Technical Academies of Minnesota

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514 BULLYING PROHIBITION POLICY

I. PURPOSE

A safe, civil environment is needed for students to learn, attain high academic standards, and promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn and/or a teacher's ability to educate students in a safe environment. The charter school cannot monitor students' activities at all times or eliminate all incidents of bullying, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of charter school personnel. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of the charter school and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of the charter school in its normal operations, the charter school intends to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond to, and to remediate and discipline for those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. The purpose of this policy is to assist the charter school in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, reprisal, retaliation, and other similar disruptive and detrimental behavior.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited:

1. on the charter school premises, at charter school functions or activities, on the charter school transportation;

2. by the use of electronic technology and communications on the charter school premises, during the charter school functions or activities, on the charter school transportation, or on the charter school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists: or

3. by the use of electronic technology and communications off charter school premises to the extent such use substantially and materially disrupts student learning or the charter school environment.

B. A school-aged child who voluntarily participates in a public charter school activity, such as a cocurricular or extracurricular activity, is subject to the policy provisions applicable to the public charter school students participating in the activity.

C. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes bullying or other prohibited conduct that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the charter school or the safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in charter school functions or activities or receive charter school benefits, services, or privileges. This policy also applies to an act of cyberbullying, regardless of whether such an act is committed on or off charter school property and/or with or without the use of charter school resources. This policy also applies to sexual exploitation.

D. Malicious and sadistic conduct involving race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, religion, sexual harassment, and sexual orientation and gender identity as defined in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 363A is prohibited. This prohibition applies to students, independent contractors, teachers, and other charter school staff.

Malicious and sadistic conduct and sexual exploitation by a charter school or charter school staff member, independent contractor, or enrolled student against a staff member, independent contractor, or student that occurs as described in Article II. A above is prohibited.

E. No charter school staff, volunteer, or contractor shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.

F. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen or negate the prohibitions contained in this policy.

G. Retaliation against a victim, a good-faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.

H. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.

I. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, retaliation, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline or other remedial responses for that act in accordance with the charter school's policies and procedures, including the charter school's discipline policy number 506. The charter school may take into account the following factors:

1. The developmental ages and maturity levels of the parties involved;

2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;

3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;

4. The relationship between the parties involved; and

5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Consequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from remedial responses or positive behavioral interventions to a reflection day and/or expulsion. The charter school shall employ research-based, developmentally appropriate best practices that include preventative and remedial measures and effective discipline for deterring violations of this policy, apply throughout the charter school, and foster student, parent, and community participation.

Consequences for charter school staff who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying, or who engage in an act of reprisal or intentionally false reporting of bullying, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge.

Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but are not be limited to, exclusion from charter school property and events.

J. The charter school will investigate all complaints of bullying reported to the charter school and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, charter school staff, volunteer, or contractor found to have violated this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

A. “Bullying” means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

1. an actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or

2. materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in charter school functions or activities or receive charter school benefits, services, or privileges.

The term “bullying” specifically includes cyberbullying, malicious and sadistic conduct, and sexual exploitation.

B. “Cyberbullying” means bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network Internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device. The term applies to prohibited conduct that occurs on charter school premises, on charter school property, at charter school functions or activities, on charter school transportation, on charter school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists, or off charter school premises to the extent that it substantially and materially disrupts student learning or the charter school environment.

C. “Immediately” means as soon as possible, but in no event longer than 24 hours.

D. “Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct” means, but is not limited to, conduct that does the following:

1. Causes physical harm to a student or a student’s property or causes a student to be in reasonable fear of harm to person or property;

2. Under Minnesota common law, violates a student’s reasonable expectation of privacy, defames a student, or constitutes intentional infliction of emotional distress against a student; or

3. Is directed at any student or students, including those based on a person’s actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, or status with regard to public assistance, age, or any additional characteristic defined in the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA). However, prohibited conduct need not be based on any particular characteristic defined in this paragraph or the MHRA.

E. “Malicious and sadistic conduct” means creating a hostile learning environment by acting with the intent to cause harm by intentionally injuring another without just cause or reason, or engaging in extreme or excessive cruelty or delighting in cruelty.

F. “On charter school premises, on charter school property, at charter school functions or activities, or on charter school transportation” means all

charter school buildings, charter school grounds, and charter school property or property immediately adjacent to charter school grounds, charter school bus stops, charter school buses, charter school vehicles, charter school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for charter school purposes, the area of entrance or departure from charter school grounds, premises, or events, and all charter school-related functions, charter school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. Charter school property may also include a student's walking route to or from the charter school for purposes of attending the charter school or charter school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the charter school does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability for them.

G. "Prohibited conduct" means bullying or cyberbullying, malicious and sadistic conduct, sexual exploitation, or retaliation or reprisal for asserting, alleging, reporting, or providing information about such conduct or knowingly making a false report about prohibited conduct.

