

# **Taconic High School**



**Student Handbook  
2024-2025**

## **Message from the Principal:**

Welcome to Taconic High School! The Taconic High School Student Handbook is designed to supplement the Pittsfield Public Schools District Handbook. This handbook is designed to provide a summary of the most important procedures and policies as they relate to THS students and families. This information will help you to understand your rights and opportunities as well as your responsibilities and obligations in order to have a safe and successful high school experience. It is important that you and your families review these policies and procedures to ensure a successful and positive experience at THS.

The THS staff looks forward to serving you.

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Interim Principal  
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## **School Department Organization**

### **School Committee**

The Honorable Peter M. Marchetti, Mayor of Pittsfield

Dr. William J. Cameron, Chair

Mr. Daniel C. Elias, Vice Chair

Ms. Diana Belair

Mr. William Garrity

Mr. Dominic Sacco

Ms. Sara Hathaway

### **Administration**

Mr. Joseph Curtis, Superintendent

Dr. Matthew Bishop, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Assessment, and Educational Engagement

Ms. Jennifer Stokes, Assistant Superintendent of School Transformation and Accountability

Ms. Kristen C. Benhke, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance

Ms. Tammy Gage, Assistant Superintendent for College and Career Readiness

### **Taconic High School**

Ms. Angela Johansen, Interim Principal

Mr. Michael Taber, Interim Vice Principal

Ms. Amy Shaw, Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning

Ms. Marcie Simonds, Vocational Supervisor

413.448.9600

### **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

The Pittsfield Public Schools, in accordance with its non-discrimination and zero tolerance policy, does not discriminate in its programs, activities, facilities, employment, or educational opportunities on the basis of race, color, age, disability, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity and does not tolerate any form of discrimination, intimidation, threat, coercion and/or harassment that insults the dignity of others by interfering with their freedom to learn and work. [M.G.L. c.76, s5]

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Taconic High School  
 BELL SCHEDULE 2022-2023  
 (93 minute class time, 4 minute passing)

Alternating Green and Gold Weeks  
 Green Week: Periods 1-4  
 Gold Week: Periods 5-8

[Please check the school website or Click Here for Green/Gold Dates](#)

WARNING BELL.....7:30

PERIOD ONE/FIVE.....7:35 - 9:11

PERIOD TWO/SIX.....9:15 - 10:46

PERIOD THREE/SEVEN (includes Lunch).....10:50 - 12:55

	FIRST LUNCH LUNCH (FLR 2) Classes	SECOND THIRD LUNCH All CTE (FLR 3) Class
Lunch 10:50 - 11:20	Lunch 11:45 - 12:15	Class 10:50 - 12:21
Class 11:24 - 12:55		Lunch 12:25 - 12:55

PERIOD FOUR/EIGHT.....12:59 - 2:30

BUS DEPARTURE.....2:35

## Marking System

Report cards are issued approximately every ten weeks via Email delivery. A report card grade reflects elements of completion of assignments, test scores, and attendance. Informal progress reports are issued approximately halfway through each marking period.

Since all classes at Taconic utilize Canvas to communicate assignments, messages, and grades, THS strongly encourages all families to sign up and follow their student on the Canvas account online and/or download the app to your phone. If you do not have a Canvas account, forgot your password, or need assistance logging on, please see the detailed instructions on our school and/or district website or contact the Taconic High School guidance department at 448-9600 x1582. If you already have access, but need assistance navigating the website or smartphone app, please do not hesitate to call guidance and someone will assist you. The Canvas Parent platform is an important tool to help families monitor student academic progress, and we strongly encourage all families to frequently log in to check student grades.

High school grades range from 0 to 100. A grade of 60 is passing. Averaging the four-quarter grades arrives at a final grade for a full-year course. Class attendance and teacher comments will appear on the report card.

A grade point average is used to determine the following:

High Honors	=	92
Honors	=	88

## Class Leveling

Leveled courses at Taconic will carry a designation of Advanced Placement, Honors, or Intensive. In some subjects, non-leveled courses will be offered as well.

**Advanced Placement** courses are part of the College Board program. These courses are taught at the college level and may earn college credit depending on the level of achievement on Advanced Placement tests. Students enrolling in any Advanced Placement course are required to sign an AP contract, complete a summer assignment, and take the AP exam at the end of the course. As our mission is to promote Career and College readiness, all students are strongly encouraged to attempt an AP class before they graduate.

An **honors level course** covers the same curriculum and high priority standards as **intensive level** courses. The difference between the two levels is the depth to which the material is covered as well as an increased expectation of independent work.

It is expected that the course level will be appropriate to student capabilities. Please note that some four year state colleges will not recognize non-titled courses as fulfilling admission requirements and students who take non-titled courses are at risk for non-acceptance at these institutions.

Students and parents are advised that courses taken preparatory to the fulfillment of entrance requirements at competitive colleges and universities should be at the AP and Honors level.

If you have any doubt about the level that is appropriate for you or your student, please consult your school counselor who will help you come to an appropriate conclusion.

### Teacher Grades

Teacher grades for all courses not labeled Pass/Fail shall be on a numerical basis with a grade of 60 being the lowest passing grade.

If a teacher is absent for more than two consecutive weeks, every effort will be made to find a qualified permanent sub who will assume grading responsibilities. If a qualified, permanent sub is not readily available, the following grading system will be in place until a permanent, qualified substitute can be found:

The grade will be calculated based on 50% attendance and 50% Work completion.

#### Attendance

Present in class for 26 or more days during Q1 (<2 ab) -----> 100%  
Present in class 21 - 25 days during Q1 (3-7 ab) -----> 95% (78% - 93%)  
Present in class 16 - 20 days during Q1 (8-12 ab)-----> 85% (59-74%)  
Present in class 11 - 15 days during Q1 (13-17ab) -----> 75% (41-56%)  
Present in class < or = to 10 days during Q1 (>17 ab) -----> 60% (0 - 37%)

#### Edgenuity/Assigned Work Completion:

Completion > 80% -----> 95%  
Completion 60 - 79% -----> 85%  
Completion 25 - 59% -----> 75%  
Completion 1 - 24% ----->60%  
Completion 0 ----->50%

### Differential Weighting of Courses

Courses labeled AP, H, or I shall be given a differential weighting called an add-on as follows:

**AP** – level courses to have 6 points added to the grade received if 60 or above.

**H** – level courses to have 5 points added to the grade received if 60 or above.

**I** – level courses to have 3 points added to the grade received if 60 or above.

**Non-Titled** – courses to have 2 points added to the grade received if the mark is 88 or higher.

### **Grade Point Average (G.P.A.)**

- All courses not labeled Pass/Fail shall affect the G.P.A. except physical education.
- The add-on weight shall be used in calculating the G.P.A., but will not appear on the student report card or transcript.
- The quarterly and the cumulative G.P.A. shall be calculated at the end of each marking period.
- Only courses taken in the Pittsfield Public Schools shall be used to calculate the G.P.A.
- Repeated courses taken in summer school will be noted on the transcript, but will not be used to calculate the G.P.A.

### **Rank in Class (RIC)**

The official RIC will only include students continuously enrolled in Pittsfield Public High Schools with an exception granted for no more than four quarters missed before beginning of grade 12.

Students with less than three years coursework in the Pittsfield Public High Schools will receive a comparative estimated decile rank in class standing.

The RIC will be calculated at the end of each marking period.

The RIC will be reported at the end of the first marking period of junior year and at the end of each marking period thereafter.

Students choosing to graduate early are given a GPA but not included in class rank.

Final RIC will be used to determine Honor and High Honor graduates. Students who have a final RIC with a G.P.A. over 92 will receive High Honor recognition at graduation, while those students who have a final RIC with a G.P.A. between 88.0 and 91.9 will receive Honor recognition. Students with less than three years of coursework in the Pittsfield Public High Schools will be eligible for High Honors/Honors recognition at graduation based on final G.P.A.,

not rank in class. High Honors and Honors recognition will be calculated based off the Q3 GPA of the senior year.

The student who has the highest eligible cumulative weighted GPA at the end of Quarter 3 of the Senior year will be awarded the Valedictorian medal at graduation. The student who has the second-highest eligible cumulative weighted GPA at the end of Quarter 3 of the Senior year will be awarded the Salutatorian medal at graduation. If students have the exact same GPA co-valedictorian and co-salutatorian honors would be given.

Outstanding CTE student recognition.

## Credits

Half year courses that meet everyday are worth 4.5 credits and full year courses are worth 9 credits. With permission from the principal or designees, students may take up to 9 additional credits in a single school year.

## Home Tutoring

The School Department provides home tutoring for students who will be absent for a prolonged period of time due to illness and/or physical or emotional disabilities. Such requests should be directed to the Guidance Department.

## Homework

On the average, thirty minutes of homework in each major subject may be assigned daily, including long-range assignments. We believe some homework is necessary to further a student's understanding of the subject material and it is the expectation of all students to complete the homework to the best of their ability. Having said that, Taconic understands the complexities and demands of a student's time and teachers will assign homework in a responsible, empathetic manner.

## Make-Up and Extra Help From Teachers

The teachers are here to help you. Ask questions. Teachers will be glad to answer them. If you need additional help, ask your teacher at the end of the period for after school help. Remember, the responsibility is yours. You are the first one to know if you need help. Your teacher may ask you to stay for extra help, even though you do not request it. Be sure to inquire as to your teacher's availability.

## Testing

During the course of a high school student's career, both mandatory and optional assessments will be administered. A descriptive list (not limited to) is provided below.

**MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System):** English Language Arts, Mathematics tests are offered in the spring of student's sophomore years. Science is offered in

the spring of the 9th grade year. Students must obtain a passing score on all three exams to be eligible for a diploma. Three re-tests are offered each year to those sophomores, juniors and seniors who do not pass. Students who achieve high scores are eligible for tuition relief at state schools.

**Benchmark Assessments:** These exams are given in certain subjects throughout the year. The purpose of benchmarks is to assess student progress towards identified high priority state standards and competencies.

**SAT/ACT/PSAT:** These exams are given to those students in preparation of application to colleges and universities. SAT preparation is integrated into the English and mathematics curriculum and private vendors also market tutorial materials. Subject (SAT II) exams are also offered to demonstrate proficiency in specific content areas.

**AP (Advanced Placement):** Administered upon the completion of an advanced placement course at THS. Scores may be used to demonstrate proficiency in the subject area and allow students to skip some first year college classes. Students taking an Advanced Placement class are expected to take the AP test in that class.

**ASVAB:** A free exam offered to students to support their exploration of future careers and aptitudes in specific career pathways.

**GRADE & GMADE:** These assessments are used to track student progress in both reading and mathematics in order to evaluate academic growth and determine course placement, including the need for remediation.

## Summer School

A student who has failed a course during the school year with a minimum final course grade of 40 may make up to two core classes during summer school. Courses failed during the school year with a final grade below 40 must be made up during the school year. See your guidance counselor for more information. It is the student's responsibility to properly inform summer school personnel so that the correct course is registered for. **A student must complete the regular course during the school year before taking remedial summer school courses. Failing a course with a grade of less than 40, or failure to make up a failed course in summer school might require a student to complete an additional year of high school to graduate.**

## Taconic High School Graduation Requirements

**The following are the minimum graduation requirements for Pittsfield Public Schools:**

4 years of English (English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12).

3-4 years of Math (Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2).

Based on a student's MCAS score, a 4<sup>th</sup> year of math may be a requirement to satisfy an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP); however, we highly recommend ALL students take a 4<sup>th</sup> year of math.

