



## Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct

Bridge Preparatory Charter School (“Bridge Prep”, “the school”) is committed to providing a safe, orderly and nurturing environment in which students can achieve academic excellence and flourish socially and emotionally. Having a firm, clear and consistently applied discipline policy allows students and teachers to maximize class time to promote student learning. Aligned to our overall school mission, Bridge Prep commits to supporting the individual learning process for every student and our academic program and staff training and support plan is constantly refined to ensure that each student’s needs are front and center. As we support the development of our students into self-advocates, we will continue to advocate for each student’s best interests at all times.

Bridge Prep strives to create a positive, safe, supportive learning environment and it is our goal to avoid disruptions to the educational experience of any of our students. Our team will work to help students understand how their actions can lead to positive or negative consequences.

We understand that many students come to Bridge Prep because of the academic difficulties they are experiencing in school and that for most students, their past school experience was not positive. This means that there may be times where students exhibit behaviors, including those come as a result of academic frustration, that have a negative impact on the community.

When this occurs, our team will use a range of student support interventions to help the student understand and learn to manage their behavior. These interventions, listed below, are in place to **Prevent** the behavior from continuing or happening again; **Teach** the student appropriate replacement behaviors or how the behavior violated the community expectations; and **Reinforce** when students are exhibiting positive behaviors. In the event that student behavior requires disciplinary action, consequences will be logical and fitting of the student’s infraction. Infractions are grouped based on the severity of the infraction and each level of infraction, in addition to the student support interventions, has a range of possible disciplinary responses that may be imposed by the School.

We strive to create positive working partnerships with each student and their family and know that we must work in partnership with families to help best meet the needs of every student. This means keeping families informed about their student’s learning progress, school activities, classroom events and anything that impacts classroom learning. Regardless of the level of infraction, teachers or staff members will complete outreach to the parent or guardian of a student via email, phone call or Remind Message to discuss any incident or behavior to make them informed as well as share with them the student support intervention(s) and/or disciplinary responses being put in place. Students who miss class time will be given the opportunity to make up any work that is missed and will return to class as soon as possible.

### Frequently Used Student Support Interventions

#### **Prevent**

- Seat Change
- Break Pass
- Redirection
- Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Referral to the school’s Student Support Team
- Referral to school provided Crisis Counseling
- Referral to external counseling services



### Teach

- Peer Mediation
- Incentivized Behavior Tracker with Replacement Behavior
- Verbal Reminder/Warning
- Student/Teacher Conference
- School/Family Conference
- Individual Student Behavior Plan
- Student Visit to Classroom Calming Corner

### Reinforce

- Positive Parent/Guardian Outreach
- Proactive Check-ins with Positive Reinforcement
- Behavior Tracker
- Class Job/Leadership Opportunity

### Disciplinary Responses

Students who are found to have violated the school's community behavioral expectations and/or are disrupting the academic experience of other students may be subject to the following disciplinary measures, either alone or in combination with another:

- **Loss of Privileges:** A student may lose privileges based on their actions. This may include attending a field trip, party, or schoolwide event. In this case, parents/guardians will be notified by phone immediately.
- **Confiscation:** Teachers or other staff members may confiscate(take) items that are deemed inappropriate or distracting in the school setting, which will be returned at the end of the school day.
- **Letter Home (Written Warning)**
- **Temporary Exclusion from District-Provided Transportation:** A student may be temporarily excluded from district-provided transportation based upon their behavior on the bus. Prior to excluding a student from the bus, a conference will be arranged with the student's parent/guardian and other appropriate personnel to help resolve the student's behavioral problems on the bus and to arrange other means, if necessary, of getting the student to school. Exclusion from the bus does not mean suspension from school and shall not last for longer than five (5) consecutive days.
- **Detention:** A detention may be determined to be the logical consequence for taking learning time away from others by engaging in disruptive or distracting behaviors. Detentions last for 45 minutes and occur on a daily basis during lunch & recess or after school. Detention is a time for reflection on rule violations. In the case of any detention, the incident is discussed first with the parents/guardians by phone before the detention is served.
- **Short-term In-School or Out-of-School Suspension:** Procedures for short-term suspensions are set forth below.
- **Long-term Out-of-School Suspension:** Procedures for long-term out-of-school suspension are set forth below.
- **Expulsion:** Procedures for expulsion are set forth below.



