- Planning for the ongoing professional development relative to bullying prevention and intervention
- Planning supports that respond to the needs of targets/victims and aggressors/perpetrators
- Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Amending the Parent and Student Handbooks
- Leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials
- Reviewing and updating the Plan biannually as required by law

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be reviewed and updated biennially by the Bullying Plan Subcommittee of the Office for Student Support Services to ensure its effectiveness and to establish strategies and indicators of continuous improvement in the effort to promote a safe and supportive learning environment. The evaluation will include assessing the adequacy of current programs, reviewing current policies and procedures, and assessing available resources including curricular, professional development, and behavioral health services.

The biennial update of the plan shall include a review of available data on social and emotional learning, the environment for the delivery of social emotional instruction in schools, and data on school climate. This data shall be used to identify areas of programmatic strength, resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, schools and the district will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, and set priorities as warranted

Definitions

Aggressor/Perpetrator: one or more students or a member of the school staff including, but not limited to an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional or other school staff.

Bullying: The Southbridge Public Schools Bullying Policy (File: JICFB) pursuant to Massachusetts General Law (MGL Chapter 92, of the Acts of 2010) specifically defines bullying as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the school staff including, but not limited to an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or other school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target/victim that:

i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target/victim or damage to the target's/victim's property;
ii. places the target/victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim;
iv. infringes on the rights of the target/victim at school; or
v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying: Bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to email, instant messages, text messages, internet postings, internet communications, or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of 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.

School Staff: Includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, or other school staff.

Target/Victim: A student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying and Retaliation

It is the responsibility of the School Administration and Principals to make clear to students and staff that bullying or harassment in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school sanctioned transportation, or at school sponsored functions will not be tolerated. School Principals or their designees shall be responsible for implementation of bullying prevention and intervention procedures, including investigating all charges of bullying, cyberbullying and/or retaliation.

Violations of School and/or District policy and procedures will be addressed in conformance with existing disciplinary policies. In addition, all reporting, investigations and responses shall be consistent with local, state and federal law regarding anti-discrimination and the protection of civil and human rights. Consultation with district legal staff, and representatives of local, regional and state law enforcement and justice agencies may be required to ensure the rights of targets/victims and aggressors/perpetrators are maintained.

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation

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

At the beginning of each school year, the school or District will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, 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 Principal or designee, will be incorporated into the Parent and Student Handbooks and posted on the Southbridge Public School website.

Though the Southbridge Public Schools Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report, the school or district will:

- Include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the information packets that are distributed for students at the beginning of the school year and in the Parent and Student Handbooks
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee
- Make the Incident Reporting Form available on the Southbridge Public School website

Reports of bullying or retaliation made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be oral or written, via telephone/cell-phone, text or face-to-face, by email, in writing, or anonymously.

1. Reporting by Staff

Any staff member that encounters an interaction that may be construed as bullying will first be asked to try to address the incident between the target(s)/victim(s) and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s). The staff member will then report the incident immediately to the Principal or designee so the investigation process may begin. This initial report should ideally include:

- Date, time and location of the incident
- Individuals involved and their roles (e.g. target/victim, aggressor/perpetrator, bystander)
- Information about if/how the incident is part of a pattern of
- Any actions taken by the staff person to defuse the situation

This initial report may be done orally, by email or via a written note. The initial report must be documented in writing using the Incident Reporting Form within 72 hours of the initial report of the incident.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others

The school or district 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 Principal or designee. This may be done by telephone/cell-phone, text, face-to-face,

by email, in writing, or anonymously. Students, parents/guardians and others are not required to complete the Incident Reporting Form. If
an oral report of a bullying incident is made, the Principal/Designee will complete an Incident
Reporting Form to document in writing the allegation. An Incident Reporting Form may also be completed by the Principal/Designee to complement written reports of bullying by a student, parent/guardian or others in those instances where additional data is secured to substantiate or complete the allegation. This form may also be completed by school staff to complete the incident file.

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 principal or designee.

Anonymous reporting will be managed at the school or district level. Students, parents/guardians and others will be able to make anonymous bullying reports by telephone/cell-phone, text, by mail, and through the Southbridge Public Schools website. Anonymous reports should include at least the following information:

- Date, time and location of the incident
- Individuals involved and their roles (e.g. target/victim, aggressor/perpetrator, bystander)
- Any knowledge of prior incidents that were reported or not
- The relationship of the reporter to the incident (e.g. witnessed firsthand, third party report)

Upon receipt of an anonymous report the school or District will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit, an Incident Reporting Form will be completed by the investigating staff member and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

No disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor/perpetrator solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

B. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal and/or a team designated by him/her will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target/victim and/or to protect the alleged target/victim from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to:

- Creating a personal safety plan
- Pre-determining seating arrangements for the target/victim and/or the aggressor/perpetrator in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus
- Identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target/victim
- Altering the aggressor’s/perpetrator’s schedule and access to the target/victim

The Principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The Principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies to protect any student who (a) reports bullying or retaliation, (b) witnesses bullying or retaliation, (c) provides information during an investigation of allegations of bullying or retaliation, or (d) has reliable information about an alleged act of bullying or retaliation from further acts of bullying or retaliation. Strategies that may be used to create a safer environment for the target(s)/victim(s) and/or aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) include:

- Increasing adult supervision at times and /or in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur
- Temporarily and/or permanently changing the target(s)/victim(s) and/or aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) class schedule and/or seating arrangements to reduce opportunities for retaliation
- Establishing a safe zone for the target/victim to go to when s/he feels vulnerable

This is not an exhaustive list. The creation of safe environments for targets/victims, aggressors/perpetrators, or others impacted by the incident will be considered for each individual person and incident.