H. "Remedial response" means a measure to stop and correct prohibited conduct, prevent prohibited conduct from recurring, and protect, support, and intervene on behalf of a student who is the target or victim of prohibited conduct.

I. "Student" means a student enrolled in a charter school.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE

A. Any person who believes they have been the target or victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying or prohibited conduct under this policy shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate charter school official designated by this policy. A person may report bullying anonymously. However, the charter school may not rely solely on an anonymous report to determine discipline or other remedial responses.

B. The charter school encourages the reporting party or complainant to use the report form available from the office manager of each building or available in the charter school office, but oral reports shall be considered complaints as well.

C. The site Climate and Culture Committee is responsible for receiving reports of bullying or other prohibited conduct at the building level. Any person may report bullying or other prohibited conduct directly to a charter school human rights officer or the charter school board chair. If the complaint involves the building report taker, the complaint shall be made or filed directly with the charter school board chair or the charter school human rights officer by the reporting party or complainant.

The building report taker shall ensure that this policy and its procedures, practices, consequences, and sanctions are fairly and fully implemented and shall serve as the primary contact on policy and procedural matters. The building report taker or a third party designated by the charter school shall be responsible for the investigation. The building report taker shall provide information about available community resources to the target or victim of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, the perpetrator, and other affected individuals as appropriate.

D. A charter school staff, volunteer, or contractor shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who witnesses, observes, receives a report of, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying or other prohibited conduct shall make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the bullying or prohibited conduct and shall inform the building report taker immediately. Charter school staff who fail to inform the building report taker of conduct that may constitute bullying or other prohibited conduct or who fail to make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the bullying or prohibited conduct in a timely manner may be subject to disciplinary action.

E. Reports of bullying or other prohibited conduct are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law. The building report taker, in conjunction with the responsible authority, shall be responsible for keeping and regulating access to any report of bullying and the record of any resulting investigation.

F. Submission of a good-faith complaint or report of bullying or other prohibited conduct will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, work assignments, or educational or work environment.

G. The charter school will respect the privacy of the complainant(s), the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the charter school's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

V. CHARTER SCHOOL ACTION

A. Within three school days of the receipt of a complaint or report of bullying or other prohibited conduct, the charter school shall undertake or authorize an investigation by the building report taker or a third party designated by the charter school.

B. The building report taker or other appropriate charter school officials may take immediate steps, at their discretion, to protect the target or victim of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, the complainant, the reporter, and students or others pending completion of an investigation of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, consistent with applicable law.

C. The alleged perpetrator of the bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be allowed the opportunity to present a defense during the investigation or prior to the imposition of discipline or other remedial responses.

D. Upon completion of an investigation that determines that bullying or other prohibited conduct has occurred, the charter school will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, reflection day, exclusion, expulsion, transfer, remediation, termination, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and appropriately discipline prohibited conduct. Remedial responses to bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be tailored to the particular incident and nature of the conduct and shall take into account the factors specified in Section II.F. of this policy. Charter school action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable work agreements; applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; the student discipline policy number 506 and other applicable charter school policies; and applicable regulations.

E. The charter school is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the charter school. Charter school officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students who are targets of bullying or other prohibited conduct and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of alleged perpetrators of bullying or other prohibited conduct who have been involved in a reported and confirmed bullying incident of the remedial or disciplinary action taken, to the extent permitted by law.

F. In order to prevent or respond to bullying or other prohibited conduct committed by or directed against a child with a disability, the charter school shall, when determined appropriate by the child's individualized education program (IEP) team or Section 504 team, allow the child's IEP or Section 504 plan to be drafted to address the skills and proficiencies the child needs as a result of the child's disability to allow the child to respond to or not to engage in bullying or other prohibited conduct.

VI. RETALIATION OR REPRISAL

The charter school will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, charter school staff, volunteer, contractor who commits an act of reprisal or who retaliates against any person who asserts, alleges, or makes a good faith report

of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, who provides information about bullying or prohibited conduct, who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, or who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying or prohibited conduct. Retaliation includes but is not limited to any form of intimidation, reprisal, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and to appropriately discipline the individual(s) who engaged in the prohibited conduct. Remedial responses to the prohibited conduct shall be tailored to the particular incident and nature of the conduct and shall take into account the factors specified in Section II.F. of this policy.

VII. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A. Consistent with its applicable policies and practices, the charter school must discuss this policy with students, charter school staff, and volunteers, and provide appropriate training for all charter school staff to prevent and respond to prohibited conduct. The charter school shall establish a training cycle for charter school personnel to occur during a period not to exceed every three school years. Newly employed charter school staff must receive training within the first year of their employment. The charter school may accelerate the training cycle or provide additional training based on a particular need or circumstance. This policy shall be included in employee handbooks, training materials, and publications on charter school rules, procedures, and standards of conduct, which materials shall also be used to publicize this policy.