As part of the student's return from a suspension, the school will hold a post-suspension conference to discuss additional strategies to support the student and the family moving forward and will encourage the student's parent/guardian to attend.

### Code of Conduct

At Bridge Prep, we want to ensure that there is a fair and consistent Code of Conduct so that students know what is expected of them at all times. We have developed a school-wide discipline system that recognizes students for positive behavior, while ensuring that appropriate disciplinary action is taken when students do not adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Student disciplinary offenses are those actions or inactions that violate the School's Code of Conduct or interfere with the delivery of educational services, jeopardize the health, safety, and well-being of any member of the school community, or threaten the integrity and stability of the school itself.

A disciplinary offense may occur while the student is on school grounds, in the school building, (whether in-person or virtually), riding on school-provided or district-provided transportation or participating in a school-sponsored activity (whether in-person or virtually).

School-related disciplinary offenses may also include misconduct outside the school, including texting, emailing and/or activity on social media or at a school-sponsored activity off school grounds (whether in-person or virtually), when such behavior can be demonstrated to negatively affect the school learning environment or to endanger the School community.

School administration will use their professional judgment in determining which disciplinary action(s) will be most effective in dealing with the student's misconduct, taking into account the following factors:

- The student's age and maturity level;
- The nature and seriousness of the behavior and the circumstances/context in which the behavior occurred;
- The student's previous disciplinary record;
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline;
- Information from parents/guardians, teachers and/or others, as appropriate;
- The student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP), and/or 504 Plan, if applicable;
- The student's attitude; and
- Other relevant factors.

When a student does not meet behavioral expectations and a violation of the School's Code of Conduct has occurred, clear and consistent disciplinary action will ensue, and other consequences as further described below.

The following chart of infractions is not exhaustive but provides examples of violations of the Code of Conduct that may result in disciplinary or other consequences. The chart may be modified from time to time or supplemented by Bridge Prep upon advance notice to students and families.

Behavioral infractions are categorized starting at Level 1 and increase in severity to Level 5. Each infraction will be responded to using appropriate Student Support Interventions and disciplinary measures detailed in the tables below. When required, the school will contact law enforcement authorities.



| Level 1 Infractions  |   |
|--|---|
| Minor disrespectful behavior (e.g., eye rolling, unfriendly tone of voice) | Communicating with a voice volume that is inappropriate for the setting                                     |
| Chewing Gum  | Bringing in possessions from home that are disruptive to the educational process (e.g., toys, gaming cards) |

| Possible Student Support Interventions    |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Redirection                               | Verbal Reminder               |
| Student/Teacher Conference                | Peer Mediation                |
| Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)       | Seat Change                   |
| Student Visit to Classroom Calming Corner | Incentivized Behavior Tracker |

| Possible Disciplinary Responses/Consequences |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Confiscation                                 | Letter Home (Written Warning) |

| Level 2 Infractions  |  |
|--|--|
| Repeated Level 1 infractions                                       | Being disruptive to the educational process (e.g., making excessive noise, walking around the classroom, refusing to do partner or group work) |
| Littering on School Grounds  | Verbally dishonoring peers, staff, family members, and other community members (e.g., name-calling, mocking, teasing)                          |
| Excluding classmates from games and activities                     | Being in an unexpected location of the school building or campus without permission  |
| Leaving the classroom, lunchroom or recess area without permission | Displaying and using personal electronic equipment from home without permission (e.g., cell phones, personal gaming systems, computers)        |

| Possible Student Support Interventions    |   |
|---|---|
| Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)       | Student/Teacher Conference                    |
| School/Family Conference                  | Behavior Tracker                              |
| Peer Mediation                            | Referral to the Student Support Team          |
| Individual Student Behavior Plan          | Referral to school provided Crisis Counseling |
| Student Visit to Classroom Calming Corner | Incentivized Behavior Tracker                 |

| Possible Disciplinary Responses |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Letter Home (Written Warning)   | Confiscation       |
| Detention                       | Loss of Privileges |

