



## Side by Side Charter School: Safe School Climate Plan

The purpose of this Safe School Climate Plan is to create and maintain a positive school climate for all children and adults of the school community. The plan includes specific measures to prevent and alleviate the occurrence of bullying in school as well as a specifically outlined protocol for addressing reported acts of bullying when they occur.



**I. Positive School Climate:** *“The quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of relationships within the community between and among students and adults.”*

**A. Origin of RISE**

- Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, Side by Side Charter School began implementing a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention & Support) framework into their PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade school programs.
- Through collaborative professional development efforts **four core behavioral expectations** were identified as being essential to promoting a positive and safe school climate at Side by Side. (These four behaviors are also integral components to the unique mission and charter of Side by Side School): **(1) RESPECT; (2) INDEPENDENCE (3) SOCIAL-JUSTICE, & (4) EMPATHY.**
- Using these 4 core behavioral expectations the acronym **RISE** will be used to identify and define this approach of promoting and maintaining a safe school climate at Side by Side School at Side by Side.

**B. “Setting the Norms: The First 4 Weeks”**

- During the first 4 weeks of the school year each homeroom teacher will be responsible to incorporate each of the 4 components of RISE into morning meeting activities and discussions. The purpose of this will be to set the norms for all children regarding each of the 4 components that are needed to maintain a positive and safe climate



- Although the meetings will look different at each grade level, the same guiding questions will be used in each class to help structure these meetings. Guiding questions will be:
  - ✓ *What does component (Respect, Independence, Social Justice or Empathy) mean? Brainstorm what it means to you.*
  - ✓ *What does this component look, sound and/or feel like in a classroom/academic setting?*
  - ✓ *What does this component look, sound and/or feel like in the lunchroom, recess or during free social times?*
  - ✓ *What does this component look, sound and/or feel like in the hallways or at your lockers?*
  - ✓ *What does this component look, sound and/or feel like on the bus or at an off-campus event?*

#### **C. Monthly “All-School” RISE Meetings**

- Each month an All-School assembly will be held for the purpose of bringing students together to share and celebrate activities or school happenings related to Respect, Independence, Social-justice or Empathy
- “Buddy-groups”: at the conclusion of the RISE meetings, “buddy group” (pairing an older elementary/middle grade class with a lower-elementary class) classes will meet for collaborative projects/activities

#### **D. RISE Card Program**

- All Side by Side students in grades 5-8 will take part in the RISE card program. This program will be used to identify and celebrate those who consistently help to promote and maintain a safe school climate\*
- At the beginning of each school year, middle grade students (5-8) and staff will collaboratively work together to (a) identify specific expectations for creating a safe school climate; (b) create rubrics to be used to assess each student ; a criteria is defined for a rubric score needed in order to obtain a student RISE card
- During monthly “Behavioral” Data-Team meetings teachers will review behavioral data and collectively complete a RISE rubric for each middle grade student.



- A list of students recommended for a RISE card is submitted to the Director for final approval; RISE cards are distributed at an assembly at the interim and end of each trimester marking period; Students are recognized for their effort and given a picture ID card to be worn around their necks at all times in school.
- Students with RISE card are given additional school-based privileges
- An intervention for success “Advisor” procedure is set up for all middle grade students to (a) assist and work with those who did not earn a card (assigned adult advisor helps to work with students on rubric specified areas in need of improvement) or (b) to help those students who have earned a RISE card to continue and maintain their cards

## **II. The “RISE Team”: The Safe School Climate Committee at Side by Side Charter School**

### **A. RISE Team**

- At the start of each school year a RISE team will be created as the designated safe-school climate committee
- The RISE Teams main purpose is to investigate research, make recommendations to and disseminate information to the school community with regards to fostering a safe school climate.
- The RISE Team will be chaired (or Co-chaired) by a Safe School Climate Specialist(s). The Side by Side Executive Director and Social Worker must always serve on the RISE Team with at least one serving as Chair or one of the Co-chairs. The team must also include teachers/staff members representing varying grade levels of the school; and at least one parent representative.

### **B. Weekly RISE Team meetings**

- The RISE team (as the designated Safe School Climate Committee) will meet once per week for the purpose of:
  - i. Developing, improving and guiding the PBIS framework at Side by Side (Sample goals for this team will include: Establish & maintain a school environment where students feel safe and positive; create a system of data collection and analysis for the purpose of decreasing office discipline referrals; etc.)



- ii. Reviewing any reports of suspected bullying in the school; identifying and address any patterns of bullying
- iii. Review and amend any Side by Side policies related to bullying
- iv. Amend the Safe School Climate plan as needed
- v. Plan for and provide professional, supportive and educational opportunities to staff, parents and students on bullying and positive school climate (PD workshops; parent forums)

**C. Bi-weekly all Staff “Safe School Climate meetings”**

- Bi-weekly staff meetings at Side by Side will be earmarked as “Climate” meetings.
- Climate meetings will be facilitated by the RISE Team
- The focus of Climate meetings will be to:
  - i. Disseminate information to the rest of the school staff with regards to the work being done by the RISE team
  - ii. Survey the student, staff and parent population
  - iii. Organize staff activities related to school climate; (identify how student-to-student relationships; student-to-teacher relationships; teacher-to-teacher relationships have impact on school climate)

**D. Professional Development workshops for staff**

- The RISE Team will organize and plan at least one (1) annual full staff PD workshop on the topic of “bullying” in schools (this will include, but not be limited to reviewing the Side by Side safe school climate plan and any school policies/protocols related to bullying)

**E. Parent Forums**

- The RISE Team (in collaboration with the school PTCO) will organize and plan at least one (1) annual “Parent Forum” on the topic of “bullying” in schools (this will include, but not be limited to reviewing the Side by Side safe school climate plan and any school policies/protocols related to bullying)



### III. Bullying in School: Side by Side Policies and Protocol

#### A. Prohibition against Bullying and Retaliation

- Side by Side Charter School expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device
- Side by Side Charter School also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- In addition to prohibiting student acts which constitute bullying, Side by Side Charter School also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
- Students who engage in bullying behavior in violation of SBS Board Policy and the Side by Side Safe School Climate Plan shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and shall be consistent with state and federal law.

