



Family Handbook

2024-2025

We hope that the information in this handbook will help make your year at Hilltown informed and enjoyable. Please reach out at any time to clarify or to ask questions.

The complete text of this handbook and related material is also available on our website: www.hilltowncharter.org and in the Hilltown portal.

Translations of this or any other school documents are available for families who need it. (Si usted desea una copia de este manual – o de cualquier otro documento de la escuela – en español, por favor comuníquese con Chris Kusek, Director de Escuela.)

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School is committed to maintaining a work and learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, age, disability, or housing status.

In 1993, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an education reform act that included provisions calling for the development of charter schools. Five local parents, artists and educators from the rural communities of Hampshire County set out to create a partnership of teachers, students, families, and community members to establish a creative learning environment for elementary school children. A student-centered approach, focusing upon the needs of individual children and following their creative impulses, was the backbone of the educational philosophy alongside a commitment to governance by a consensus-model caregiver cooperative.

Support for the vision was overwhelming as many talented community members offered their expertise for the project and joined the founding coalition. On Dec. 9, 1994, the Massachusetts Secretary of Education granted Hilltown a five-year charter to begin operation in Williamsburg in September 1995 and the school opened its doors in the Brassworks building with 3 classrooms and 40 students.

We have now grown to 12 classrooms with 218 students - adding the 7th and 8th grades in 2000 and 2001 respectively. The state reviews of the school have been most favorable and in 2020 we received a fifth renewal of our charter.

We are proud of and grateful for Hilltown's twenty-nine successful and creative years!

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School

1 Industrial Parkway, Easthampton, MA 01027

Phone: 413-529-7178, Fax: 413-527-1530

Website: www.hilltowncharter.org

E-mail: info@hilltowncharter.org

Our Family Handbook does not include photos in order to make it easier to open it online and download. We invite you to visit our website and read our weekly newsletter to see photos.

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SCHOOL CALENDAR - 2024-2025

HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR 2024-25

August

20 - New Teacher Orientation Day
 21 - First day for returning Teachers
 23 - First day for TAs
 27 - Practice Kindergarten 9-11
 28 Students' First Day

AUGUST						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FEBRUARY

February

5 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 17-21 NO SCHOOL Winter Break

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

September

2 NO SCHOOL Labor Day
 3 NO SCHOOL Prof. Dev.

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MARCH

March

12 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 13 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 14 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

October

14 NO SCHOOL Indig. Peoples Day
 23 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 24 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Conferences
 25 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Conferences

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

APRIL

April

2 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 21-25 NO SCHOOL Spring Break

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

November

5 NO SCHOOL Prof. Dev.
 11 NO SCHOOL Veterans' Day
 27-29 NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Break

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MAY

May

7 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 26 NO SCHOOL Memorial Day

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

December

11 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal - Prof. Dev.
 20 HALF DAY 11:50 dismissal
 23-31 NO SCHOOL Winter Break

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE

June

16 LAST DAY if no snow days; HALF DAY
 19 NO SCHOOL Juneteenth Indep. Day

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

With the use of 5 cancellation days,
 the last day of school would be June 24.