| Level 3 Infractions   |   |
|---|---|
| Using profane, obscene, or vulgar language, gestures, or behavior | Engaging in scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism or cheating |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| Shoving, pushing, or engaging in minor physical confrontational behavior with other students or staff members | Engaging in vandalism or intentional damage to school property                   |
| Being in an off-limits location of the school/building without permission                                     | Leaving the school premises without permission of a supervising school personnel |
| Engaging in intimidating or bullying behavior, including cyber bullying                                       | Throwing objects or spitting at another person                                   |
| Repeated Level 2 infractions  |  |

| Possible Student Support Interventions |   |
|--|---|
| Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)    | Peer Mediation                                |
| School/Family Conference               | Behavior Tracker                              |
| Referral to the Student Support Team   | Referral to school provided Crisis Counseling |
| Individual Student Behavior Plan       | Referral to external counseling services      |

| Possible Disciplinary Responses                  |   |
|--|---|
| Letter Home (Written Warning)                    | Confiscation  |
| Detention  | Loss of Privileges  |
| Short-Term In-School or Out-of-School Suspension | Temporary Exclusion from District-Provided Transportation |

| Level 4 Infractions   |   |
|---|---|
| Repeated Level 3 infractions  | Engaging in physically aggressive behavior which creates a substantial risk of or results in injury to others |
| Engaging in sexual activity or inappropriate touching   | Engaging in reckless behavior that imposes a risk of serious injury to self or others                         |
| Harassment (verbal or physical behavior creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment; includes Sexual Harassment)      | Taking or attempting to take property of the school or another person without authorization                   |
| Possession or use of tobacco (cigarettes, chewing tobacco), electronic cigarettes, or related paraphernalia (pipes, vaping devices) | Possession or use of a weapon or dangerous object   |
| Possession or use of alcohol  | Possession or use of drugs or illegal substance or drug paraphernalia   |
| Starting a fire   | Falsely activating a fire alarm or other disaster alarm   |

| Possible Student Support Interventions        |  |
|---|--|
| Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)           | Peer Mediation                           |
| Referral to school provided Crisis Counseling | Referral to the Student Support Team     |
| Individual Student Behavior Plan              | Referral to external counseling services |

| Possible Disciplinary Responses |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Detention                       | Confiscation       |
| Letter Home (Written Warning)   | Loss of Privileges |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| Short-Term In-School or Out-of-School Suspension | Temporary Exclusion from District-Provided Transportation |
| Long-term Out-of-School Suspension               |   |

| Level 5 Infractions   |   |
|---|---|
| Repeated Level 4 infractions  | Making a threat   |
| Engaging in physical aggression, including sexual aggression (compelling or forcing another to engage in sexual activity) | Causing a serious injury by engaging in reckless behavior   |
| Inflicting or attempting to inflict serious injury upon students or others  | Selling or distributing drugs or alcohol  |
| Engaging in threatening, dangerous, or violent behavior that is gang-related  | Using a weapon or firearm to threaten or to attempt to inflict injury upon school staff or other students |
| Possession or use of a firearm  | Setting off a false alarm   |

| Possible Student Support Interventions        |  |
|---|--|
| Outreach with parent(s)/guardian(s)           | School/Family Conference                 |
| Referral to school provided Crisis Counseling | Referral to external counseling services |

| Possible Disciplinary Responses                  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Short-Term In-School or Out-of-School Suspension | Long-term Out-of-School Suspension |
| Expulsion  |                                    |

**Gun Free Schools Act Policy**

Federal and New York law require the expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the Executive Director may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (as amended).

Any such expulsion must comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its implementing regulations, for a student with or presumed to have disabilities.

“Firearm” as used in this law is defined by 18 USC § 921(a) and includes firearms and explosives.

The Executive Director shall refer to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system any student who brings a firearm or weapon to the school. “Weapon” as used in this context shall mean any device, instrument, material, or substance that is used for or is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocketknife with a blade of less than two and half inches in length.

**Procedures and Due Process for Short Term Suspension**

A short-term suspension refers to the removal of a student from the Bridge Prep school community for disciplinary reasons for a period of up to ten (10) days. This includes in-school and out-of-school suspension.