3 years of history (US. History I, US History II, World History).

3 years of science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics).

4 years of PE.

2 Years of Human Development.

1 Year of World Language.

**Demonstrate Proficiency on MCAS in ELA, Math and Science or satisfy Educational Proficiency Plan.**

244 total credits - 64 credit minimum a year.

**MassCore:** The Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is intended to help our state's high school graduates arrive at college or the workplace well prepared and reduce the number of students taking remedial courses in college. MassCore recommends a comprehensive set of subject area courses and units as well as other learning opportunities to complete before graduating from high school.

The *recommended* program of studies includes: four years of English, four years of Math, three years of a lab-based Science, three years of history, two years of the same foreign language, one year of an arts program and five additional "core" courses such as business education, health, and/or technology. MassCore also includes additional learning opportunities including AP classes, dual enrollment, a senior project, online courses for high school or college credit, and service or work-based learning.

**What is the difference between MassCore and the PPS requirements?**

- Mass Core is the state recommended course of study for students.
- PPS is the minimum required course of study in order for a student to graduate from Pittsfield Public Schools. It is strongly recommended that students attempt to take the course of study that follows the Mass Core model.

MassCore Requirements		PPS Requirements	
Academic	CTE	Academic/CTE	

English	4	4		4	
History	3	3		3	
Math	4	4		3	
Science	3	3		3	
Foreign Language	2	exempt		1/CTE-exempt	
PE	4	4		4	
Human Development	2	2		2	

### **Promotion**

Promotion at the high school level shall be by course rather than by grade. Students who fail required subjects and do not take and pass said subjects during the subsequent summer school session shall be required to repeat these subjects the following school year.

### **Career & Technical Education (CTE) Programs**

Upon acceptance to a CTE program, the program course requirements for CTE certification shall include all shop and related courses for the particular CTE Program in which the student is enrolled as well as all regular graduation requirements. Because vocational students' course requirements leave little room for electives or makeup of failures, it is strongly recommended that any failure be made up in the summer school following the year in which the failure occurred. Students must be promoted to the next grade level in order to continue in CTE at Taconic High School.

### **Pittsfield Public Schools** **[CTE/Vocational Safety Procedures 2024-25R](#)**

All work performed in the lab will be carried out in the safest possible manner. Any person working in the shop agrees to be safety conscious at all times. It is understood that any violation of the safety procedures contained herein, or given by a teacher, is grounds for immediate strict disciplinary action (including removal from the CTE program and/or suspension from school).

1. Do not enter the lab unless a qualified teacher is present.
2. Professional, safe attitude and practices are required at all times. Roughhousing or disruptive physical contact is never allowed.
3. Proper Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) must be worn and used at all times while in the shop area, this includes masks.
4. No hats are to be worn in the shops at any time except for shops that require headgear, i.e., hard hats, welding helmets, culinary caps.
5. Cell phone use is not allowed at any time in the shops. Earbuds are not allowed in the shop.
6. Proper eye protection will be worn when using any power tool or at any other time you suspect there may be eye hazards present.
7. Long hair shall be held back.
8. Proper clothing (uniforms) must be worn. No loose, ragged or ill fitting clothing will be allowed. Clothing must be clean and properly maintained.
9. All loose jewelry must be removed before operating a machine.
10. Devote all of your attention to the machine or tool you are using.
11. Stay out of safety lines/zones unless you are using a machine within the safety line area.
12. Ask for assistance when help is needed on an operation.
13. Completely clean your area when work has been completed.
14. Disconnect power before performing maintenance or replacing parts on any piece of equipment. When required, follow lockout/tagout procedures.
15. Never leave a machine until all motion has stopped.
16. Properly lift and transport all equipment, supplies, and materials. Do not throw anything in the shop.
17. Immediately report all safety concerns and violations to your teacher.
18. If, at any time, I do not understand what is the safe way to use any hand tool or power tool I will ask my teacher for help before I proceed.

### **Safety Violation Procedures**

The Pittsfield Public Schools Safety Violation Policy is designed for students that continue to disregard their own safety and the safety rules of their vocational/technical program. An instructor that has a student that chronically displays unsafe behaviors must document the

student's unsafe behavior. Any demonstration or disregard for personal or others safety is an indication of poor safety behavior and will be considered a safety violation.

The Safety Program is to educate the students on their unsafe practices. The following procedures must be followed when a student is in violation of unsafe practices in their vocational/technical area.

**First offense:** The instructor informs the student that their first safety violation has occurred and the teacher instructs the students on the proper safety procedures in their technical area. The student's unsafe behavior must be documented on the school's log entry form. In addition, a letter will be sent home notifying the parent or guardian of the student's unsafe behavior. The parent will be informed that their child has received his/her first safety violation.

**Second offense:** The instructor informs the student that their second safety violation has occurred and the teacher will instruct the student on the proper safety procedures in their technical area. The student's unsafe behavior must be documented on the school's log entry form. In addition, a letter will be sent home notifying the parent or guardian of the student's unsafe behavior. The parent or guardian will be informed that their child has received his/her second safety violation and a parent meeting will be requested to discuss the unsafe behavior.

**Third offense:** The instructor informs the student that their third safety violation has occurred and instructs the student on the proper safety procedures in their technical area. The student's unsafe behavior must be documented on the school's log entry form. In addition, a letter will be sent home notifying the parent or guardian of the student's unsafe behavior. The parent or guardian will be informed that their child has received his/her third safety violation and a parent meeting will be requested to discuss the continued disregard of the safety policies of the Pittsfield Public Schools CTE Health and Safety Policy and determine the most appropriate placement for the students at that time.

It is at the discretion of the Assistant Superintendent of College and Career Readiness or the building Principal, that a student be removed from a technical program depending on the severity of the offense, even after the first offense. The safety of all students enrolled in the PPS Career and Technical programs is our main priority. If a student is no longer a vocational student at THS, they would have to transfer to Pittsfield High School or return to their sending district if applicable.

## **Alternative Educational Pathways**

Taconic High School and the Pittsfield Public Schools are dedicated to providing a complete and appropriate education for each child. While the programs outlined thus far offer a range of experiences for a diverse student body, there are exceptional cases that necessitate unique alternative educational pathways. These pathways are accessible through student support teams (SST). Student support teams consist of academic, behavior and attendance. Each team analyzes Panorama's four categories (coursework, attendance, behavior and SEL) as well as Powerschool data to develop individual student intervention plans. After 6 weeks of interventions the teams

review the data, and if needed, recommendation for alternative education is brought to the district level team for placement approval.

## **Policy for Course Credits Outside The Pittsfield Schools**

It shall be the policy of the Pittsfield Public Schools to authorize the granting of credit to students at Taconic High School and Pittsfield High School for courses pursued at Berkshire Community College or other educational institutions approved by the Superintendent of Schools, for which they received prior authorization from their high school principal.

### **Guidelines:**

- Students are responsible for obtaining and returning paperwork in a timely manner.
- Students must gain approval from their building principal.
- Credit equivalents are determined as directed by the guidance departments, the building principal, and the educational institution.
- Pass-fail courses will not factor into GPA or RIC.
- Student athletes, in order to be eligible for participation, must meet minimum credit, attendance, and academic standards. Students may be required to produce attendance verification and/or academic progress reports. They must sign to give the institution attended permission to share attendance and grade information with the Taconic guidance department.
- Approvals may not be granted if equivalent courses are available through the Pittsfield Public Schools.

## **Accidents**

Accidents of any nature should be reported to the nurse and the building administration.

## **Health Services**

The high school maintains a fully equipped health suite staffed by a full-time and a half-time registered nurses. Students may go to the nurse's office between classes or get a pass from a classroom teacher.

## **School Counseling Services**

The School Counseling Office encourages SELF-REFERRAL. This involves the student signing up for appointments in the Guidance Office. E-Hall Pass and QR codes are used for appointment scheduling throughout the day. Emergency situations will be handled immediately.

Students are encouraged to spend some time with their counselor. Work may be left with the secretary if the counselors are tied up. Counselors will make it a point to see you on any matter on which they may be of assistance to you.

In addition to guidance services, students at Taconic High School have access to services from the Brien Center for Health and Substance Abuse for prevention and intervention services.

### **Course Registration**

Registration occurs each spring and both students and parents are involved in the registration process using the Xello program which offers course planning and selection, college and career readiness tools as well as college application process. Evening informational meetings as well as faculty support the registration process. Student schedules are released on Powerschool in the summer. Guidance counselors are available to support schedule changes throughout the summer and at the start of the school year.

### **Course Change Process**

**Advanced Placement Courses: Advanced Placement courses can only be dropped by September 1st of the upcoming school year.**

#### **Within the first two weeks of a course:**

When a student desires to withdraw from a course the student should obtain a **Change of Course Form** from the Guidance Office. After filling out the form the student will return it to the Guidance Office. The teacher will approve or reject the request. The student will then bring the form home for a parent's signature. When this has been accomplished, the student will make an appointment with his counselor and deliver the **Change of Course Form** to that counselor. If approved by all parties, the counselor will make the change in the schedule.

However, if the counselor notes that the teacher opposes the change, the counselor will pursue the matter with the family. Please note, due to a variety of reasons, not all requests can be honored.

#### After two weeks into a course:

Indiscriminate change is disruptive to students and to the educational program. Course changes will not be made without very good reason, and only under exceptional circumstances. The principal may ultimately approve changes to be made, but only after remediation steps have been attempted following the start of school in the fall. At a minimum, evidence of a meeting between student, teacher, and parent/guardian must have occurred before a change would even be considered. Personality conflict between student and teacher is not a valid reason for a course change. If you believe you have a good reason for requesting a change, discuss the matter with your teacher and secure from him/her a Request for Change of Course Form. \*Please note: All course changes are subject to availability of classes and the class enrollment. Unfortunately, not all requests can be honored.

Withdrawal from a course will result in the following:

<b>Time</b>	1-2 weeks	3-40 weeks
<b>Grade</b>	No record	Mark at time of withdrawal

- Partial credit may be given for courses withdrawn from prior to the end of the normal termination date subject to the approval of the principal.
- When a student changes from one level to another, the two teachers will meet jointly to determine an appropriate grade for the quarter.

### **Withdrawals and Transfers**

A student withdrawing from high school must obtain a withdrawal form from the guidance office. The student must return all texts and other school property and secure the signatures of his teachers, his counselor, the school nurse, the Attendance Office, and the Main Office. Once completed, the form is returned to the guidance department. The school department will share demographic information about school dropouts with Berkshire Works, the Adult Learning Center or other appropriate agencies that may be able to help the student obtain a GED or job training. Furthermore, an exit interview will be attempted prior to the student’s departure.

### **Scholarship Information**

In the fall there is a general orientation for seniors where scholarship information is explained. Individual counselors discuss scholarships with their students. Scholarships are available from three sources: the federal government, local organizations, and colleges. While we are happy to assist students in identifying and applying for scholarships, it is the student’s responsibility to make sure all scholarship requirements and deadlines are met.

### **Restitution Policy/Damage to School Property**

Students and their parents are held responsible for loss of or damage to textbooks, equipment, and materials that have been assigned to them, and for loss, damage, or destruction of school property for which the student has been judged responsible by the principal.

The principal has authority and responsibility to administer restitution procedures for lost, damaged, or destroyed school property. The principal shall establish the repair or replacement cost of the property in question, under regulations issued by the Superintendent of Schools. When damage or destruction to a school building is concerned, the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance shall consult the Director of Building Maintenance to ascertain the repair or replacement cost.