2. Obligation to Notify Others

The Principal or designee has primary responsibility to notify the following constituencies in writing – through a letter or email message - when bullying or retaliation has occurred. A copy of all written or electronic communication with these constituencies

must be sent to the Office of Student Support Services so they are (a) appropriately informed, and (b) can assist with response as needed.

a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target/victim and the aggressor/perpetrator (or the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) if he/she/they is or are school staff) of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee 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 aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) or target(s)/victim(s) from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone/cell-phone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor/perpetrator, the principal 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 principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor/perpetrator.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the supervisor of school resource officers and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. Investigation

The principal or designee 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 aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) or target(s)/victim(s) involved.

During the investigation the Principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s), victim(s)/targets, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. If the alleged aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is a staff member, he/she will have the right to request union representation during the investigation phase.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the Principal 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 principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Upon receipt of an anonymous report the school or District will initiate a preliminary investigation. If the anonymous allegation is deemed to have potential merit, an Incident Reporting Form will be completed by the investigating staff member and the investigation process at the school level will proceed.

D. Determinations

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target/victim is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will:

- Determine what remedial action is required, if any
- Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the target(s)/victim(s) or perpetrator(s)/aggressor(s) teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's/victim's or aggressor's/perpetrator's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target(s)/victim(s) and the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) (or the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) if he/she/they is/are school staff) about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations.

Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's/victim's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target/victim must be aware of in order to report violations.

E. <u>Responses to Bullying</u>

The creation of school environments where every student feels a sense of belonging is integral to student success. To this end, the Southbridge Public Schools will modify or institute procedures by grade level as necessary to provide a safe environment at all times of the school day including non-classroom times such as lunch, bus rides, recess, and after-school and other out-of-school time, particularly for students who have been targets/victims of substantiated allegations of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, as well as aggressors/perpetrators of said actions as needed to restore a safe and supportive learning environment for all students .

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district 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). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students or school staff, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students and school staff understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals.
- Meeting with parents/guardians/school staff to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti- bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home
- Adopting behavioral plans or contract to include a focus on developing specific social skills
- Making a referral for any further evaluations as appropriate

If a student who is found to be the target/victim or aggressor/perpetrator in a substantiated bullying incident has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and the cause of the incident is related to his/her disability, then the provision of skill building training shall be integrated into that student's IEP.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the target(s)/victim(s) and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Parent and Student Handbooks. If the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is school staff, disciplinary action, if any, may include, but is not limited to disciplinary action that is permissible by Southbridge Public Schools Policy, State and Federal Laws and Regulations, Case Law, including but not limited to Administrative Hearings and/or Union Contracts/Agreements.

Discipline procedures for aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the Principal or designee determines that a false allegation of bullying or retaliation has been made, appropriate actions will be taken. This may include disciplinary actions for those incidents where the accuser is a student or school staff.

Discipline, the need to identify constructive limits and controls in order to develop positive behaviors in all children, is an essential ingredient in every student's total learning experience. The goal of discipline is to help students and school staff develop wise decision-making skills so that they may learn to make responsible choices in their interactions with others. Progressive discipline strategies are used by the teachers and administrators of the Southbridge Public Schools and may include any one of the following strategies and/or combination of the following discipline strategies:

- Counseling that starts at the classroom level between teacher and aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s), and if not productive, proceeds to the social worker, guidance counselor, or principal and/or the assistant principal
- Detention: office, after-school, and/or weekend
- Assignment to an Adjustment Counselor
- Suspension from school that may be imposed by the principal or assistant principal for up to 5 days for serious misbehavior and that may be extended to 10 days with the approval of the Superintendent, or Assistant Superintendent
- If the aggressor(s)/perpetrator(s) is/are school staff, disciplinary action, if any, may include, but is not limited to disciplinary action that is permissible by Southbridge Public School Policy, State and Federal Laws and Regulations, Case Law, including but not limited to Administrative Hearings and/or Union Contracts/Agreements.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target/Victim and Others

Upon the completion of the investigation, the Principal or designee will consider what adjustments, ifany, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's/victim's sense of safety and the sense of safety for others as well.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or designee will contact the to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

4. Confidentiality

The Southbridge Public Schools recognizes that both the alleged target/victim and alleged aggressor/perpetrator have strong interest in maintaining the confidentiality of an allegation and related information. The privacy of the alleged target/victim, alleged aggressor/perpetrator, and all witnesses will be respected and maintained consistent with legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to comply with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Resources and Support Services

A. In District resources and support Services

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets/victims, aggressors/perpetrators, families, and others are addressed. Each principal has adopoted and implemented PBIS in their school.. This framework helps to create and monitor a safe and supportive learning environment for targets/victims and/or aggressors/perpetrators of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation. Additionally, other resources are available thats include (a) referrals to counseling as needed to address underlying issues of trauma and other difficulties that may contribute to the problem, (b) behavioral intervention plans, (c) social skills groups, (d) individually focused curricular.