The Executive Director may impose a short-term suspension and shall follow due process procedures consistent with applicable federal case law. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the Executive Director shall notify the student orally of the charges against them. If the student denies the misconduct, the Executive Director must provide an explanation of the evidence against them. The student shall be provided an opportunity to deny or explain the charges against them that led to the suspension.

The Executive Director shall immediately notify the student's parent or guardian in writing that the student may be suspended from school. The written notice shall be provided by personal delivery or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension at the last known address(es) of the student's parent or guardian. Notification also shall be provided by telephone if the school has been provided with a telephone number(s) for the purpose of contacting the parent(s) or guardian(s).

Such notice shall provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed and shall inform the parents or guardian of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the Executive Director. Both the notice and informal conference shall be in the dominant language or mode of communication used by the parent or guardian. At the conference, the parents or guardian of the student and the student shall have the opportunity to present the student's version of the incident and to ask questions of complaining witnesses under such procedures as the Executive Director may establish. Such notice and opportunity for an informal conference shall take place before the student is suspended unless the student's presence in school poses a continuing danger to persons or property or an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process, in which case the notice and opportunity for an informal conference shall take place as soon as possible after the suspension as is reasonably practicable.

An appeal of the Executive Director's decision to impose a short-term suspension may be made to the Bridge Prep Board of Trustees, which will make its decision based solely upon the record before it. All appeals to the Board must be in writing and submitted to the Board by email to [board@bridgeprepcharter.org](mailto:board@bridgeprepcharter.org) or by letter sent to the School. The Board of Trustees will issue a written decision no later than thirty (30) days after receipt of the appeal. Final decisions of the Board may be appealed to the School's authorizer:

New York State Education Department  
Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue, Room 5N Mezzanine  
Albany, NY 12234  
(518) 474-1762

### **Procedures and Due Process for Long Term Suspension or Expulsion**

A long-term suspension refers to the removal of a student from the Bridge Prep school community for disciplinary reasons for a period of more than ten (10) days. Expulsion refers to the permanent removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons. This is the final level of correction.

Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension or expulsion, the following procedure, consistent with applicable federal case-law, shall be followed:

- The student shall immediately be removed from the class or school, as needed.
- The Executive Director shall verbally inform the student of the charges and the evidence for those charges; where applicable, the student will have the opportunity to explain their side of the events.



- The Executive Director shall immediately notify the student’s parent or guardian in person or on the phone.
- The Executive Director shall provide written notice that the school is going to commence a disciplinary hearing to the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s) by personal delivery or express mail delivery as soon as possible at the last known address of the parents/guardians. Such notice shall provide a description of the incident or incidents that resulted in the suspension and shall state that a formal hearing will be held on the matter that may result in a long-term suspension or expulsion. The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by the parents or guardians if it is known to be other than English. The notice will state that at the formal hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, present and question witnesses, and present evidence.
- The School will set a date, time and place for the hearing, which shall be set forth in the written notice described above.
- An audio transcript of the formal hearing will be created and made available to all parties upon request.

The Executive Director, or his/her designee, shall serve as hearing officer and preside over the hearing. When the Executive Director does not serve as hearing officer, the designated hearing officer shall provide a report to the Executive Director which shall be advisory only and the Executive Director may accept or reject all or part of it. A written decision will be issued within five school days after the formal hearing to the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

An appeal from the written decision may be made to Bridge Prep’s Board of Trustees (“the Board”), which will make its decision based solely upon the record before it. All appeals to the Board must be in writing and submitted to the Board by email to [board@bridgeprepcharter.org](mailto:board@bridgeprepcharter.org) or by letter sent to the School. The Board of Trustees will issue a written decision no later than thirty (30) days after receipt of the appeal. Final decisions of the Board of Trustees may be appealed to the School’s authorizer:

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### **Provision of Instruction During Removal**

Bridge Prep will ensure that alternative educational services are provided to a student who has been suspended or removed to help that student progress in the general curriculum of Bridge Prep. Alternative instruction for suspended students will be of sufficient duration to enable a student to cover all class material, take all tests and quizzes, keep pace with other students, and progress to the next grade level. All suspended students are entitled to receive alternative instruction commencing within 24 hours of the suspension or expulsion. Alternative instruction dates, times and form will be listed on the student’s suspension letter. All students will be provided with a minimum of two hours per day of alternative instruction.

For a student who has been expelled, alternative instruction will be provided in like manner as a suspended student until the student enrolls in another school or until the end of the school year, whichever comes first.





Instruction will take place either in-school or virtually. One or more of the following individuals will provide instruction: teacher, teacher aide, or a tutor hired for this purpose. Please note that whoever administers this instruction will meet all certification requirements as stipulated in Section 2854(3)(a-1) of the New York State Education Law.

### **Discipline of Students with Disabilities**

In addition to the disciplinary procedures applicable to all students, the following procedures are applicable to students with disabilities. A student not specifically identified as having a disability, but whose school district of residence or charter school, prior to the behavior which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge—in accordance with 34 CFR 300.534—that a disability exists shall also be disciplined in accordance with these provisions. Bridge Prep shall comply with Sections 300.530-300.536 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the following procedures, except that in the event that the following procedures are inconsistent with federal law and regulations, such federal law and regulations shall govern.

Bridge Prep shall maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with a disability including the name of the student, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

Students for whom the IEP includes a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) will be disciplined in accordance with the BIP. If the BIP appears not to be effective or if there is a concern for the health and safety of the student or others if the BIP is followed with respect to the infraction, the matter will be immediately referred to the appropriate Committee on Special Education (CSE) for any consideration of changes.

A student identified as having a disability shall not be suspended for a total of more than ten days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE of the student's district of residence prior to the eleventh day of suspension, because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement.

In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE of the student's district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to parental notification and involvement.

Bridge Prep will ensure that the Director of Specialized Instruction along with the student's teacher will attend all meetings regarding their students initiated by the CSE of the student's district of residence. These meetings could be relating to the development and implementation of behavioral intervention plans, initial referrals, change in service, annual reviews, or Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs), among other things.

### **Provision of Services During Removal**

Bridge Prep will place students in an interim alternative educational setting as appropriate and mandated by 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.530 and 300.531.

Any student removed for a period of fewer than 10 cumulative days during the school year will receive all classroom assignments and a schedule to complete such assignments during the time of their suspension. Provisions will be made to permit a suspended student to make up assignments or tests missed as a result of such suspension. The School also shall provide additional alternative instruction to assist the student, so that the student is given full opportunity to complete assignments and master the curriculum, including additional instructions, virtual instruction and/or home visits and one-on-one tutoring.



During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals, equals 10 or more school days during the school year, but does not constitute a change in placement, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the student to progress appropriately in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of their IEP. In these cases, the Dean of Specialized Instruction, in consultation with the Executive Director and the student's special education teacher, shall make the service determination.

During any subsequent removal that does constitute a change in placement, but where the behavior is not a manifestation of the disability, the services must be provided to the extent necessary to enable the student to progress appropriately in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of their IEP. The CSE of the student's district of residence will make the service determination.

During any removal for drug, weapon, controlled substance and/or serious bodily injury offenses pursuant to 34 CFR §300.530(g), services will be provided to the extent necessary to enable the student to progress appropriately in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of their IEP. These service determinations will be made by the CSE of the student's district of residence.

#### **Additional Due Process (MDR)**

If discipline that would constitute a change in placement is contemplated for any student with a disability, the following steps shall be taken:

- No later than the date on which the decision to take such action is made, the parent(s) or guardian of the student with a disability shall be notified of that decision and provided the procedural safeguards notice described in 34 CFR §300.504; and
- Immediately, if possible, but in no case later than ten school days after the date on which such decision is made, the CSE of the student's district of residence and other qualified personnel shall meet and review the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior that is the subject of the disciplinary action.

If, upon review, it is determined that the student's behavior was a manifestation of their disability, the IEP Team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) (unless an FBA was conducted before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred) and implement a BIP for the student, or review the existing BIP and modify it as necessary, and return the student to school unless the parent and the School agree to a change of placement as part of a modification of the student's BIP.

If, upon review, it is determined that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of their disability, then the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a student without a disability, except as provided in 34 CFR §300.530(d), which relates to the provision of services to students with disabilities during periods of removal.