The student or parent shall make restitution payable to the school department, or when a school building is concerned, to the City of Pittsfield. If the principal is unable to obtain restitution from the student or parents, the principal shall refer the case to the City Solicitor for possible legal action.

### **School Operations**

**For detailed information regarding school operations and practices, please click here to access Taconic High School's [Entry, Exit, Transition, Bathroom, Breakfast, Lunch Plan](#)**

**Students can enter the building at 7:15 a.m on each school day. Please plan accordingly as there is no supervision prior to that time.**

### **Volunteers & Visitors**

While Taconic High School extends a warm welcome to parents and others who visit our school and classroom, at the same time, we must assure that our students and staff are safe and learning is not disrupted. Schools must be aware of who is in the building and why they are there. With the exception of the main entrance, all exterior entrances to THS are locked after the start of the school day. During the school day, the only doors that should be used by students and visitors are the front doors, where school staff are continually stationed. All visitors must report to the main office and may be asked to provide I.D. (preferably a driver's license), sign in, and receive a visitor's pass/identification for use while in the building. Visitors will be escorted to their destination.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer time to work with our students and is likely to have access to students which, at times, may be unsupervised while on school premises or while participating or assisting in school-sponsored programs or activities must register with the district for a Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) check before engaging in volunteer activities. The opportunity to volunteer may be denied if the check reports evidence of criminal conduct deemed by the superintendent or designee to create a credible risk to students, staff, or the public.

### **Student Code of Conduct, Character, and Support**

For the Pittsfield Public Schools full Code of Conduct, Character, and Support, please see the PPS District Website at [www.pittsfield.net](http://www.pittsfield.net)

### **Behavior Violation Matrix**

**Standardized disciplinary responses are embedded within five levels of accountable consequences and restorative interventions, which aim to decrease disproportionate responses to behavior violations.** This ensures that all students are treated fairly and respectfully, without favor toward or prejudice against any one group of students according to a person’s age, actual or perceived ability, talent, race, color, national origin, ethnic group, language, socio-economic status, religion, weight, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity and expression.

The matrix below outlines the definitions of behavioral offenses and the **initial** level of response to be used. **Repeated incidents of the same violation may warrant the next level of consequences.** Pre-K to Grade 3 developmental considerations may modify assignment of consequences as well.

<u>Level 1 Consequences</u>	<u>Level 2 Consequences</u>	<u>Level 3 Consequences</u>	<u>Level 4 Consequences</u>	<u>Level 5 Consequences</u>
Promotion/ Prevention Responses Facilitated by Teacher	Interventions Facilitated by Teacher, Student Support, and/or Admin		Interventions Facilitated by Student Support and/or Admin	

Level	Behavior Violation	Action
Level 1	Minor classroom and minor public space behavioral incidents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No send out</b> - Student remains in classroom.</li> <li>Possible teacher-led restorative conversation.</li> <li>A student support note is submitted when a student’s low-impact, unskillful behaviors raise concern and warrant documentation within the school’s student database.</li> <li>A student support note helps teachers share specific information/data that may reveal behavior patterns and trends that need to be addressed if these behaviors become chronic.</li> </ol>

Level 2	Persistent, low-impact classroom behavior violations, more serious public space violations, and non-violent personal misconduct	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>No administrative send outs</b> - Student remains in class.</li> <li>2. Possible Reset or SSP/TOD referral.</li> <li>3. <b>ODR Referral submission.</b></li> <li>4. Aligned consequence and intervention, including restorative intervention.</li> <li>5. Teacher remains involved.</li> <li>6. *Accumulation of referrals may prompt a Level 3 response.</li> </ol>
Level 3	More serious behavior violations as determined by their severity and frequency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>ODR referral submission + restorative intervention</b></li> <li>2. Send-out and possible .5–2 Day ISS/RISE OR up to 1 Day OSS.</li> <li>3. Aligned consequence and intervention, including restorative intervention.</li> <li>4. All secondary students with OSS, return to school with at least .5 days in RISE for reentry plan.</li> </ol>
Level 4	Repetitive or high- impact behavior violations that involve verbal and physical violence and violations that have a destructive or disruptive impact on the school community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>ODR referral submission + send out + restorative intervention + possible ISS/RISE for remainder of the day or possibly emergency removal.</b></li> <li>2. Send-out and possible .5–3 Days ISS/RISE OR up to 5 Day OSS.</li> <li>3. RISE can be no more than 3 days.</li> <li>4. Aligned consequence and intervention, including restorative intervention.</li> <li>5. All secondary students with OSS, return to school with at least .5 days in RISE for reentry plan.</li> </ol>
Level 5	Behaviors that present the most serious level of threat and harm to individuals and the school community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>ODR referral submission + send-out + restorative intervention + emergency removal.</b></li> <li>2. 5 or more days Day OSS.</li> <li>3. Aligned consequence and intervention, including restorative intervention.</li> <li>4. Restorative interventions should begin during the suspension and not wait for the student’s return to school.</li> <li>5. All secondary students with OSS, return to school with at least 1 full day in RISE for reentry plan.</li> </ol>

Violation Category	Code	Description of the Offense	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>PPS-SPECIFIC CLASSROOM, BUS and OTHER VIOLATIONS</b>							
Classroom Misbehavior	PPS-02	Refusal to do work or participate in lesson; lack of compliance with classroom routines and procedures; off-task behavior; interrupting others from doing their work; engages in demands, argumentative and adversarial speech, both orally and written in chat in online learning platform.	■				
Persistent Classroom Misbehavior	PPS-03	Persistent refusal to do work or participate in a lesson; lack of compliance with classroom routines and procedures; off-task behavior; interrupting others from doing their work; engages in demands, argumentative and adversarial speech, both orally and written in chat in online learning platform.		■			
Public Space Misbehavior	PPS-04	Running, excessive noise, horseplay, loitering or unauthorized hall walking.	■				
School Bus Misbehavior	PPS-05	Not following bus safety expectations. This includes excessive noise, standing up while the bus is moving, changing seats, and throwing objects, and distraction of the driver while driving or otherwise behaving in a way to impact safety on the school bus.		■			
Inciting or Participating in a Disturbance	PPS-06	Engaging in an intentional act to disrupt the normal operation of the school community; instigating or encouraging another person to violate the Code of Conduct, Character and Support.			■		
Refusal to be Searched	PPS-07	Refusing to allow a search by a <b>school official</b> who possesses reasonable suspicion that a student may possess contraband violating school policy that could potentially endanger the welfare of the student or the safety of others.				■	
Refusal to Identify	PPS-08	Refusing to identify oneself when asked by a member of the school staff, either an administrator or a teacher.		■			
Academic Dishonesty	PPS-12	Includes plagiarism, cheating, copying from another student, altering records, and assisting another student in any of the above actions.		■			

Violation Category	Code	Description of the Offense	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Violation of the Dress Code	PPS-13	Wearing clothing that is in opposition to the dress code policy.	■				
<b>ALCOHOL AND DRUG VIOLATIONS</b>							
<b>Alcohol Violations</b>							
Sale of alcohol	1010	Selling or attempting to sell alcoholic beverages on school property or at a school function.				■	
Distribution of alcohol	1020	Distributing (i.e., giving away) alcoholic beverages on school property or at a school function.				■	
Drinking alcohol	1030	Consuming alcoholic beverages on school property or at a school function.			■		
Possession of alcohol	1040	Having alcoholic beverages in one's pocket(s), bag(s), locker, car, etc. while on school property or at a school function.			■		
Suspicion of alcohol use	1050	Exhibiting behaviors that suggest that an individual consumed alcohol.			■		
Other Alcohol	1097	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve an alcohol violation.			■		
<b>Drug Violations (excluding alcohol and tobacco)</b>							
Sale of an illegal drug	1610	Selling or attempting to sell illegal drugs on school property or at a school function.				■	
Sale of substance represented as an illegal drug	1620	Selling a substance represented as an illegal drug (e.g., selling oregano represented as marijuana).			■		
Distribution of illegal drug	1630	Distributing (i.e., giving away) illegal drugs on school property or at a school function.				■	
Distribution of substance represented as an illegal drug	1640	Distributing (i.e., giving away) any substance represented as an illegal drug.			■		

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Use of an illegal drug*	1650	Smoking, snorting, injecting, ingesting, or otherwise using an illegal drug.			■		
Marijuana use	MA02	Smoking or otherwise using marijuana on school property or at a school function.			■		
Possession of an illegal drug*	1660	Having an illegal drug in one's pocket(s), bag(s), car, locker, etc. on school property or at a school function.			■		
Marijuana possession	MA01	Having marijuana in one's pocket(s), bag(s), locker, car, etc.			■		
Possession of illegal drugs with intent to sell	MA03	Possession of illegal drugs with intent to sell on school property or at a school function.				■	
Possession of drug paraphernalia	1670	Having equipment (e.g., bong) for use in consuming illegal drugs in one's pocket(s), bag(s), car, locker, etc. on school property or at a school function.			■		
Suspicion of use	1680	An instance where an individual's behavior suggests that he or she used illegal drugs.			■		
Other drug offense	1697	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve illegal drugs.			■		
<b>Use of Medication</b>							
Sale of medication	2110	Selling prescription or over-the-counter medication.				■	
Distribution of medication	2120	Distributing (i.e., giving away) prescription or over-the-counter medicine in violation of school rules.				■	
Use of medication in violation of school rules	2130	Using prescription or over-the-counter medicine in violation of school rules.			■		
Possession of medication in violation of school rules	2140	Having prescription or over-the-counter medication in one's pocket(s), bag(s), car, locker, etc., in violation of school rules.			■		
Suspicion of use of medication in	2159	An instance where an individual's behavior suggests that he or she used prescription or			■		

Violation Category	Code	Description of the Offense	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
violation of school rules		over-the-counter drugs in violation of school rules.					
<b>Tobacco (Possession or Use)</b> Tobacco products include, but are not limited to: cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos (or little cigars), clove cigarettes, loose tobacco, blunt wrappers, chewing tobacco (chew, dip), or any other product not mentioned that contains tobacco of any kind. It also includes any products containing nicotine such as dissolvable nicotine, electronic cigarettes, vaporizers, nicotine gel, nicotine water, or any other preparation of unregulated tobacco and any product or formulation of matter containing biologically active amounts of nicotine that is manufactured, sold, or offered for sale, or otherwise distributed with the expectation that the product or matter will be introduced into the human body, and not including any cessation product approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for use as a medical treatment to reduce and eliminate nicotine or tobacco dependence.							
Sale of tobacco	3310	Sale of tobacco products.			■		
Distribution of tobacco	3320	Distribution (i.e., giving away) tobacco products.			■		
Use of tobacco	3330	Smoking, chewing, or otherwise using tobacco.			■		
Possession of tobacco	3340	Having tobacco in one's pockets, bags, car, locker, etc.		■			
Suspicion of use of tobacco	3350	An instance where an individual's behavior, breath, etc. suggests that he or she has used tobacco.		■			
Other tobacco offense	3397	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve tobacco.			■		
<b>AGGRESSION</b>							
<b>Verbal Aggression</b>							
Aggressive, non-compliant speech	2200	Hostile, oppositional, confrontational refusal to comply with reasonable directives and requests by authority.			■		
Aggressive language	PPS-14	Cursing, swearing, use of insulting, defaming, vulgar, or abusive language directed at an adult.			■		
Verbal threat	3220	Threatening an individual or group of individuals with spoken words or sounds. The intensity of the threat needs to be considered. when assigning the level to determine if Level 3 or 5 is more appropriate.				■	

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Written threat	3230	Threatening an individual or group of individuals in writing (e.g., letter, note, message, chat box). The intensity of the threat needs to be considered when assigning the level to determine if Level 3 or 5 is more appropriate.				■	
Electronic threat	3240	Threatening an individual or group of individuals by text, email, postings on Internet sites, or through other electronic mechanisms.				■	
Other threat	3297	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve a threat.				■	
<b>Physical Aggression</b>							
Physical aggression, minor	2500	Confrontation, tussle, or physical aggression that does not result in injury.		■			
Fighting (Mutual Altercation)	1700	Mutual participation in an altercation involving physical violence. No victims, only offenders.				■	
Physical threat	3210	Threatening an individual or group of individuals with a gesture(s) or body language. Includes posturing.			■		
Battery (Physical Attack)	1300	Touching or striking another person against their will or intentionally causing bodily harm to an individual. Must have an offender and a victim. (This includes hitting, kicking, shoving, punching, scratching or spitting on another person, etc.)				■	
Kidnapping (Abduction)	2300	Unlawful seizure, transportation, and/or detention of a person against his/her will, or of a minor without the consent of his/her custodial parent(s) or legal guardian. This category includes hostage taking.					■
Homicide (murder or manslaughter)	2000	Killing a human being.					■
<b>ARSON</b>							
Arson (Setting a Fire)	1100	The unlawful or intentional damage, or attempt to damage any school property by					■

Violation Category	Code	Description of the Offense	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
		fire or incendiary device. Firecrackers, fireworks, and trash can fires would be included in this category if they were contributing factors to a damaging fire.					
<b>ATTENDANCE</b> (Multiple violations may warrant Level 3 consequences but do not include out-of-school suspension.)							
Forging absence excuse	1210	Creating a false document or signature used with the intent to deceive a school official.			■		
Leaving class	1220	Leaving class without permission (attended class, but left).	■	■			
Leaving school	1297	Leaving school without permission.			■		
Skipping class	1220	Cutting class (never attended).	■				
Tardiness	1230	Lateness for class without permission.	■				
Tardiness	1230	Lateness for school without permission.		■			
Truancy/ Daily non-attendance	1240	Not in school without permission to be absent.		■			
Other attendance policy violation	1297	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve an attendance policy violation.	■				
<b>BURGLARY, ROBBERY, THEFT</b>							
Burglary / Breaking and entering	1440	Stealing of property and/or unlawful entry or attempted entry into a building or other structure with the intent to commit a crime.				■	
Robbery	2600	The taking, or attempting to take anything of value that is owned by another person or organization under confrontational circumstances by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. A key difference between robbery and theft is that the threat of physical harm or actual physical harm is involved in a robbery.					■
General theft	3110	Taking or attempting to take money or			■		

Violation Category	Code	Description of the Offense	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
		property belonging to another person or the school with the intent to permanently deprive the victim of his or her possessions.					
Motor vehicle theft	3120	Theft of a motor vehicle on school property. This category includes theft of a car, truck, motorcycle, dune buggy, snowmobile, RV, or anything that is self-propelled.					■
Threat of robbery	MA04	Any threat (verbal, written, electronic) by a person to commit a robbery.			■		
Other theft	2197	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve theft.			■		
Extortion	PPS-08A	Theft using coercion, which includes obtaining money or property from another student through coercion, intimidation, or threat of physical harm.				■	
<b>ELECTRONIC USE AND DEVICE VIOLATIONS</b>							
Violation of Electronics Device Policy	PPS-09	Students may not use or operate personal electronic devices or cell phones in any instructional space during the school day. This includes earphones or buds.	■				
Recording and/or distribution of others' images or voice	PPS-10	Students may not record the voice or image of another without consent or in any way that interferes in the educational environment. This includes the distribution of voice and/or image, as well as, posting to a public forum.			■		
Violation of Electronic Acceptable Use Policy	PPS-11	Includes photographing, taking a screenshot, or recording a video during classroom learning. Further, lesson recording provided by the teacher cannot be shared by the parent or student. Refer to complete Electronic Acceptable Use Policy for additional violations.		■			
<b>FELONY CHARGES AND CONVICTIONS</b>							
Felony conviction outside of school*	MA05	Type of felony determines a substantial threat to a safe, peaceful school environment.					■

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Felony complaint (charge) outside of school*	MA19	Type of felony determines a substantial threat to a safe, peaceful school environment.					■
<b>HARASSMENT AND BULLYING</b>							
Bullying	1810	The repeated use by one or more students (aggressors) of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture of any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. This includes cyber-bullying.			■		
Hazing	1820	Committing an act or acts against a student or coercing a student to commit an act that creates risk of harm to a person in order to be initiated into a student organization or class.				■	
Other nonsexual harassment	1897	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve nonsexual harassment. This includes harassment based on the basis of real or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, or other protected groups.				■	
<b>SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND OBSCENE BEHAVIOR</b>							
Sexual harassment (unwelcome sexual contact)	1900	Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other physical or verbal conduct/communication of a sexual nature, including gender-based harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.				■	
Sexual battery/sexual assault	2800	Oral, anal, or vaginal penetration forcibly or against the person's will or where the victim is incapable of giving consent. Includes rape, fondling, indecent liberties, and child molestation.					■

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Sexual offenses, other (lewd behavior, indecent exposure)	2900	Sexual intercourse, sexual contact, or other behavior intended to result in sexual gratification without force or threat of force on school property or at a school function. Code statutory rape here.					■
Displays of affection in violation of school policy	2410	Holding hands, kissing, sexual touching or other displays of affection in school or at a school event.	■				
Obscene written messages	2420	Writing obscene messages on paper, on blackboards, or elsewhere on school property (e.g. on bathroom wall).		■			
Drawing obscene pictures	2430	Creating illustrations of a sexually explicit or vulgar nature.		■			
Obscene electronic communication	2440	Posting obscene messages on Internet message boards, sending obscenities via Internet chat rooms/instant messaging, Twitter or other social media, cell phone text and downloading or emailing obscene material.				■	
Obscene gestures	2450	Gestures that are offensive, socially unacceptable, or otherwise not suitable for an educational setting.		■			
Obscene language/profanity	2460	Suggestive, explicit, or vulgar language, cursing, or abusive language.		■			
Other obscene behavior	2497	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve obscene behavior.		■			
<b>THREAT (THREAT OF DESTRUCTION OR HARM to SELF OR OTHERS)</b>							
Bomb threat	2710	Intentionally making a false report of potential harm from a bomb, dynamite, explosive, or arson-causing device on school property.					■
Fire alarm	2720	Verbally or otherwise (e.g., ringing alarm bells) making a false report of fire.				■	
Chemical / Biological threat	2730	Intentionally making a false report of potential harm from dangerous chemicals or biological agents.					■

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Terroristic threat	2740	Making terroristic threats to harm students or school officials, and/or to destroy school property.					■
Other school threat	2797	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve a school threat.					■
Suicide	3010	Taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.	Not applicable				
Attempted suicide	3020	Attempting to take one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.	Referral for MH Services, not an Accountable Consequence.				
<b>TRESPASSING (UNLAWFUL OR UNAUTHORIZED PRESENCE)</b>							
Trespassing (unlawful or unauthorized presence)	3400	Students are on school grounds either in the building they attend or in another school building without permission.			■		
<b>VANDALISM (DAMAGE TO SCHOOL OR PERSONAL PROPERTY)</b>							
Vandalism of school property	3510	Intentionally damaging or destroying school property. The frequency and severity of the incident needs to be considered when assigning levels. May require some form of restitution.			■		
Vandalism of personal property	3520	Intentionally damaging or destroying the personal property of a student or staff member, including graffiti. The frequency and severity of the incident needs to be considered when assigning levels. May require some form of restitution.			■		
Other vandalism	3597	The incident cannot be coded in one of the above categories but did involve vandalism.			■		
<b>WEAPONS VIOLATIONS</b>							
<b>Firearms</b>							
Handgun	0011	Displaying or possessing a handgun or pistol in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■

<b>Violation Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of the Offense</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
Shotgun	0012	Displaying or possessing a shotgun in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■
Rifle	MA14	Displaying or possessing a rifle in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■
Other type of firearm*	0013	The weapon involved was another type of firearm not named above, including zip guns, starter guns, and flare guns. As defined by the Gun-Free Schools Act.					■
<b>Knives/Other Weapons (Level 3 could be a first consideration based on a student's age and development.)</b>							
Knife with blade less than 2.5 inches	0021	Displaying or possessing a knife with blade less than 2.5 inches in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■
Knife with blade greater than or equal to 2.5 inches	0023	Displaying or possessing a knife with blade greater than or equal to 2.5 inches in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■
Other knife*	0029	The weapon involved was another type of knife.					■
Other sharp objects*	0030	The weapon involved was another type of sharp object, (e.g., razor blade, ice pick, dirk/dagger, Chinese star, other pointed instrument [used as a weapon]).					■
Other object*	0040	The weapon involved was another known object (e.g., chain, nunchakus, brass knuckle, billy club, electrical weapon or device [stun gun], BB or pellet gun).					■
Substance used as weapon*	0050	The weapon involved was a substance (e.g., mace, tear gas) that was used as a weapon.					■
Explosive or incendiary device	MA51	Displaying or possessing a bomb, grenade, rocket, missile, mine, or other incendiary device in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■
Unknown weapon	0099	Displaying or possessing any other object not described above, such as fireworks or firecrackers in school, on school grounds or at a school function.					■

## **Student Discipline and Due Process Rights**

Discipline, the need to identify constructive limits and controls in order to develop positive behaviors in all students, is an essential ingredient in every student's learning experience. The goal of discipline is to help students develop wise decision-making skills so that they may learn to make responsible choices in their interactions with others. To deal with student discipline issues, certain progressive discipline strategies are used by the teachers and administrators of the Pittsfield Public Schools and may include:

- Counseling that starts at the classroom level between teacher and student and, if not productive, proceeds to the principal, vice principal or dean of students.
- Written assignments that are meaningful and of reasonable length and are not merely exercises in penmanship.
- Detention after school, to be preceded by parental notification.
- In-school suspension where the student is removed from the regular program to complete work assignments under a specialist's direction - if available - at the school.
- Suspension from school that may be imposed by the principal after a hearing for ten (10) days or less, if the suspension does not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days. For suspensions of more than ten (10) days, or if the proposed suspension cumulatively in the school year exceeds ten (10) school days, a suspension may be imposed by the Superintendent after a hearing by the Principal and Superintendent.
- Expulsion from school that may be imposed by the principal or by the School Committee.

#### **DUE PROCESS FOR SUSPENSIONS: NOTICE OF PROPOSED SUSPENSION**

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ or an in-school suspension as defined by 603 CMR 53.02(6), the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out-of-school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing. 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 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/guardian to attend the hearing;
- e. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- f. the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal sent written notice and documented at least two attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations.

All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

### **SHORT-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION**

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

**Principal Hearing:** The purpose of the hearing with the principal 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 has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts. A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal will provide notification in writing of his/her determination in the form of an update to the student and parent/guardian, and provide reasons for the determination. If the student is suspended, the principal shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

### **LONG-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION**

A long-term suspension is 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. The purpose of the hearing with the principal 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 has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

1. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not.
2. The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense.
3. 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.
4. The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district.
5. The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.

Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

1. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing.
2. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal.
3. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school.
4. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during removal, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
5. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or his/her designee (only if a long-term suspension has been imposed) within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal shall send his/her determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

## **APPEAL OF LONG-TERM SUSPENSION**

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant.

The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue his/her written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be final.

### **EMERGENCY REMOVAL**

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing 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's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal.

During the emergency, removal the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason

for the emergency removal. The principal shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable, within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day. The decision shall meet all of the due process requirements of a principal's determination in a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable.

### **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION UNDER 603 CMR 53:02(6) & 603 CMR 53.10**

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year.

A Principal may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

The principal 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 determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year.

On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal 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 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. Such a meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (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 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 for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal 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 and the parent.

### **SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION FOR DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES UNDER M.G.L. 71 §§37H and 37H½**

The due process notification and hearing requirements in the preceding sections do not apply to the following disciplinary offenses:

Possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or assault of staff

A student may be subject to expulsion if found in possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or the student assaults a member of educational staff, and the principal

determines the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The Principal shall notify the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the opportunity for a hearing, and the right to have representation at the hearing, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. After said hearing, a principal may, in his/her discretion, decide to levy a suspension rather than expulsion. A student expelled for such an infraction shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the Superintendent of his/her appeal. The student has the right to counsel at the hearing before the Superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student was guilty of the alleged offense.

Felony complaint or issuance of felony delinquency complaint. Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the Principal may suspend a 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 Principal shall notify the student in writing of the charges, the reasons for the suspension (prior to such suspension taking effect), and the right to appeal. The Principal will also provide the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the process for appealing the suspension to the Superintendent. The request for appeal must be made in writing within five (5) calendar days. The hearing shall be held within three (3) days of the request. The suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing before the Superintendent. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Felony conviction or adjudication/admission in court of guilt for a felony or felony delinquency  
The Principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, 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 reasons for the proposed expulsion. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal the decision

to the Superintendent, as well as the appeal process. The expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the Superintendent.

The student shall notify the Superintendent in writing of his/her request for an appeal of the decision no later than five (5) calendar days following the date of the expulsion. The Superintendent hearing shall be held with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) within three (3) calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and shall have the right to counsel. The Superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Principal. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

Subject to funding, the middle schools and high schools will utilize the Student Resource Center program site as an alternative to out of school suspensions lasting three or more days for students 14 years of age or older. The program offered at the Student Resource Center is seen as an educationally sound atmosphere to the three out of school suspension situations outlined below.

### **DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS (Special Needs Includes both Special Education and Section 504 Students)**

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook.

**Procedure:** Procedures for suspension of students with disabilities when suspensions exceed 10 consecutive school days or a pattern has developed for suspensions exceeding 10 cumulative days; responsibilities of the Team; responsibilities of the district.

1. A suspension of longer than 10 consecutive days or a series of suspensions that are shorter than 10 consecutive days but constitute a pattern are considered to represent a change in placement.
2. When a suspension constitutes a change in placement of a student with disabilities, district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team, as determined by the parent and the district, convene within 10 days of the decision to suspend to review all relevant information in the student's file, including the IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information from the parents, to determine whether the behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability or was the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP—"a manifestation determination."

3. If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the disability, then the suspension or expulsion may go forward consistent with policies applied to any student without disabilities, except that the district must still offer:
  - a. services to enable the student, although in another setting, to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward IEP goals; and
  - b. as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications, to address the behavior so that it does not recur.
4. Interim alternative educational setting. Regardless of the manifestation determination, the district may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (as determined by the Team) for up to 45 school days:
  - a. on its own authority if the behavior involves weapons or illegal drugs or another controlled substance or the infliction of serious bodily injury on another person while at school or a school function or, considered case by case, unique circumstances; or
  - b. on the authority of a hearing officer if the officer orders the alternative placement after the district provides evidence that the student is “substantially likely” to injure him/herself or others.
  - c. characteristics In either case, the interim alternative education setting enables the student to continue in the general curriculum and to continue receiving services identified on the IEP, and provides services to address the problem behavior.
5. If district personnel, the parent, and other relevant members of the Team determine that the behavior IS a manifestation of the disability, then the Team completes a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plan if it has not already done so. If a behavioral intervention plan is already in place, the Team reviews and modifies it, as necessary, to address the behavior. Except when he or she has been placed in an interim alternative educational setting in accordance with part 4, the student returns to the original placement unless the parents and district agree otherwise or the hearing officer orders a new placement.
6. Not later than the date of the decision to take disciplinary action, the school district notifies the parents of that decision and provides them with the written notice of procedural safeguards. If the parent chooses to appeal or the school district requests a hearing because it believes that maintaining the student’s current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, the student remains in the disciplinary placement, if any, until the decision of the hearing officer or the end of the

time period for the disciplinary action, whichever comes first, unless the parent and the school district agree otherwise.

State Requirements Federal Requirements 34 CFR 300.530-537

For a discipline flow chart, see;

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr\\_meetings/disc\\_chart.doc](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/spr_meetings/disc_chart.doc).

## **STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

Students are encouraged to bring their concerns about school issues or incidents to the attention of the professional staff. Students can contact a teacher, the School Adjustment Counselor, a member of the Guidance Department, any administrator, or the Principal. Students and families are required to utilize the proper channels of communication when a concern arises. For more details, please see the following document: [Contacting the Pittsfield Public Schools](#) located on the district and school webpage.

Parents/Guardians should feel free to reach out to professional staff with concerns about school issues or specific incidents. Parents are strongly encouraged to contact teachers directly first with concerns related to a particular class or academic performance. If unsatisfied with the contact with the teacher, parents may then share their concerns with building administrators.

### **An Act Prohibiting the Practice of Hazing M.G.L. c. 269 Section 17-19**

Section 17. Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which wilfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest

or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

Section 18. Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Section 19. Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full

time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

## **Bullying**

Bullying Prevention Investigators:

Angela Johansen, Interim Principal, [ajohansen@pittsfield.net](mailto:ajohansen@pittsfield.net)

Michael Taber, Interim Vice-Principal, [mtaber@pittsfield.net](mailto:mtaber@pittsfield.net)

All can be reached via email or through calling the main office (413) 448-9600.

## **Anti-Bullying Information**

Included are selected portions from the 2022-24 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Please refer to the complete document posted on the website at [www.pittsfield.net](http://www.pittsfield.net) for further information.

### **PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROHIBITION OF BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND RETALIATION:**

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, and retaliation as defined in this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP), is not acceptable conduct and is prohibited within the Pittsfield Public Schools. Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. The Pittsfield Public Schools leadership and staff will strive to maintain learning and working environments that support positive personal relationships between students and between students and staff and are free of bullying. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension or expulsion in accordance with state law, district policy and student handbooks. In addition to disciplinary consequences, a student

engaging in bullying behavior will also receive other interventions intended to build increased competence in relationship-building and other necessary social emotional learning skills.

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

Any form of bullying is prohibited:

- in any school building and on all school grounds
- in district provided virtual learning environments and learning management systems
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds
- at a bus stop or on a school bus or any other school sanctioned transportation, such as another vehicle whether owned, leased, or used by the school district
- at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether it takes place on or off school grounds
- through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school district or school
- at any program or location that is not school-related, or through the use of personal technology or electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

As the District's Anti-Bullying Policy (STU-80) states, it is not the District's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the District does not condone and will take both disciplinary and remedial action in response to conduct that creates a hostile environment and interferes with students' opportunity to learn.

#### **DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS:**

The following language and definitions are applied throughout this BPIP and are to be used consistently within the Pittsfield Public Schools in relation to incidents of bullying/cyber-bullying:

**A. Bullying:** The repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying includes cyber-bullying. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)

**B. Cyber-bullying:** Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers and the Internet. It includes, but is not

limited to, email, instant messages, text messages and Internet postings, including, but not limited to blogs, websites, and social networking. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, s. 37O)

**C. Retaliation:** Any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a student or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**D. Aggressor:** A student or staff member who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliatory behavior. (The use of the term aggressor varies from the term “bully” in the Act to Prevent Bullying, yet is being used in the plan under the guidance of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

**E. Target:** A student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is directed.

**F. Hostile Environment:** 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 the student’s education. (Reference M.G.L. c.71, 37O)

**G. Staff:** School staff is defined as including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

**Students with Possible Increased Vulnerability:** The plan recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.

## **REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

### **A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others and may be in oral or written form. Reports made by a staff member must be submitted in writing by the person making the report. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members can be written on the same reporting form or may be made anonymously. Oral or anonymous reports made by a parent and/or student shall be scribed by a staff member in circumstances where a written report was not submitted. Also, a web based system will allow users to file anonymous reports electronically. Click here for a copy of the [Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form-2](#)

Use of a “Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form” (see Appendix B) is required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

- Annually provide information on how to access the Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form posted on the website or from their child's school building.
- The Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.
- Annually, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, educators and other staff, students and parents or guardians with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation as parts of district and school handbooks. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be included in these handbooks, on the school and district website, and in information made available to parents or guardians.

## **B. Reporting by Staff**

Every school or district staff member, including but not limited to, central office administrators, building principals and administrators, school adjustment counselors and school psychologists, teachers and related service providers, paraprofessional staff, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, bus drivers, athletic coaches and extracurricular advisors is required to monitor and address student behavior and to intervene when unkind behavior occurs. This includes immediately ensuring that any need for student safety in the present moment is restored. Concern about any bullying or retaliatory conduct must also be reported as soon as possible to the principal or the administrator designated to investigate suspected bullying behavior.

In addition, if any adult suspects that a student is being targeted and bullied, they are required to fill out the district suspected bullying determination form and submit it to the building administrator. As the person who has witnessed the behavior it is most effective if that staff member makes contact with the family of the target and the aggressor to give the clearest description of the bullying behavior and the steps planned to take to promote respectful behavior in your classroom.

The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority and the responsibility of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

## **C. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians and Others**

The school or district asks 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 administrative designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Anonymous reports can be made from a link on the district website. Suspected Bullying Reporting and Determination Form-2. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report or may report orally. 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. A student who knowingly makes a false

allegation of bullying or retaliation shall also be subject to disciplinary action.

## **D. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation**

### **Safety First**

Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, the staff member, principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The staff member, principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting the following persons from bullying or retaliation: a student/staff member who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student/staff member who provides information during an investigation, or a student/staff member who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

### **Notification Requirements**

Notice to Parents or Guardians: Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor and will review response protocols. 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.

Notice to Another School or District: If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone 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.

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, 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.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and in compliance with school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer or another member of the Pittsfield Police Department in the absence of a school resource officer and/or other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

## **Investigation**

The following provides general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. Note that the guidelines should be modified as necessary to respond appropriately to the individual complaint.

Pre-Investigation: Before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, school personnel will assess the level of need and take immediate steps to support the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. If the initial report is to or by a staff member, the staff member will complete an initial review of the situation and intervene as necessary. The staff member will make a referral to the principal or administrative designee if further administrative investigation is needed.

Investigation: The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gather information from the complainant, including such matters as what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred and where the events occurred.

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and could result in disciplinary and restorative actions in alignment with the Student Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.

The principal or administrative designee and other staff members, as determined by the principal or administrative designee, may conduct interviews. To the extent practical, given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal, designee and any other interviewers 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 other investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determinations: The principal or designee will make a determination based upon the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted from participating in school or from school activities. The principal or designee will, one, determine

what remedial action is required, if any, and, two, determine what response and/or disciplinary or restorative actions are necessary as guided by the Student Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.

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

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor orally 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 parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken with other students unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

## **Responses to Bullying**

### Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee will decide upon a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior and restore/repair relationships. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Some skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building or restorative sessions;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students in consultation with guidance and/or school adjustment counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral interventions and supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- Developing individual behavior plans to include a focus on specific social skill development; and
- Making a referral for counseling or other mental health services for targets, aggressors and family members.

## **Taking Disciplinary Action**

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of information gathered through investigation by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent

with the BPIP and with the district and school's Code of Conduct, Character and Support. Discipline up to and including suspension and expulsion may be applied by the school principal. All suspensions or expulsions are subject to review by the Superintendent and his/her designee with the student and parents afforded full due process rights.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and state laws regarding student discipline. A manifest determination will be completed to determine the connection between a student's bullying behavior and his/her disability. As necessary, a special education team will be reconvened to review the student's IEP.

Students with disabilities are known to be considered to be a vulnerable population for both being bullied and, in some disability categories, for engaging in bullying behavior. The risk for this will be reviewed at all IEP initial, reevaluation and annual meetings as part of the IEP process to determine appropriate interventions, both universal for all students and individualized.

### **Promoting Safety for the Target and Others**

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well.

Supportive services will be assessed and offered to the target. These services may include safety planning, school adjustment counselor services and mental health referral, as well as, increased use of Tier 1 classroom strategies that promote safe and supportive learning environments.

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 target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures or other responses are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **Attendance**

Teachers are expected to cooperate with and assist students who miss class work, quizzes or examinations due to absences. While the fact that an unexcused absence is not in itself justification for automatic grade reduction, it is to be expected that such absences will adversely affect student performance due to missed quizzes, examinations, assignments, and participation in class activities. It is therefore appropriate for teachers to establish marking procedures which will include grades for daily activities, which, when not made up, will be reflected in the teacher's grade book.

## **Excused and Unexcused Absences**

Students must bring in a note or have a parent/guardian email either [jcbenson@pittsfield.net](mailto:jcbenson@pittsfield.net) or [clausier@pittsfield.net](mailto:clausier@pittsfield.net) for each day, or part of a day, that they are absent. This note or contact must include the date absent and the reason for the absence. Such absences are classified as either excused or unexcused.

A. Absences for any of the following reasons will be classified as excused provided that the school receives written verification from the parent/guardian within three (3) school days of the student's return from absence:

1. Illness or injury that prevents the student from attending school. The illness or injury must be verified by the school nurse or the parent/guardian in writing. If the absence is three (3) or more consecutive days it needs verification by a healthcare provider. Note: tutoring will be available to any student who is ill for 9 consecutive days and presents medical documentation (a physician's note).
2. Bereavement for a member of the immediate family, (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin); other bereavement if approved by the Principal or designee.
3. Specified religious holidays (STU-17).
4. Required court appearances.
5. Medical or psychological tests during the school day. The parent must show evidence (such as a note from the health care provider) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
6. Other functions, activities, or extraordinary situations approved by the school principal.

B. Any absence not considered excused by the reasons stated in Section A above will be considered unexcused.

C. The school office will maintain records for all students delineating excused and unexcused absence from school or class until the first day of school the next year.

## **Class Attendance Grading Policy**

A. General

1. All work missed as a result of an absence must be completed (See INS-104). If students are absent for any length of time, they should be checking Canvas to stay current with assignments. Students who are absent on a day on which an assignment is due and/or a test quiz is administered will be required to submit the assignment and/or complete the

test/quiz on the day of their return. Students absent more than one day should consult with their instructor for a timeline to submit missed work.

2. Absence or tardiness from school or class, whether excused or unexcused, is detrimental. Instructional time is a precious commodity, and it is reasonable to assume that absences
3. from class for whatever reason adversely affects learning. It is expected that the classroom teacher enables the student who misses class to compensate for the instructional opportunity lost through make up opportunities.

#### B. Points

1. Student attendance will count for 10 percent of the overall quarter grade.
2. Each faculty member will create a weekly assignment in the attendance category that will illustrate the student's attendance for the week.
3. Daily points will be awarded.
  - a. student who arrives on time for class and stays for the duration of class - 20 points
  - b. student is tardy for class - 15 points
  - c. student leaves class without permission or his removed by an administrator - 0 points
  - d. student cuts class - 0 points
  - e. Student has an approved excused absence with a note - no loss of points

\*Tardy is defined as entering the classroom without permission after the late bell has rung. If a student is more than fifteen minutes late without a pass, it is considered a class cut and the student would receive no attendance points for that day.

#### D. Appeals

1. Students may appeal loss of attendance points to the Principal. The Principal has two possible actions: 1) accept attendance appeal and grant attendance points or 2) deny the appeal.

#### **Notification:**

Attendance data will be collected on a period basis. Teachers should be reaching out to families with any attendance concern during the course of the school year.

Teachers will be working with students and families at the classroom level for occasional absences and tardies. If teacher interventions are not successful and tardiness and/or absenteeism becomes chronic, disciplinary referrals may be submitted according to the Code of Conduct, Character, and support. Under certain circumstances the school may file a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) request with Juvenile Court.

Upon reaching 15 absences in a year parents should be contacted and an appointment will be

scheduled with a school counselor or an administrator.

Attendance data is collected daily, upon reaching 10 days of consecutive unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home with a date and time for a parent or guardian to come in to discuss interventions and/or alternative education with a school counselor or administrator.

### **Early Dismissal: Guidelines**

All requests for an early dismissal should be in writing. If sending an early dismissal request via email, please email the request to [clausier@pittsfield.net](mailto:clausier@pittsfield.net) or [jcbenson@pittsfield.net](mailto:jcbenson@pittsfield.net). If a student has a written note, students should report to the main office prior to the start of the school day or upon arrival to school with the written note from their parent/guardian to request an early dismissal. When it is time for an early dismissal, the main office will send an electronic pass to the classroom teacher from whose class the student will be dismissed. Class periods missed after dismissal will result in a recorded absence for that period. In certain circumstances dismissal slips may be authorized and/or verified via phone.

### **Attendance and Participation in Co-curricular Activities**

Consistent with school athletic and co-curricular policy, students participating in athletics and/or co-curricular activities must attend school for at least three consecutive periods in order to be eligible to participate in relevant after school, weekend, or vacation events. Students may appeal emergency cases to the Principal who will review them on an individual basis. Coaches and advisors will be expected to monitor student attendance for eligibility. Any student who participates in a practice, game or co-curricular activity, but is not in school for the required consecutive five periods will be suspended from participation for one week.

### **Electronic Devices/Use**

Students are not allowed to access electronic devices (cell phones, personal listening devices, speakers, etc) during class time unless approved by the teacher. Students may access electronic devices during passing time and lunch. This non-instructional time access must be of a personal nature. Playing music or other sound aloud will not be tolerated at any time. Students using headphones need to be able to hear announcements and directions from staff. Students who do not adhere to this policy, or participate in inappropriate or unsafe behavior may be subject to the school Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.

No student or staff member may be recorded at any time, either visually or audibly, without their permission. Doing so will result in consequences outlined in the Code of Conduct, Character, and Support.

**Electronic devices lost or stolen while at school are not the responsibility of the Pittsfield**

## Public Schools.

### Food/Beverages

Due to life-threatening allergies and the THS Integrated Pest Management Plan the only food/beverage allowed in classrooms is water. Students must consume all other food/beverages in the cafeteria or Epicurean room (when open) as they are designated food safe zones.

### Schoolwide Expectations

In conjunction with the Positive Behavioral Supports initiative at Taconic, students are expected to apply the THS principles when considering their conduct and behavior as a member of the Taconic High School community.

At THS, we:

**Take responsibility - Be present and on time!**

**Have respect - Be considerate and courteous!**

**Strive for excellence - Challenge yourself to grow and learn!**

The Positive Behavioral Supports team will review and implement programs to teach these expectations with all students throughout the year.

**[For further information on the Taconic School-wide Expectations click here to see the THS PBIS Handbook or visit the school website.](#)**

### Assemblies

Attendance at assemblies is required of all students except those excused by a proper authority. If you need to leave an assembly, permission must be secured from a staff member. **For all assemblies, bags, backpacks, and purses are prohibited and must remain secured in lockers or the classroom.** Students are expected to refrain from any behavior that will interfere with the enjoyment of the program by others.

### Extra-Curricular Activities

Taconic students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly manner while participating in school sponsored clubs, performances, dances and other school activities and events. All students should be mindful of the rights of others to participate and enjoy the activities. In order to participate in an extracurricular activity, including dances, students must be in school for a minimum of a half-day.

**Administration reserves the right to prohibit students who are not meeting the school wide expectations for academic performance and/or behavior from participating in extra-curricular events including Prom, Dances, after school events, and school day performances.** Students failing two or more classes, who receive an out-of-school suspension, or students who receive two or more in-school suspensions may not be allowed to participate in

extracurricular activities. This decision can be appealed to the building principal. When a student is on suspension, they cannot participate in any extracurricular activities or interscholastic sports.

## **Off-Campus School Activities**

Students are expected to show the same consideration for the rights of others in off-campus school activities as during the regular school day. Our expectations for behavior should still guide our students on all off-campus activities.

### **Dances**

Only Taconic students and their guests may attend dances at THS. Students will be notified by administration within 5 days of an upcoming dance if they are ineligible to attend. All school rules apply to the student and the guest. The guest must be enrolled in high school and be in grade 9 or above. If the guest is guilty of an infraction of school rules, the student bringing the guest may potentially not be allowed to participate in further extra curricular activities or bring guests to events in the future. Students may bring one guest to a given event and must purchase a ticket in advance and get signed for approval by a member of the administration. No guest tickets will be sold at the door. Dances typically are scheduled from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

**Dances are meant to provide an opportunity for students to build a sense of belonging and promote a positive school culture. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with our school wide behavioral expectations and district rules. Students who do not follow these expectations and rules may be asked to leave the dance.**

Serious infractions of rules at dances will result in severe consequences which may include suspension from school and a ban from participation in future co-curricular activities. Being in possession or under the influence of any drug, including alcohol may result in suspension and banishment from future dances including the prom. Students must arrive within one half hour of a dance start time and cannot leave the dance until one-half hour prior to the end of the dance. Students who may be more than 30 minutes late, need to have prior permission from school administration. For those students wishing to leave the dance early, school staff will call the parent or guardian of each student wishing to leave to receive permission to dismiss the student from the dance.

### **Prom**

In addition to the previously mentioned expectations for dances, there are some additional expectations for the prom. School prom is for THS students in grades 11 and 12 who are meeting the behavioral and academic expectations. Grade 10 THS students may attend the prom as a guest of either a Grade 11 or 12 student. Grade 11 and 12 THS students attending the prom may bring guests from outside the building under the following conditions:

- Guests must fill out the THS Prom Promise and guest permission form
- Guests enrolled in a high school and attending grades 10-12
- Guests who are not attending high school must be under the age of 21, show an approved picture ID, and have permission from the THS administration
- The THS administration reserves the right to deny permission to any potential prom guest

## **School Grounds**

Students under the age of 18 may not leave the grounds during the school day without being properly dismissed. Students age 18, or over, may seek permission to leave the grounds from an administrator and will be **approved at the discretion of the Administration and/or the Main Office**. Students who leave the building without permission during the school day may be refused re-entry or searched immediately upon return to the building to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Any student on school grounds without authorization may be charged with trespassing and is subject to school suspension and possible criminal action.