B. The charter school shall require ongoing professional development, consistent with Minnesota Statutes section 122A.60, to build the skills of all charter school staff who regularly interact with students to identify, prevent, and appropriately address bullying and other prohibited conduct. Such professional development includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies both to prevent and to immediately and effectively intervene to stop prohibited conduct;

2. The complex dynamics affecting a perpetrator, target, and witnesses to prohibited conduct;

3. Research on prohibited conduct, including specific categories of students at risk for perpetrating or being the target or victim of bullying or other prohibited conduct in the charter school;

4. The incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and

5. Internet safety and cyberbullying.

C. The charter school annually will provide education and information to students regarding bullying, including information regarding this charter school policy prohibiting bullying, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying and other prohibited conduct.

D. The staff of the charter school is directed to implement programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to respond to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize the target or victim, and to make resources or referrals to resources available to targets or victims of bullying.

E. The charter school staff is encouraged to provide developmentally appropriate instruction and is directed to review programmatic instruction to determine if adjustments are necessary to help students identify and prevent or reduce bullying and other prohibited conduct, to value diversity in the charter school and society, to develop and improve students' knowledge and skills for solving problems, managing conflict, engaging in civil discourse, and recognizing, responding to, and reporting bullying or other prohibited conduct, and to make effective prevention and intervention programs available to students.

The charter school staff must establish strategies for creating a positive charter school climate and use evidence-based social-emotional learning to prevent and reduce discrimination and other improper conduct.

The charter school staff is encouraged, to the extent practicable, to take such actions as it may deem appropriate to accomplish the following:

1. Engage all students in creating a safe and supportive charter school environment;

2. Partner with parents and other community members to develop and implement prevention and intervention programs;

3. Engage all students and adults in integrating education, intervention, and other remedial responses into the charter school environment;

4. Train student bystanders to intervene in and report incidents of bullying and other prohibited conduct to the charter schools' primary contact person;

5. Teach students to advocate for themselves and others;

6. Prevent inappropriate referrals to special education of students who may engage in bullying or other prohibited conduct; and

7. Foster student collaborations that, in turn, foster a safe and supportive charter school climate.

F. The charter school may implement violence prevention and character development education programs to prevent or reduce policy violations. Such programs may offer instruction in character education, including, but not limited to, qualities such as attentiveness, truthfulness, respect for authority, diligence, gratitude, self-discipline, patience, forgiveness, respect for others, peacemaking, and resourcefulness.

G. The charter school shall inform affected students and their parents of rights they may have under state and federal data practices laws to obtain access to data related to an incident and their right to contest the accuracy or completeness of the data. The charter school may accomplish this requirement by including all or applicable parts of its protection and privacy of pupil records policy number 515 in the student handbook.

VIII. NOTICE

A. The charter school will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and staff, and this policy shall appear in the student handbook.

B. Article II, paragraph D, regarding malicious and sadistic conduct, must be conspicuously posted in the office of each charter school.

C. This policy shall be conspicuously posted in the offices of the charter schools in summary form.

D. This policy must be distributed to each charter school staff member and independent contractor, if the contractor regularly interacts with students at the time of employment with the charter school.

E. Notice of the rights and responsibilities of students and their parents under this policy must be included in the student discipline policy number 506, distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year.

F. This policy shall be available to all parents and other charter school community members in an electronic format in the languages appearing on the charter school's website, consistent with charter school policies and practices.

G. The charter school shall provide an electronic copy of its most recently amended policy to the Minnesota Commissioner of Education.

IX. POLICY REVIEW

To the extent practicable, the charter school board shall, on a cycle consistent with other charter school policies, review and revise this policy. The policy shall be made consistent with Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.031 and 121A.0312, and other applicable law. Revisions shall be made in consultation with students, parents, and community organizations.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.05, Subds. 9, 11, 13, and 17 (Definition)
Minn. Stat. § 120B.232 (Character Development Education)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.03 (Model Policy)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (School Student Bullying Policy)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.0311 (Notice of Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Parents under the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.0312 (Malicious and Sadistic Conduct)
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.69 (Hazing Policy)
Minn. Stat. Ch. 124E (Charter Schools)
Minn. Stat. Ch. 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act)
20 U.S.C. § 1232g *et seq.* (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
34 C.F.R. §§ 99.1 - 99.67 (Family Educational Rights and Privacy)

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 403 (Discipline, Suspension, and Dismissal of Charter School Employees)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 413 (Harassment and Violence)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 414 (Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 415 (Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 423 (Employee-Student Relationships)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 501 (School Weapons Policy)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 507 (Corporal Punishment)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 521 (Student Disability Nondiscrimination)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 522 (Title IX Sex Nondiscrimination Policy)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 524 (Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 525 (Violence Prevention)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 526 (Hazing Prohibition)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 529 (Staff Notification of Violent Behavior by Students)

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 709 (Student Transportation Safety Policy)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 711 (Video Recording on School Buses)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 712 (Video Surveillance Other Than on Buses)