B. Community Resources

The Southbridge Public Schools may collaborate with community resources to assist schools in (1) developing safety plans for students who have been targets/victims of bullying or retaliation, (2) providing social skills programs to prevent bullying and (3) offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

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 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.

Instructional Services

The ultimate goal of the Southbridge Public Schools is to prevent bullying from happening. Instructional activities will focus on helping students develop healthy social relationships with their peers and adults, and creating a positive school culture.

A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches

A program of evidence-based social/emotional learning instruction is offered to all students in all schools. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports is a district wide initiative that has been adopted by all principals in Southbridge. Other programs that foster a positive school culture and reduce the risk of violence are incorporated into the curriculum. These programs:

Counteract the following risk factors

- Delinquent beliefs / General delinquency involvement / Drug dealing
- Early onset of aggression and/or violence
- Victimization and exposure to violence
- Poor refusal skills
- Lack of guilt and empathy

Enhance the following protective factors:

- High expectations for students with clear standards and rules
- Opportunities for prosocial school involvement
- Individual social competencies and problem solving skills

The District will continue to implement PBIS with fidelity in order to ensure all students have opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will (a) prevent bullying and other forms of violence, and (b) promote positive social relationships and community culture. These might include:

- 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
- 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

B. General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying prevention and intervention initiatives:

- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students
- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities
- Modeling the safe use of the Internet and monitoring students' Internet use at school to reward positive behavior and redirect unsafe activities
- Supporting non-violent conflict resolution, including supervised, peer mediation

C. Cyber Safety Instruction

Students are provided with instruction and guidance in cyber safety and media literacy skills. The students also engage in project based learning activities which focus on the areas of internet safety, cyberbullying and bullying. Students are oriented to the district Internet Acceptable Use Policy as outlined in the Parent and Student Handbooks which (a) provides guidelines for the safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies, and (b) specifically prohibits use of the District technology for cyberbullying and other forms of hostile and anti-social purposes.

Professional Development and Staff Training

The goal of professional development and staff training program is to establish a common understanding of the tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

(i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying
(ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents
(iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor/perpetrator, target/victim, and witnesses to the bullying
(iv) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment
(v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying
(vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying

A. Annual staff Training on the Plan

The District will annually offer professional development and training to staff and will include the following topics:

- Orientation to the District Plan, including staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricular to be offered at the schools
- Definition of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation
- Identifying the signs and symptoms that a student may be a target/victim of bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation
- Cyber safety, which shall include information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying, and strategies for promoting cyber-safety
- Ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development

Staff members hired after the start of the school year shall be 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 District will, as resources allow, offer additional professional development and staff training on topics intended to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. Additional areas identified for professional development include:

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language
- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference
- Building relationships and communicating with families
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors
- Using positive behavioral intervention strategies
- Applying constructive disciplinary practices
- Teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

Communication and Collaboration with Families

Clear communication and consistent collaboration with staff, students, families, and community partners is essential to achieving bullying prevention within the Southbridge Public Schools. Communication with these and other constituents shall include information about the (a) dynamics of bullying including signs and symptoms of bullying/cyberbullying/retaliation, (b) strategies for preventing cyberbullying and promoting online safety, (c) strategies for preventing bullying and/or retaliation in the classroom, across the school community, at home and in the community, (d) information about how to report bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation, (e) district procedures for responding to and investigating bullying, and (f) strategies for creating a safe learning environment for target/victim and reinforcing positive behavior standards among perpetrators. Communication will be via this

district plan, the Southbridge Public Schools Bullying and Harassment Policy, Parent and Student Handbook Disciplinary Policies, and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

A. Parent and Community Notification

Each year the school will inform parents and guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. Parents will receive written notice each year relative to the student-related sections of the Plan and the school and district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats through the Southbridge Public Schools website.

B. Parent Education and Resources

The school and/or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the school PTOs, school councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council or similar organizations, and community partners.

Relationship to Other Local, State, and National Policies, Regulations, andLaws

A. Relationship to Non-Discrimination Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, 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 the Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 or district policies.

B. Relationship to Existing Disciplinary Regulations

In addition, nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or
37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the plan covers the behavior.

C. Relationship to Other District Policies

This Plan is related to the following District policies:

ACAB - SEXUAL HARASSMENT
IHAMA - DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO EDUCATION JIC-E-1 – STUDENT CONDUCT
JICCC-R - STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES
JK-R - STUDENT DISCIPLINE
JKD/JKE-R STUDENT SUSPENSION/EXPULSION
SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY