

SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION POLICY

ADOPTED APRIL 2017

GOALS

Health and wellness are at the core of any student's chance of success. At Bridge Boston Charter School (BBCS), we are committed to removing obstacles to learning, and provide services as well as information to bolster family and student health and wellness. Recognizing that, like many states across the country, Massachusetts is facing a growing epidemic of opioid addiction, BBCS is committed to supporting our students who may be at-risk of or struggling with substance use disorders, educating students about the dangers of substance abuse, and maintaining a safe and substance-free environment at our school.

CURRICULUM

GRADE FIVE

The substance use prevention curriculum at BBCS begins even before 5th grade through a research-based social emotional learning curriculum that builds skills such as being assertive, predicting feelings, managing emotions, and solving problems. In particular, beginning in 5th grade the topic of problem-solving around peer pressure is a focus. These social emotional tools assist students in becoming confident and responsible, and less likely to be at-risk of or struggling with substance use. Students begin to access curricula and language as early as four years old in our K1 program that assists them in developing problem-solving skills that help them resist negative impacts of peer pressure.

GRADES SIX THROUGH EIGHT

BBCS will adopt and implement a substance use prevention curriculum for grades 6 through 8 that is: a. Evidence-based, b. Culturally competent, and c. Developmentally appropriate. We will solicit student feedback about the curriculum. Possible curricula will incorporate information about tobacco, marijuana, alcohol, inhalants, and will address students' hopes and plans for their futures. Set time will be dedicated in the schedule for each grade to deliver instruction, and a broad selection of staff will be trained to deliver and support the curriculum including classroom teachers, and Special Education and Counseling staff.

INTERVENTION PROVISIONS AND TREATMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BBCS has a team of employees known as Student Support Staff. These staff work in collaboration with parents and guardians, as well as other school staff, to identify students and families who would most benefit from individualized supports and services. BBCS then hires, contracts, and partners with specialists and agencies who

are responsible for providing services beyond those strong base layers in the classroom with the master teacher and teaching fellow. This team of Student Support Staff may vary in a given year depending on needs, but includes the Director of Students and Families, Special Education Administrator and staff, Social Worker, Psychologist, English Language Learner Director and staff, Division Heads, the school nurse, the Reading Specialist, the Dean of Students and staff, and others.

In addition to providing direct services to students and families on-site at BBCS, Student Support staff advocate on behalf of individual students and their families. The staff works with pediatricians, behavioral health providers, and other specialists as well as with health and social service agencies to ensure the best care possible. BBCS and the Student Support staff work in close collaboration with families to ensure that they receive whatever health and mental health supports they require. BBCS has partnering relationships with many agencies such as Southbay Community Services, Home for Little Wanderers, PEAR (Collaboration between Harvard and McLean), Cradles to Crayons, Rosie's Place, ABCD, Forsyth Dental, and Homestart and works to link families to appropriate services. Some clinical services are provided directly on-site at BBCS. In addition, BBCS staff are aware that if other needs are stressors on the family, that this puts a family at greater risk for Substance Use, and so a wide array of services such as housing advocacy, workshops on positive discipline, clothing orders, MBTA passes, food pantry recommendations, free furniture referrals, back rent support, and others are considered part of BBCS' prevention, intervention, and treatment policy.

All information gathered from families, students, and teachers by the Student Support staff is confidential information that will not be shared with third parties unless required by law or authorized by the student or eligible parent. When a teacher notices any of the warning signs of substance abuse in a student, the teacher should notify his or her Student Support staff contact as soon as possible.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PHYSICAL WARNING SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Drop in attendance and performance at school
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems; may borrow or steal to get it
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities)
- Psychological warning signs of drug abuse
- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts

- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness
- Lack of motivation; appears lethargic or “spaced out”
- Appears fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason

BBCS will provide professional development to teachers to ensure understanding and awareness of the Student Support staff process as well as the warning signs of substance abuse.

DISCIPLINE AND ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

BBCS strives to nurture a positive and safe school culture by understanding students’ behaviors through various contexts. At the heart of the BBCS philosophy is the idea that we are building a community of learners together, and that the actions of one affect all. By developing a strong sense of belonging within the BBCS community we are working to support individual development along with social responsibility. Behavior management practices at BBCS rely upon our meaningful connections and strong relationships with students. Consequences that help to change behaviors are utilized and are determined based on the nature and frequency of the infraction along with the needs and well-being of the entire school community.

In an effort to provide preventive and positive approaches to behavior instruction and modification, and to respond with interventions and consequences aimed at addressing the causes of unexpected behavior, resolving conflicts, meeting students’ needs and keeping students in class and in school, Bridge Boston has created systems to support our Community Guidelines. The guidelines and systems are intended to:

- Build a community of children who can identify and regulate their emotions and impulses, problem solve conflicts, respect others, respect themselves, advocate for themselves, and be productive members of their community.
- Reinforce the values of joy, achievement, generosity, unity, acceptance, and resiliency (JAGUAR).
- Reinforce behaviors in a way that increases expected behaviors and decreases unexpected behaviors.
- Have a common language across staff, students, and families so we can work together to meet students’ needs, keep students in school, and have a safe and supportive teaching and learning environment in which students are treated in a fair, consistent, nondiscriminatory manner.
- Live into Ross Greene’s mantra, “Kids do well if they can” (The Explosive Child, 2006)

Within this context, BBCS strictly prohibits the possession, use, or sale of tobacco, alcohol, and controlled substances, and the misuse of any prescription or over-the-counter medication on school campus or at school events (including on transportation to and from school). Students who are determined to be in violation of this prohibition may be subject to suspension or possible expulsion. Teachers are instructed to immediately report any possible alcohol, drug, or substance-related behavior to the Dean of Students and Director of Students and Families.

PARENT/GUARDIAN AND STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

BBCS will provide opportunities for families to be involved in the prevention of substance use. When a student is identified as at-risk or struggling with substance use, the Student Support staff will work closely with parents and guardians to develop an intervention plan. Aside from targeted interventions for particular students, BBCS will provide fliers, links to resources, parent education nights, or other opportunities for all parents to learn more about topics related to substance use prevention.

PERIODIC REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE POLICY

BBCS shall review this policy at least every five years and make any revisions necessary.