January

1 NO SCHOOL New Year's Day
 20 NO SCHOOL Martin Luther King Day
 24 NO SCHOOL Prof. Dev.

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JULY

July

4 Independence Day

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

*Grades K-5 dismiss at 12:30 on Wednesdays, except where noted

updated 4/4/23

HCCPS PERSONNEL - 2024-2025

<p>ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF Chris Kusek, Head of School Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Director of Teaching and Learning Monique Bourgeois, Administrative Assistant Nicole Marcotte, Logistics/Kids' Club Coordinator Carla Clark, Finance Manager Tiffany Ross, C&F Engagement Coordinator Amy Linnell, Academic Support Coordinator Jess Williamson, Behavior Support Coordinator</p>	<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION & RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS (SERS) Andrea Hearn, Reading Specialist Emilie Woodward, School counselor, Social skills and Mental Health educator Emily Lees, Special Education Teacher Mary Price, School nurse, Health Educator Gaby Blaustein, Special Education Teacher Kate Kamins, Special Education Teacher Kate Saccento, Special Education Teacher</p>
<p>CLASSROOM TEACHERS Kerri Pollard, Blues Teacher Cecilia Darby, Indigos Teacher Nan Childs, Greens Teacher Julianne Clarke , Yellows Teacher Emily Endris, Reds Teacher Missy Kubacka, Oranges Teacher Peter Kennedy, Purples ELA/Humanities Andrea Hermans, Purples Math/Science Joe Keppler, Prisms Science Joey Gollosi, Prisms ELA Beth Adel, Prisms Humanities Rachel Merrell, Prisms Math</p>	<p>TEACHING ASSISTANTS Adam Hargraves, Indigos TA Bailey Costin- Shaw, Purples TA Brenda Sotelo, Oranges TA Cas Meade, Prisms TA Chrismarie, Special Education TA Clara Kohrman, Blues TA Damiona Reid, Prisms TA Dawson Clark, Purples TA Debra Courage, Atelier TA Debby Ghezzi , Prisms TA Emma Kaserkie, Prisms TA Jennifer Santiago, Yellows TA Kaleigh Santiago, Special Education TA Liza Eaton, Special Education TA Marilyn Rivera, 1:1 Student Support Michaela Wuethrich, Reds TA Sasi Wallace- Recess TA Seana Lamothe, Greens TA</p>
<p>SPECIAL SUBJECTS TEACHERS Alex Niemiec, PE Teacher, Head Coach Felicia Sloin, Music Teacher 6-8 Cyndy Sperry, Atelierista 7/8 Grace Mrowicki, Technology Teacher/Coordinator Juan Carlos Carpio, Spanish 7-8 Nick Deysher, K-5 Music and Movement Nicole Singer, Atelierista K-6</p>	

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School is:

- To engage students in a school that uses experiential, hands-on activities, the arts, and interdisciplinary studies to foster critical thinking skills and a joy of learning.
- To sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program.
- To cultivate children’s individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS, or “Hilltown”) was founded in 1995 as Massachusetts Public Charter School. Inspired by the preschools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, our educational approach is grounded in knowledge of children’s development and in a commitment to teaching creative, critical thinking skills, and strong basic skills.

At HCCPS, we believe that children construct their understanding of the world through direct experience, with teachers serving as guides and resources. We create an engaging and joyful learning environment using an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum. Emphasis is placed on asking children and adults to reflect on and document the learning process. The expressive arts play a critical role in the academic and social curriculum, and create a common language that brings our community together in meaningful ways.

HCCPS welcomes and relies on family involvement. Children, families, school and community form an integrated, interdependent system, which operates through an inclusive, consensus-based governance structure. Beyond the academic curriculum, children learn essential life skills through participation in an intimate and inclusive whole school cooperative. Involvement in the local environment and its communities inspires learning and encourages social and civic responsibility as well as stewardship for the earth.

Caregivers and teachers help children to care for and respect themselves and each other. We strongly believe that the cultivation of each individual voice within a community leads to inclusion of and respect for differences and multiple perspectives.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees (BOT) is the charter school equivalent of a School Committee. It is responsible for the school's overarching philosophies, direction and policies, and is accountable for all legal and fiscal issues affecting the School. It operates using a consensus model and makes decisions on the hiring and supervision of the Head of School, and contractual relationships. Members of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School elect the Trustees at their annual meeting held each May. Trustees serve a two or three-year term and do not need to be caregivers at the school. The Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, Community and Family Engagement Coordinator, and 2-3 staff members attend Board meetings as speaking but non-decision-making members. Schedules of BOT meetings, links to meetings, agendas, and minutes are available to caregivers in the newsletter and on the calendar on the school website. All BOT meetings are open to the school community and the general public. All regular meetings include a public comment period at the beginning where anyone can submit input on any issue in the school. For more information, including a list of current Board and Committee Members, meeting schedules and minutes, or how to become a member of the BOT or a committee, please visit our website at www.hilltowncharter.org or contact the Community and Family Engagement Coordinator.

Domain Council

Domain Council meets monthly and is made up of the Head of School, the Director of Teaching and Learning, the Community and Family Engagement Coordinator, the Board of Trustees President and one other member of the BOT – usually the Vice President. These Board members serve as the supervisory team for the Head of School, and have many opportunities to work closely with him and evaluate his work. Domain Council works as a collaborative team, and is responsible for proposing the annual budget, reviewing the agenda for BOT meetings, and making policy recommendations to the Board, as well as for addressing any emergency needs.

Administration

Hilltown has a collaborative structure. The Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and various Coordinators all work together to make decisions that best serve the school. The administrative team shares the responsibility of guiding and operating the school and work together to ensure that the school is viable and stays true to its mission. The Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Community and Family Engagement Coordinator are non-voting members of the Board of Trustees.

Head of School

Chris Kusek is responsible for the administrative domain of the school. He submits much of the reporting that goes to the state, manages the facility, admissions procedures and school finances, hires and supervises the office staff, school nurse and custodial crew, and is the school's civil rights coordinator. He supervises staff at the Director and Coordinator levels and supports the implementation of Special Education supports and services.

The Director of Teaching and Learning

Rebecca Belcher-Timme is responsible for overseeing the educational domain of the school, leading and supervising the educational staff, developing curriculum and coordinating hiring committees for teaching positions.

Community and Family Engagement Coordinator

The Community and Family Engagement Coordinator is responsible for the community domain of the school. This position bridges the line between inside and outside of school, developing systems for caregiver and community volunteers and institutional partnerships, scheduling and facilitating meetings of the cooperative, coordinating the school's event and fundraising calendar, and leading events.

The “Cooperative” and Caregiver Participation

HCCPS is structured as a cooperative. We believe that education is enhanced by strengthening the ties between school and home, and caregiver involvement is an essential factor in the school. We ask families to volunteer as they are able. Caregiver contributions also help us to keep costs down and allow flexibility, richness and diversity in the school, which we might otherwise not achieve.

Membership and Voting

All caregivers, legal guardians and staff at school are considered members of the Cooperative and are eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting at which we conduct the business of electing new members to Hilltown's Board of Trustees and vote on any updates that are needed to the school's by-laws.

Caregivers make up most of the membership of the major decision-making bodies of the school, including the Board of Trustees along with its policy-making committees. They also serve on The Friends of Hilltown.

Meetings of the cooperative are held several times a year, depending on the need. Caregivers are encouraged to attend. These meetings are a chance for members to hear from the Board of Trustees and the school administration about current happenings at the school and discuss relevant community issues such as school culture, structure and educational philosophy. Elections of new Board of Trustees members occur in the spring at the Annual Meeting.

Volunteering at School

Participating in the activities of the school is a wonderful way for caregivers to support students' learning, feel informed and connected, and get to know other caregivers. At Hilltown, we rely on volunteers to help us create the richest possible learning environment. There are many ways for parents and families to participate in this cooperative community and we encourage every caregiver to volunteer for the school in some way every year.

All caregivers are asked to complete an individual Caregiver Volunteer Survey at the beginning of the year. These give us information about how you would most like to participate as well as your skills and interests. Caregivers who want to spend time with students in the classroom or driving on field trips must give permission for a state CORI check.

ADMISSIONS

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter School is a public K-8 school and is open to all students of appropriate grade levels from any Massachusetts town on a space available basis, with priority given to siblings of current students and applicants from Hampshire and Franklin counties. No tuition or application fee is required. Charter schools are funded by the per pupil expenditure from each student's home school district. Hilltown Cooperative Charter

Public School is committed to maintaining a work and learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing status. Our enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year is 218 students, kindergarten through grade 8, in twelve mixed-age classrooms.

In January each year, the school advertises and holds an Informational Open House and then conducts an admissions lottery in February to assign students to a waiting list for the following September. As openings occur, the top person on the list is offered the slot. Following the admissions lottery, caregivers are notified of acceptance or waiting list status. Caregivers of prospective students should contact the school for an application or download one from our website: www.hilltowncharter.org. Once a student is enrolled at Hilltown they have a secure space for subsequent years and siblings gain admission priority. School meetings orient families to the school and help welcome them into the school community.

COMMUNICATION

Overview

Good communication among caregivers, staff and the Board of Trustees is essential. Hilltown has multiple ways to keep parents informed and engaged, including:

- Emails from teachers and staff members
- The school newsletter, "Hilltown Happenings"
- Hilltown's Google calendar
- Google Classrooms (student login required)
- Hilltown Portal (see below)
- Postings on bulletin board in main entryway
- Printed copies of forms and announcements in the main entryway
- On the rare occasion that communications or other announcements might be sent home with students, parents will generally be notified by email or in the newsletter.

If you are not able to receive school communications by email or through the portal, or if you think you have been missing some school communications, please contact Monique in the main office (mbourgeois@hiltowncharter.org, 413-529-7178 ext. 110). Printed copies of any forms or documents can be mailed to you upon request.

Updating Contact Information

Please be sure to give the main office any address, email or phone number changes throughout the year so that we can stay in touch with you.

Snow/Inclement Weather Day Information

HCCPS follows the Easthampton school district in canceling school due to snow or inclement weather. When school is closed or delayed, Hilltown sends a text and/or automated phone call to caregivers who wish to receive either or both, and an email to all caregivers. Hilltown also posts school closings at www.wwlp.com and www.wggb.com (Channel 40).

The Hilltown Portal

One of the main ways that we share information is through a secure portal system, where parents and caregivers can log in to find general information about school and class activities, as well as information specific to your child(ren) such as what classes they are in and their attendance. School forms and documents such as the Family Handbook, Lunch Order and Kids' Club Sign-ups can be downloaded from the School Links and Files section. Progress Reports and other student reports can be downloaded from the E-Locker, as they become available. We will generally email you when key items are posted, but it would be helpful to check for updates and developments periodically throughout the year.

Family Directory

The **Family Directory** is available through your account in the Hilltown portal and may also be obtained in a paper version to help caregivers and students stay in touch with one another by phone and email. This information is confidential and must not be passed along to anyone outside the school or used for group mailings. You may update and control your own directory listing in the Portal if your contact information changes or for desired level of visibility. The interactive Hilltown Family map (aka carpool map) is another great tool for networking with other families. (This map is shared only with Hilltown families and staff. The link is posted inside the portal and in the Hilltown newsletter.)

Hilltown Newsletter

This is our other main method of communication. It is distributed to staff and families via email once a week. It contains an updated calendar, information about various special activities, meeting summaries from the Board of Trustees, and other announcements and articles from the school. There is a Community section where we list programs and activities that are happening at Hilltown but organized and managed by caregivers or other entities. Caregivers may also use this section to request help or offer giveaways. The Newsletter is sent by email via Constant Contact. Make sure that your inbox is ready to receive it so it doesn't go to SPAM.

Social Media

Caregivers may also communicate with each other in private community **Facebook groups** which are created by the school for grade-level caregiver cohorts. These can be a good place for making connections around transportation, outdoor adventures, etc.

Communication with Teachers

For most teachers, an email is the best way to request time for uninterrupted discussion. (Staff email addresses can be found in the Staff Directory on the Hilltown portal.) Please include your telephone number and the times you are most easily reached. The teacher will contact you to discuss the issue or set up a time to meet. If you call the school to leave a message for a teacher, please be aware that they may not check their messages until the end of the day. Leave all urgent or time-sensitive messages with the Administrative Assistant to pass along in person. Teachers are not expected to be available to caregivers and students at night or on the weekends. Teachers may take up to 24-48 hours to respond to non-urgent matters.

Communication with Students

During the day you may leave messages in the office for students who are in the building, and they will be delivered when time allows. Students will be called from class only for emergencies. ***Please note that personal electronic devices—including phones and smart watches—may not be used by students during the school day or after school activities.***

Addressing Concerns, Getting Your Voice Heard

We encourage everyone in the school to go directly to the person involved to resolve problems as they come up. Educational or classroom concerns should first be addressed with the teacher involved. School administrators are always glad to converse with caregivers. Please reach out by email to ask questions or to schedule a meeting.

Board of Trustees meetings are open to everyone and have room for a public comment period during every meeting. Some of the Board committees have membership open to non-Board members, and participation in the work is a great way to have input into how things happen. Committee meetings are also open to the public. Times and links are posted in the newsletter and the school's online Google calendar.

Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC)

The Hilltown Special Education Parent Advisory Committee is a caregiver-run organization directly liaised with the Academic Support Coordinator and the Director of Teaching and Learning. The HCCPS SEPAC mission is:

- To provide a network in which parents/guardians/advocates of students with special needs have access to relevant information, training and support
- To encourage an atmosphere of effective open communication, understanding, and mutual respect among all students, caregivers, educators and the community-at-large about issues relevant to Hilltown's Special Education
- To provide advice and recommendations to school leadership and the Board of Trustees regarding special education programs and policies

Meetings are monthly, noted on the school's Google calendar, and are announced in the newsletter.

Parent Resource Group and Class Parents

All active community members can be a good resource when you have general questions or need to check in. Class Parents assist teachers with materials and communications and also work to strengthen the sense of community among caregivers.

Visiting the School

Caregivers are welcome to stop by the main office any time to ask questions, drop things off or pick up forms, but if you would like to visit a classroom or meet with a staff member please make arrangements in advance.

Lost and Found

Please label students' lunch boxes, water bottles, and clothing (especially outerwear). We will collect lost items in our Lost and Found near the front door, and attempt to return them to their families if they are labeled.

Lost Book Replacement

In many classes, students will be issued at least one text or workbook and will often borrow reading books from the class library. These books are costly and are important to the program. If a student loses a book, that student and his or her family are expected to pay at least half of the cost of replacing it.

Dissemination

Sharing our best practices with the larger community is a goal at Hilltown. You can find the full details of our dissemination efforts in our Annual Report (www.hilltowncharter.org)

SCHOOL ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Arrivals and Departures

These guidelines and procedures are intended to make arrival and dismissal at Hilltown safe and supportive of all the different ways students get to and from school, whether by car, bus, bike or on foot.

Please review your student's Transportation/Pick-up Form in your Hilltown portal at the start of each school year and update their permissions to walk, bike or take the bus.

Easthampton District Bus

Easthampton residents may be eligible to take a yellow school bus provided by Easthampton District. In the summer, an email is sent to those who may be eligible. If you live in Easthampton and have questions about this bus, please email Chris Kusek at ckusek@hilltowncharter.org.

PVTA

The Nashawannuck Express, running between Easthampton center and downtown Northampton, is available to pick students up in front of the school Monday through Friday starting on the first day of school. As of August 2024, PVTA is free for students after school, and anticipates keeping this policy for this school year. We will notify you of fare changes, if any, in the newsletter (Please note that PVTA does not offer a bus at 12:30, the regular Wednesday dismissal time for grades K-5). If a student forgets or misplaces their bus money, they can borrow some from the main office.

General information about the PVTA can be found on the PVTA website: <https://www.pvta.com/>

The Nashawannuck Express schedule can be found at: <https://www.pvta.com/schedules/NE>

Drop-off and Pick-up

8:00-8:15 Drop-off window

3:00 Pick-up* (Wednesdays, K-5 pick-up is at 12:30 pm)

*Teachers often have after school meetings or other scheduled commitments.

It is important for caregivers to arrive on time for pick up.

Drop-off Details by Grade

- **Kindergarten:** Caregivers walk Kindergarten students into the building through the front entrance. Caregivers and kindergarteners may come in as early as 8 am and wait in the family corner or hallway until the classroom doors open at 8:15 am. Caregivers need to stay with their kindergartener until the classroom door opens.
- **Grades 1-5:** Students in grades 1-5 are dropped off in front of the school entrance by a single car line (and walk down the sidewalk to the blacktop if it is before 8:15 am) OR caregivers may park in the lot or on the street and walk the student(s) to the blacktop. Please do not drop off students in front of the blacktop area, as it causes a back-up in the parking lot. Grades 1-5 teachers pick up their classes at 8:15 am on the blacktop.
- **Grades 6-8:** Students in grades 6-8 are dropped off in front of the school entrance by a single car lane closest to the curb. Students in grades 6-8 walk to the blacktop if they are dropped off before 8:15 am.

Morning Blacktop Supervision

Three staff members supervise the blacktop from 8:00-8:15 am. The before-school playground expectations are:

- Blacktop and platform only (no swings, play structure)
- No running if wet or icy
- No ball games
- No electronic devices
- No equipment from the shed
- Wait for the whistle to enter the building (Purples and Prisms go in when the whistle is blown. Grades 1-5 line up and wait for their teacher to walk them in.).

Dismissal and Pick-up Details by Grade

- **Grades K-5:** Each class has a designated blacktop location. Every K-5 student must be signed out by a caregiver before leaving the blacktop. Each classroom teacher will have a clipboard with the signout sheet for the class.
- **Grades K-1:** At 2:50, teachers walk their students down the hallway to the blacktop.
- **Grades 2-5:** At 2:55, teachers walk their students down the hallway to the blacktop.
- **Grades 6-8:** At 3:00, students are dismissed and wait at the front of the building.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *What if students arrive at 8:15 am when the front doors are open?*
Students may enter the school and will be asked to wait in the hallway until their teacher arrives with the class. Students who arrive after 8:20 will be marked tardy.
- *What if it's pouring rain at arrival?*
The All School doors will be open at 8 am for any students in grades 1-5 arriving early, and the front entrance will be open at 8 am for any students in 6-8. Grades 1-5 wait in the All School space for their teacher to pick them up, Grades 6-8 wait quietly outside their homerooms.
- *What if it's pouring rain at dismissal?*
Students in grades K-5 wait in the All School space in designated spaces, and students will be called as parents arrive at the doorways. Students in grades 6-8 wait out front under the overhang of the building.