A parent or guardian may request a hearing to challenge the manifestation determination. Except as provided below, the student will remain in their current educational placement pending the determination of the hearing.

If a parent or guardian requests a hearing or an appeal to challenge the interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination, the student shall remain in any interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until the expiration of the time period provided for in



the disciplinary action resulting from a disciplinary change in placement that would exceed ten consecutive school days, including a disciplinary change in placement relating to drugs, weapons, controlled substance and/or serious bodily injury offenses, whichever occurs first, unless the parent and the School agree otherwise.

### **Students with a 504 Plan and “Deemed to Know” Students**

With regard to disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion, the Section 504 rights of charter school students with disabilities are the same as other students with disabilities.

When addressing discipline for students with disabilities, including students with 504 plans or those who are “presumed to have a disability,” Bridge Prep will comply with applicable legal requirements governing the discipline of a student for misconduct.

### **Compliance with the Child Find Requirements of IDEA**

Bridge Prep will comply with the federal Child Find requirements (34 CFR §300.111), which require schools to have in place a process for identifying, locating and evaluating students with disabilities. Students enrolling for the first time in a New York public school will be screened by a team of teachers (including both regular and special education teachers) to identify any possible indication that the child may need a specialized or Individualized Education Program, or referral to the CSE of the student’s district of residence. Other students will be brought to the attention of the team if they are demonstrating any problems within the regular classroom environment. Strategies will then be implemented to address any identified special needs of the student. Should the problems persist, and a disability is suspected, the student will be referred to the CSE of the student’s district of residence for an evaluation.

### **Search and Seizure**

For the safety of students and everyone in the school community, school property that is assigned to students, including lockers and desks, remain the property of the school. Students, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in these areas. School Leadership will make an individual search of a student’s bag, backpack, desk, lockers and person only when there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a student is in the possession of an item which is prohibited on school property or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process. Searches will be conducted under the authorization of the Executive Director or his/her designee. Items which are prohibited on school property, or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process, may be removed from students’ desks, bag, backpack, lockers and person by School Leadership.

### **Non-Discrimination**

Bridge Prep welcomes all students equally. All students will be treated as individuals and different treatment based on race, color, national origin, disability status, sex, sexual orientation, religion or any other characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law will not be tolerated. Anyone who feels that he or she has been treated differently on any such basis should speak with a Social Worker, who will apprise the Executive Director of all reports. Anyone who raises any concerns of discrimination on any basis will be free from retaliation for raising such a concern.

### **Policy Definitions**

“*School property*” means in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a public elementary or secondary school; or in or on a school bus, as defined in section 142 of the vehicle and traffic law.



“*School function*” means a school-sponsored extra-curricular event or activity.

“*Harassment*” and “*Bullying*” shall mean the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse, including cyberbullying, that (a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or (b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; or (c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or (d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property. Acts of harassment and bullying shall include, but not be limited to those acts based on a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. For the purposes of this definition the term “threats, intimidation or abuse” shall include verbal and non-verbal actions.

“*Cyberbullying*” shall mean harassment or bullying as defined above, where such harassment or bullying occurs through any form of electronic communication.

### **Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) Policy**

Bridge Prep promotes a nurturing school culture that has respect for diversity among students and between students and staff. Bridge Prep is committed to providing a supportive and safe learning environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity so they can grow and thrive academically and socially. The ability of students to learn and our ability to educate our students are compromised when members of our school community engage in discrimination, harassment, bullying, or intimidating behavior towards others. These behaviors affect not only those who are its targets, but also those individuals who participate in and witness such acts.

In accordance with New York State’s “Dignity for All Students Act” (“DASA”), Bridge Prep will promptly address incidents of harassment and/or discrimination of or by any student enrolled at the School. This includes bullying, taunting, or intimidation in all their myriad forms.

### **Students’ Rights**

No student shall be subjected to harassment or bullying, including cyberbullying, by employees or students on school property or at a school function. Additionally, no student shall be subjected to discrimination based on the student’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex, by school employees or students on school property or at a school function.