#### B. Definition of Bullying

- **“Bullying”** means the *repeated* use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic communication, such as cyber-bullying, or a physical act or gesture directed at another student attending school in the same district that:
  - a. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property;
  - b. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
  - c. creates a hostile environment (a situation in which bullying amongst students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate) at school for such student;



- d. infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
- e. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

- Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, written, verbal, or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

**C. Other Important Definitions**

- **"Cyber-bullying"** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone, or other mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications.
- **"Electronic communication"** means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electro-magnetic, photo-electronic, or photo-optical system;
- **"Hostile environment"** means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;
- **"Mobile electronic device"** means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text-messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted;
- **"Outside of the school setting"** means at a location, activity, or program that is not school-related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by Side by Side Charter School.



**D. Prevention and Intervention:**

- The implementation of PBIS (RISE Team, etc) at Side by Side Charter School is to foster and maintain a safe and positive school climate. All actions, plans and activities from the RISE Team and all-staff “Climate” meetings will occur for the purpose of preventing bullying behaviors.
- Publication and display of RISE expectations, school and/or classroom rules and all Board of Director’s policies prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation are provided to all school stakeholders (hard copies; on school website, etc.)
- adequate adult supervision, primarily by teachers and administrators, as well as within all schools’ outdoor areas, hallways, multi-purpose room, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur

**E. Procedures for Reporting and investigating Complaints of Bullying**

- Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying using the form provided by Side by Side Charter School (form will be made available on the school website, in the main office and in the Social Worker’s office). Written reports of bullying must be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the time and place of the alleged conduct, the number of incidents, the target of the suspected bullying, and the names of potential witnesses. Such reports may be filed with the Executive Director or School Social Worker (acting as the Safe School Climate Specialist in the building) and all reports shall be reviewed and acted upon in consistency with this plan. The Executive Director and/or Social Worker, at their discretion, may request the involvement of the RISE Team (Safe School Climate Committee) to assist in investigating any report of bullying.
- Students may make anonymous reports of bullying to any school employee, but we strongly encourage students to go directly to the Side by Side Social Worker or the Executive Director. All school employees will be trained in how to make a bullying report, and they will immediately take the report to the Executive Director or the School Social Worker. A student may also request anonymity when making a report, even if the student’s identity is known to the school employee. In cases where the student requests anonymity, the Safe School Climate Specialist (Executive Director and/or Social Worker) shall meet with the student to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining the anonymity of the complainant may have on the investigation



and on any possible remedial action. All anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the complaint, and is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

- School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying shall orally notify the Executive Director or Social Worker, not later than one (1) school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. The school employee shall then file a written report not later than two (2) school days after making such oral report using the school's bullying report form (see attached)
- The Executive Director and/or the School Social Worker (acting in the role of Safe School Climate Specialist) shall be responsible for reviewing any anonymous reports of bullying and shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports. In order to allow the school to adequately investigate complaints filed by a student or parent/guardian, the parents of the student suspected of being bullied must provide consent to permit the release of that student's name in connection with the investigation process, unless the student and/or parent has requested anonymity. The Safe School Specialist or other school administrator will follow-up on all relevant information while conducting an investigation. Parents and students should be advised that all reports of bullying will be investigated.
- In investigating reports of bullying, the Executive Director and/or the School Social Worker (acting in the role of Safe School Climate Specialist) will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. They will then interview witnesses, as necessary, reminding the alleged perpetrator and other parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action

**F. Responding to Verified Acts of Bullying**

- Following investigation, if acts of bullying are verified, the Executive Director or Social Worker shall notify the parents or guardians of the students against whom such acts were directed as well as the parents or guardians of the students who commit such acts of bullying of the finding not later than forty-eight hours after the investigation is completed. This notification shall include a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying. In providing such





notification, however, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of other students, including the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, or personally identifiable information about a student other than the parent/guardian's own child, will not be disclosed except as provided by law

- The Executive Director or Social Worker shall develop a ***Student Safety Support Plan*** for any student against whom repeated acts of bullying were directed. Such a support and intervention plan will include safety measures to protect against further acts of bullying. The Student Safety Support Plan, which is a specific and individualized intervention plan, will also address recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. The plan may include counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee
- **Notice to Law Enforcement:** If the Executive Director reasonably believes that any act of bullying constitutes a criminal offense, he/she shall notify appropriate law enforcement. Notice shall be consistent with the school's obligations under state and federal law and Board policy and procedures regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable student information.
- If a bullying complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of legally protected classifications (such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics), the Executive Director or Social Worker shall coordinate the investigation with professionals outside of the school. (Marlene DeBellis is the current Title IX Coordinator and Mary Newbery the current Section 504 Coordinator for Side by Side Charter School).

#### **G. Documentation and Log**

- Side by Side shall maintain written complaints of bullying, along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying investigations, consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law. Any educational record containing personally identifiable student information pertaining to an individual student shall be maintained in a confidential manner, and shall not be disclosed to third parties without the prior written consent of a parent, guardian, or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law