## **Student Presence in School or on Grounds After Hours**

Students may remain in the school building after school hours for any organized activity or staff-supervised event. Students may only use school grounds for their intended purpose. Students who do not have a valid reason to be at school after the school day has ended, need to leave the building by 2:45 pm.

## **Student Parking and Motor Vehicle Regulations**

There are limited parking spaces for students on campus at THS, and student parking passes will be assigned on a first come, first serve basis for seniors. Juniors may request a parking pass based on availability. Student parking is a privilege and subject to approval and students who wish to drive must register their car with the main office. Students who receive permission must hang their student parking tag from their rearview mirror, and park in the designated student parking lots (lot parallel to Valentine Road, and dirt lot behind the greenhouse and the softball field). Failure to do so may result in receiving parking fines and/or having their car towed. Students who drive are expected to drive safely at all times on campus and to obey all traffic patterns and speed limits.

Those students who are being dropped off/picked up are to use the student drop off/pick up entrance and exit (entrance is clearly marked and leads to the student parking lot) during the times of 7:00 to 7:35 each morning and 2:00 to 2:40 in the afternoon. For the safe operation and dismissal of the buses, it is critical that students follow these expectations and those who consistently do not may receive tickets and/or fines.

## Gender Identification

The Pittsfield Public Schools, in accordance with its non-discrimination and zero tolerance policy, does not discriminate in its programs, activities, facilities, employment, or educational opportunities on the basis of race, color, age, disability, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity and does not tolerate any form of discrimination, intimidation, threat, coercion and/or harassment that insults the dignity of others by interfering with their freedom to learn and work. [M.G.L. c.76, s5]

## Senior Week Guidelines

Several **optional** activities and events are held at the end of each school year to celebrate and recognize the contributions made by the senior class. Parents, relatives, faculty and community guests also share these events and need to feel welcomed. Observation of general guidelines of dress and decorum create a common expectation for students and adults. Similar expectations apply to those activities such as underclass awards ceremonies for students in lower grades. Any serious breach of school rules will result in termination of the privilege of participating in remaining senior activities, including graduation.

The events covered by these guidelines are optional for students. Any student who feels they cannot comply need not attend. Failure to adhere at the time of the event will result in exclusion from participation.

All school policies regarding smoking, drug and alcohol use, harassment and discipline remain in full force. Failure to abide by these policies will result in the prohibition from participation in any or all remaining events including graduation.

### Activities Include:

- Honors/Scholarship Awards Night
- Class Picnic/Class Trip/Senior Banquet
- Junior/Senior Prom
- Graduation Ceremony

**Honors/Scholarship Awards Night and Graduation, Senior Banquet, Junior/Senior Prom, Picnic:** Dress deemed appropriate as dictated by the event.

## Passes

You are allowed four minutes to pass between classes. Students are encouraged to use the bathroom during this time. Passes may be granted by the teacher during class, but with good reason as instructional time is important. Passes are provided by teachers during class time for emergency use only. Teachers and students will utilize the E-hall pass system for all pass use.

### Bathroom Passes:

Bathroom passes will be issued at teacher discretion during instructional time utilizing the E-hall pass system. No Bathroom passes will be allowed within the first 5 minutes of every class period

as this instructional time is critical for the period. Students are to use the restroom closest to their classroom and return in a timely fashion. Students who abuse passes without good reason may have their ability to receive passes limited by school staff. If this is the case, school administration will work collaboratively with the parent or guardian of the student to make sure the plan is appropriate.

## **Athletic Program**

For detailed and specific expectations, rules, policies, and practices regarding athletics at Taconic, please refer to the Pittsfield Public Schools Athletic Handbook [PPS Athletic Handbook.pdf](#) located on the district and school website.

The athletic program is an important supplement to the Taconic High School academic program. Twenty-two varsity and junior varsity teams exist at our high school. All students are urged to become involved in this important part of the school. School rules and regulations apply during all school-sponsored functions.

Athletes are reminded that they are student-athletes and although you are participating in a sport, your academic progress comes first. Furthermore, as athletes wearing a Taconic uniform, you are ambassadors of the school and are held to high expectations of sportsmanship and behavior while competing.

## **Student Voice**

In order to promote a positive school culture and cultivate a sense of belonging, all students are strongly encouraged to take an active role in the Taconic school community. At Taconic, we believe that students have the biggest impact on a positive school culture and a positive school experience. Therefore it is important that students take advantage of opportunities to participate and give students a voice at Taconic.

Panorama Survey: This is the main method of gathering student voice at Taconic and every student is required to take the Panorama Student Voice survey twice a year. The purpose of the survey is to gather student voice and school staff will analyze the results and make changes based on the results where appropriate.

LINK Crew: Trained Taconic Link Crew junior and senior students are assigned a small group of 9th grade students to serve as mentors. In addition to running orientation, LINK leaders strive to introduce their assigned freshmen to the Taconic community and invite them to school-wide events. Prospective LINK leaders apply for the opportunity to be mentors and are selected by LINK faculty advisors. The goal of the program is to create a diverse team of student leaders to transition new students and provide support, mentorship, and guidance over the course of their first year in high school.

Student Council: Function is to support school wide initiatives including school service projects and the promotion of a positive school culture. Currently, the student council is facilitated by the principal and participation is voluntary. Every effort is made to have the council representative of

all grades, programs, and perspectives.

Class Council: Function is to support preparation for school year activities including dances, prom, senior week, and graduation. The class councils are run by the class advisors for each grade.

## **PENALTY/DUE PROCESS REGARDING PLAGIARISM/CHEATING POLICIES**

Taconic High School believes that plagiarism and academic dishonesty is a serious violation. All instances of Plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the PPS Code of Conduct, Character, and Support. In addition to the restorative and accountable measures outlined in the Code of Conduct, Character, and Support, **on the second offense and any subsequent offenses**, disqualification from nomination to the National Honor Society or removal from membership in the National Honor Society is possible. *The school reserves the right to inform the student's potential college of documented cheating/plagiarizing incidents.*

**Plagiarism**: Plagiarism is the use of and representation of other people's words and ideas, in whole or in part, as the student's own work. This definition applies to, but is not limited to the following: words or ideas taken without proper acknowledgement from any published source, such as a collection of literary essays, *Spark Notes* et al., from any site on the Internet, from any essays written by other students, from any class notes taken by a student of a teacher other than the student's own.

### **Plagiarism may take many forms, including the following:**

- Copying word for word from any outside source without proper acknowledgement. This applies to use of an entire paper, to the use of entire sections and paragraphs, and to the use of a few words and phrases.
- Paraphrasing ideas from any outside source without proper acknowledgement.
- Submitting in whole or in part a paper written by another student.
- Submitting in whole or in part an assignment written for another course.
- Allowing one's essay, assignment, and/or test answers to be copied by another student.

**Cheating**: Cheating, in any form, is not tolerated at Taconic High School. Cheating can be defined as any form of plagiarism, and further defined (but not limited to) as a student's deceitful and dishonest act relating to academics. The following criteria shall be considered cheating: claiming credit for work not the product of one's own effort; providing oneself or others with unwarranted access to material or information during a test and/or other assigned work when no outside sources have been sanctioned, knowledge of or toleration of cheating by others. It will be presumed that any use of outside sources, including but not limited to: plagiarizing, bringing unauthorized notes during any test, turning in the same paper twice to two different classes, caught by a teacher looking at another student's paper will be understood as an intent to deceive. It will further be presumed that students who allow their work to be plagiarized, and/or who knowingly assist another student to cheat, do so with the intent to deceive.

## **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Academic Work**

**Purpose:** This practice aims to guide students on the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their academic work, emphasizing the importance of ethical practices, proper citation, and the distinction between legitimate use and plagiarism.

**Encouragement of AI as a Learning Tool:** We recognize the potential of AI to enhance learning and support academic success. Students are encouraged to use AI tools to aid in research, improve writing, and develop critical thinking skills. These tools can provide valuable insights, generate ideas, and assist with language and grammar checks.

**Proper Citation of AI Use:** When using AI tools to generate content or assist in academic work, students must:

1. Clearly indicate the use of AI in their submissions. This includes specifying the AI tool used and the extent of its contribution.
2. Provide appropriate citations for AI-generated content, similar to how they would cite any other source. For example, “This essay was partially generated using [AI Tool Name].”
3. Ensure transparency by including a brief description of how the AI tool was utilized in their work.

**Identifying AI-Generated Plagiarism:** AI use is considered plagiarism under the following circumstances:

1. Failing to acknowledge or cite the use of AI tools in the creation of assignments or projects.
2. Submitting AI-generated content as one’s own original work without proper attribution.
3. Relying excessively on AI-generated content to the extent that the student's own contributions are minimal or non-existent.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Misuse of AI tools undermines the learning process and is subject to consequences outlined in the PPS Code of Conduct, Character, and Support and a violation of the school’s plagiarism policy.

## **National Honor Society Policy**

Juniors, and reconsidered seniors are to be formally selected in the fall of their junior and senior years. They are to be selected on the basis of the cumulative GPA reported at the close of their sophomore and junior years respectively. That cumulative GPA must be a minimum of 90.0 or above.

1. In the event that a senior whose cumulative GPA was not 90.0 or above by the end of their junior year, achieved a cumulative GPA of 90.0 or above by the close of the 1st quarter of their senior year, that student may, at the discretion of the NHS advisory board, be listed as a member of the NHS. However, circumstances and timing may not allow for those senior students to take

part in that year's induction ceremony.

2. For the purposes of selection, the School Counseling Department, Powerschool and Building Administration are to be contacted to check for plagiarizing write-up slips and/or other offenses against the school rules for which a student would have been suspended, or otherwise disciplined etc.. If a potential candidate has a write-up for plagiarizing in 9th grade, but nothing since that time, he/she would still receive an invitation to join the NHS. If he/she has been written up for plagiarizing/cheating in grades 10-12, no invitation will be issued. If the potential candidate was suspended any time after 9th grade for any offense, during his/her enrollment at Taconic High School, that student would not be eligible for NHS membership.

3. If a current NHS member is caught cheating and/or plagiarizing, or he/she is suspended for any reason, he/she will be dismissed from the NHS. At the date of the dismissal, membership in the NHS will be removed from his/her transcript.

4. If it comes to the attention of the principal from a reliable source that a Taconic student has been seen outside of school engaged in an illegal activity, the principal will investigate. The results of that investigation will have direct bearing on whether or not a student will be invited to join the NHS.

5. The Plagiarizing/Cheating policy which is published in the Taconic High School Student Handbook is hereby made a part of this policy.

6. Students transferring in from other schools and who have been enrolled at least since the beginning of their junior year at Taconic could be selected as applicants to the NHS. Their former school's counseling department and teachers would be contacted by the NHS advisor(s) to ascertain if the student had been a member of that school's NHS, and if so, that the student's exiting cumulative GPA was 90 or above. The new (to Taconic) student's behavioral record at his/her former school would be checked for any record of plagiarizing, cheating, using illegal substances, etc. If this student, new to THS, has a 90 or equal cumulative GPA at his/her former school AND his/her continued academic performance at THS has equaled a cumulative GPA of 90 or above, AND his/her behavior at Taconic and at their former school has been excellent, this student would be invited to apply for membership in the NHS. Membership in the NHS would have no bearing on the new student's rank or lack of class ranking at Taconic.

7. If a junior or a senior has a cumulative GPA of 90 or above AND elects to attend courses at BCC (or another comparative institution), they could still be selected as an applicant to the NHS. However, solely for the purposes of the THS NHS, those student's GPAs would only be calculated on the basis of their THS classes. Periodic examination of their transcripts from BCC will be made by their school counselors, and if they are found to be slacking off academically or otherwise at BCC, their future membership in the NHS may be re-considered by the THS NHS Advisory Board, at the Board's discretion.