Bridge Prep’s Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct prohibits harassment and bullying, and students who engage in such behavior will be disciplined as set forth in the Code of Conduct. Further, the School reserves the right to discipline students, consistent with our Code of Conduct, who engage in harassment or bullying of students off school property under circumstances where such off-campus conduct:

1. affects the educative process;
2. endangers the health and safety of Bridge Prep students within the educational system; or
3. is reasonably believed to pose a danger to the health and safety of school students within the educational system.



This includes written and/or verbal harassment which materially and substantially disrupts the work and discipline of the school and/or which school officials reasonably forecast as being likely to materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school.

### **Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC)**

Bridge Prep has designated the School Social Worker to serve as the Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC). The DAC is trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender and sex.

The name and contact information for the DAC is posted on the school's website and is as follows.

Tiffani Policastro  
Social Worker  
[tpolicastro@bridgeprepcharter.org](mailto:tpolicastro@bridgeprepcharter.org)  
718-274-3437

The DAC will be accessible to students and other employees for consultation and advice.

### **Prevention**

In the school setting, we are provided the opportunity to develop our students into caring, smart well-rounded young people, and our Social Emotional Learning programming and school culture is rooted in respect for others. Students are provided with a weekly class period for Social Emotional Learning, led by one of our Social Workers, in addition to various other forms of social emotional programming, such as individual crisis counseling and peer groups which exist to not only decrease incidents of bullying, but to help our students learn to develop supportive relationships with one another. Staff are provided with targeted support to identify the warning signs of bullying, as well as information related to their responsibility of being active participants in the prevention of bullying before overt acts occur.

In order to assure the success and fidelity of our Social Emotional programming, the School's DAC works with the entire staff to coordinate the dissemination of information on anti-bullying, implement strategies to prevent bullying, and enforce this policy. The DAC meets directly with School Leadership to provide updates and to share concerns or request needed support.

### **Intervention**

Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step in preventing escalation and resolving issues at the earliest stages. The purpose of intervention, which may involve remediation according to the School's Code of Conduct, is to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior and protect and prioritize the safety of the target.

### **Reporting and Investigation**

All Bridge Prep staff members are responsible for reporting harassment, bullying or discrimination of which they have been made aware to their immediate supervisor. Any student who believes that s/he is being subjected to harassment, bullying, or discrimination, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of harassment, bullying or discrimination, shall report the harassment, bullying or discrimination to any staff member, the DAC, or to the Executive Director. A staff member who witnesses harassment, bullying or discrimination, or who receives an oral or written report of harassment, bullying or discrimination, shall promptly orally notify the Executive Director not



later than one school day after witnessing, or receiving a report of, such acts and shall file a written report with the Executive Director not later than two school days after making such oral report.

The Executive Director shall promptly lead or supervise a thorough investigation of all reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination, and ensure the investigation is completed in a timely manner, and shall take appropriate action, including as necessary, referral to the next level of supervisory authority (e.g., the Board of Trustees) and/or other official designated by the Board to investigate allegations of harassment, bullying or discrimination. When an investigation reveals any verified harassment, bullying or discrimination, the School will take prompt actions that are reasonably calculated to end the harassment, bullying or discrimination, eliminate any hostile environment, create a more positive school culture and climate, and prevent recurrence of the behavior. Any such actions shall be consistent with Bridge Prep's Code of Conduct, which helps support our mission and our goal of ensuring a safe, supportive learning environment for all students that is free from discrimination and harassment. It is our goal that our students come to school every day ready to learn and participate as active members of our school community, respectful of the needs of their peers.

Follow up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged harasser and victim shall be made to ensure that the harassment, bullying or discrimination has not resumed and that those involved in the investigation of allegations of harassment, bullying or discrimination have not suffered retaliation.

The Executive Director shall provide a report on data and trends related to harassment, bullying and discrimination to the Board of Trustees at least once during each school year. Material incidents of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination on school grounds or at a school function will be reported to the State Education Department as required by law.

The Executive Director shall promptly notify law enforcement authorities when the Executive Director believes that any harassment/bullying or discrimination constitutes criminal conduct.

### **No Retaliation**

Bridge Prep prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who report or participate in the investigation of allegations of harassment, bullying or discrimination. All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and School policies, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

### **Distribution of Policy**

Bridge Prep shall distribute a written or electronic copy of this Policy to all employees, students, and parents/guardians at least once during every school year.