8. For an initiated member of the NHS to remain an NHS member throughout the remainder of his/her high school career, he or she should not drop below a cumulative GPA of 90. However, if a member does drop below a cumulative GPA of 90 but remains above a cumulative GPA of 88

he/she will be considered on probation. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their own cumulative GPA. If their cumulative GPA drops below an 88 at any time during the probationary period, his/her membership will be revoked.

Junior's Probation: If a junior's cumulative GPA for the final quarter of their junior year is a 90 or above, the member will be removed from his/her probationary status and will recover his/her full NHS membership status. However, if the junior's cumulative GPA for the final quarter of their junior year is NOT 90 or above, that student will have his/her membership revoked.

Senior's Probation: If a senior's cumulative GPA drops below a 90 but remains above an 88 during the first or second quarter of their senior year, they will be considered to be on probation during that time. If their cumulative is still an 88 .9 or below by the close of their 3rd quarter, they will not graduate with NHS honors. But, if at the close of a senior's 3rd quarter, their cumulative GPA is an 89 .0 or above, they will graduate with full NHS honors. No member's nomination to be an NHS officer will be accepted if he/she is on probation.

9. If an NHS member student does not comply with any of the agreements within the NHS Expectations and Contract, he/she may receive a letter home concerning but not limited to the following issues: not fulfilling and/or submitting his/her volunteer hours, having unexcused absences from scheduled meetings. A copy of that letter will be placed in the student's school file.

10. If an NHS member student does not comply with any of the agreements within the NHS Expectations and Contract, he/she may have his/her membership status revoked at the discretion of the NHS Advisor(s) and the Principal.

11. Freshmen and sophomores are encouraged to engage in volunteer activities within the Taconic community and in the larger Pittsfield community. Working with organizations such as Berkshire Youth United (BYU), and documenting your hours will probably help your Taconic NHS application.

## **PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT GRIEVANCES OF DISCRIMINATION**

This policy addresses how to file complaints regarding alleged discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

The Pittsfield Public Schools has adopted procedures to assist any person who believes that she/he has been discriminated against for a prohibited reason, and to rectify any instances of such discrimination. Any student, or any parent or guardian, who believes that she/he has been discriminated against for any reason stated above should make her/his complaint, either formally or informally, to the school building principal or to the district's designated coordinator for compliance with the requirements of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504, ADA, IDEA, and M.G.L 151B. Any person who believes that she/he has been discriminated against for any reason stated above in a matter of hiring or employment, or in having access to school facilities or activities, should make her/his complaint, either formally or informally, to the district's

designated coordinator for compliance with the requirements of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504, ADA, and IDEA.

The Pittsfield Public Schools’ designated coordinators for all such matters are:

	<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Title VI	Discrimination by race, color, national origin.	Deputy Superintendent	499-9510
Title VII	Discrimination by employers on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.	Human Resources Director	499-9505
Title IX	Discrimination in educational programs or athletics, on the basis of gender.	Title IX Coordinator	499-9515
Section 504	Discrimination against individuals with disabilities.	504 Coordinator	499-9515
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.	Special Education Director	499-9515
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities from birth to the age of 21.	Special Education Director	499-9515
Ch. 151 B	Discrimination by MA employers on the basis of race, color, national origin.	Human Resources Director	499-9505

### **Rights of Students with Disabilities**

Federal law guarantees every student the right to a free and appropriate public education regardless of handicap or disability. State regulations (603 CMR 28.00) further guarantee the right to an education in the “least restrictive environment,” in typical settings with students without disabilities.

- Every Pittsfield public school offers academic support services. These programs provide specialized instruction for eligible students in the area of documented disability.
- The PPS also offer services in a substantially separate setting for students with developmental delays, intellectual impairments, autism, and behavioral disorders when documented within a student’s IEP or 504 Plan. These programs provide specialized instruction in a structured and predictable learning environment.

If you believe that your child is having difficulty making progress in a regular classroom due to a

suspected disability, you have the right to seek through the school principal or the district's Office of Special Education an evaluation of your child to determine if she or he does have a disability and is eligible for special education services. As a first step, contact the building principal to discuss convening a Building Assistance Meeting. For more information contact your child's principal or the Office of Special Education at 499-9515.

### **Rights under Section 504**

A student with a disability recognized under the federal statute known as Section 504 (29 USC §794[a]) is entitled to accommodation of that disability. Section 504 covers qualified students with disabilities who attend schools receiving Federal financial assistance. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Section 504 also prohibits discrimination against any student based on such a disability. A student whose disability is recognized under special education law, known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA: see USC §1401[3]) is entitled to educational programs and assignments that are designed to develop her/his educational potential. [M.G.L. c. 71B §1] Section 504 accommodation plans and special education individualized education programs (IEPs) must be developed in accordance with procedures set out in federal and Massachusetts law and regulations. The 504 Coordinator is responsible for assuring compliance with Section 504. (Contact the Superintendent's Office for referral to the 504 Coordinator).

For a copy of the Massachusetts Department of Education Special Education *Parents' Rights Brochure* and the *Section 504 Handbook*, available in many languages, visit [www.doe.mass.edu/sped/parents](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/parents) on the Web.

### **Homeless Assistance**

Consistent with the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, homeless students are defined as those who lack a regular, fixed nighttime residence including supervised temporary accommodations (see definition, Policy STU-14). Students have the right to stay in their school of origin for the entire time they are homeless, even if they move to a different school district. Students who move into permanent housing during the school year can still finish the year in the same school. They may also choose to enroll in a school within the new zone, town or city where they live temporarily. Transportation will be provided unless your new address is within the walking distance of your child's school. For help, call the Deputy Superintendent's office, which serves as the district's homeless liaison, at 499-9510.

**Please reference the Pittsfield Public School’s Policy Handbook for Parents and Students regarding:**

- Equal Education Opportunities
- Procedures for Enrolling Students
- English Language Learning Support
- Building Safety and Public Accessibility
- Student Safety, Health, and Immunization
- Student Transportation
- Due Process Rights
- Student Records and Privacy

**PPS Policy STU-38: Portable Communications Devices**

POLICY

The first responsibility of a school system is to ensure students and their parents of an orderly safe environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. Toward this end, the following process is effective immediately.

Portable Communications Devices

The School Committee recognizes that cell phones and other kinds of portable communication devices (PCDs) may play an important part in the safety as well as the convenience of students. Cell phones and PCDs are defined here as products of current and emerging technology that are wireless, and that send or receive electronic communications, including pictures, text, graphics, and sound, by means of analog, digital, or other format of data transmission. The School Committee establishes the following rules for students’ use of cell phones and other kinds of PCDs.

- A. Students may carry or otherwise possess cell phones and other kinds of PCDs on school grounds and at school-sponsored or school-related events or activities; except that students shall keep any such devices turned off and shall not use or operate any such device during the instructional day, or at any other time during any school-sponsored activity or program, or in any location, when their use would reasonably be expected to disrupt or interfere with instructional activities or the academic climate of the school or its programs or services.
- B. The term “instructional day” as used in paragraph A, above, means the times established for regular academic instruction. The term “instructional day” shall also refer to activities or programs that occur outside the time when regular academic

instruction is provided and when students are obliged to be in attendance, such as for Saturday detention, in which case the restriction on the use or operation of cell phones or other kinds of PCDs shall apply to the students involved in such activities or program.

- C. No cell phone or other kind of PCD shall be used at any time during or in conjunction with any school-sponsored activity for the purpose of, or in a manner that facilitates cheating, sexual or other harassment or discrimination, bullying or demeaning acts, violation of any person's privacy, interference with or disruption of any Pittsfield Public Schools activity, violation of a criminal or other statute, or otherwise in a manner that violates a Pittsfield Public Schools policy or rule of conduct for students.
- D. A student who violates the restrictions set forth in this policy on the use of cell phones or other kinds of PCDs may face disciplinary action. Absent a circumstance that exacerbates the offense, such as the use of a cell phone or other kind of PCD in violation of paragraph C, above, violation of the restrictions set forth in this policy shall be deemed insubordination under the student rules of conduct, and shall be treated as such in taking disciplinary action. **Rules pertaining to student cell phone use are attached to this policy.**
- E. School officials, including classroom teachers, may confiscate a cell phone or other kind of PCD that is used by a student in violation of the restrictions set forth in this policy. The student's parent or guardian shall be notified of the infraction and advised that he/she may claim the confiscated device at the school.
- F. Although the Pittsfield Public Schools shall make a reasonable effort to ensure the security of any cell phone or other kind of PCD confiscated pursuant to the preceding paragraph, it shall be the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to claim any such confiscated device in a timely way, thereby ensuring that the device is in the safekeeping of the parent or guardian as soon as possible.
- G. Electronic devices lost or stolen while at school are not the responsibility of the Pittsfield Public Schools.
- H. The principal or his/her designee may, at his/her sole discretion, grant exceptions to the prohibition on the use of cell phones and other kinds of PCDs. The principal or his/her designee may require suitable documentation of a critical need for such an exemption before granting the exemption.

## **Regulations**

**Infraction 1** - *Educator supported*: - Students are asked to place their phones in the classroom holder for the duration of the period. The educator documents the incident that day, notes it as a first infraction, and contacts the caregiver by phone or email to inform them.

**Infraction 2** - *Educator and administrator supported*: The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log and contacts the student's caregiver by phone or email. **The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.**

**Infraction 3** - *Administrator supported*: The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is assigned a half day of RISE. **The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.**

**Infraction 4** - *Administrator supported*: The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is then assigned one day of RISE. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

**Continued Infractions** - *Administrator supported*: An educator requests assistance, and the phone is brought to the main office. The student is assigned either RISE or OSS. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

\*Refusal to hand over the phone to an administrator would result in a full day in RISE and may include OSS for subsequent infractions.

\*Students with sensory disabilities and/or medical needs may need to have cell phone access as an accommodation. For example, hearing-impaired students use phone-mediated Bluetooth listening devices, and visually impaired students listen to text read aloud.



# Pittsfield Public Schools Cell Phone Regulations

Cell phones, earphones, and smartwatches must be turned off and put away during all instructional periods.

1st Violation	2nd Violation	3rd Violation	4th Violation
<i>Educator supported</i>	<i>Educator &amp; administrator supported</i>	<i>Administrator supported</i>	<i>Administrator supported</i>
Students are asked to place their phones in the classroom holder for the duration of the period. The educator documents the incident that day, notes it as a first infraction, and contacts the caregiver by phone or email to inform them.	The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log and contacts the student's caregiver by phone or email. <b>The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.</b>	The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is assigned a half day of RISE. <b>The student may retrieve their phone at the end of the school day.</b>	The educator requests assistance, and the phone is held in the main office for the day. The educator completes the incident log, and the school administrator contacts the caregiver by phone and email. The student is then assigned one day of RISE. <b>Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.</b>

**Continued Infractions** - *Administrator supported:* An educator requests assistance, and the phone is brought to the main office. The student is assigned either RISE or OSS. **Parents or caregivers are required to pick up the cell phone.**

\*Refusal to hand over the phone to an administrator would result in a full day in RISE and may include OSS for subsequent infractions.

\*Students with sensory disabilities and/or medical needs may need to have cell phone access as an accommodation. For example, hearing-impaired students use phone-mediated Bluetooth listening devices, and visually impaired students listen to text read aloud.