Car Lanes

Please form one line only for drop-off and pick-up, in the lane closest to the school. The lane closest to Industrial Parkway needs to be left open for vehicles to exit the parking driveway/parking lot. Students should not get in or out of the car from the outside lane because that space is meant for vehicles to pass through.

Crosswalks

There are three crosswalks that our community can use to get to and from school:

- One in front of the main entrance
- One in front of the shed next to the blacktop

- One on Industrial Parkway

Vehicles may not park or temporarily stop in any of the crosswalks.

Also, please remember that vehicles may not pass a school bus when the stop sign with flashing lights is on. The yellow school bus stops in front of the crosswalk on Industrial Parkway for loading and unloading.

The Parking Lot

Caregivers may park in any of the open spots in the back parking lot to drop-off or pick-up their students. During the school day, the back parking lot is blocked-off by cones so that students may play in the lot during recess or PE. If you need to park in the back lot during the school day, please proceed slowly into the lot and park in one of the spots on the perimeter (not in the center of the lot).

Street Parking

If you park on Industrial Parkway, please park on the side opposite the school and do not block any driveways or park on any areas marked with yellow paint.

No Idling

When waiting to drop off or pick up your student after school, please turn off your engine if the line is not yet moving. Massachusetts law states that: “No person shall cause, suffer, allow, or permit the unnecessary operation of the engine of a motor vehicle while said vehicle is stopped for a foreseeable period of time in excess of five minutes.” Vehicles should never be left running on school property without an adult inside or right nearby.

An important note for the drivers in our community:

We ask everyone to be patient as safety and civility are of the utmost importance for our community. If time is of the essence and you need to be somewhere after dropping off your student, your best strategy is to arrive before 8:10 a.m. when there is no congestion in the parking lot and drop-off lanes. Please do everything to encourage students and adults to cross only at the crosswalks and not to cross Industrial Parkway without an adult.

Parking for caregivers is available in the large parking lot in the middle of the lot until 9 am and after 2:45 pm, and all day in the back lot along the chain linked fence. Parking is also available on Industrial Parkway on the opposite side of the street from the school except in areas that are marked in yellow, on the crosswalk or blocking any driveways. Please be courteous to our neighbors when parking, and please leave spots marked by the letter “S” for staff to park in.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

Attendance

Massachusetts General Laws require children to attend school regularly. Regular school attendance is the foundation for a student’s school success, and supports students to develop a sense of belonging, build strong relationships, and benefit from daily experiences and support in the classroom. Parents and caregivers are essential to strong attendance and are responsible to ensure children attend school regularly and on time. The HCCPS attendance policy is scheduled to be updated at the September 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting, and will be updated in the Appendix when approved.

Absences

Students may need to be absent from school for full or partial days for a range of reasons that would be considered excused including illness, family emergency, court appearances, and religious observances. Family vacations are not considered excused, and we strongly encourage families to use scheduled vacation days for this purpose. Students who were not in attendance at school are not permitted to participate in school-sponsored after-school activities (e.g., Kids' Club, sports, theater).

Hilltown is required to report chronic absences to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Chronic absenteeism is the percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of scheduled school days regardless of whether such absences are excused or unexcused (e.g., absent 18 school days when enrolled for 180 school days). Hilltown is also required to take action when a student is habitually truant, which is defined by state law as "a school-aged child, not excused from attendance under the lawful and reasonable regulations of such child's school, who willfully fails to attend school for more than 8 school days in a quarter." Up-to-date student attendance records are available in the Hilltown Portal, and are included on all progress reports.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The school day begins at 8:15. An arrival after 8:20 is considered tardy, and students must check in at the main office upon arrival. Please use the "Reporting Absences" procedures below in the event that your student will arrive after the start of school, or needs to be dismissed early. A student must be at school, at a school related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half of the school day to be counted as present.

Reporting Absences

It is important that we have an accurate count of students in the building in case of an emergency. If a student will be absent from any part of the scheduled school day for any reason, a parent or guardian must either email attendance@hilltowncharter.org (preferably by 8:20 am) or call the school at 413-529-7178 and leave a message on the attendance voice mail (option 2). If you need to speak with someone, please call the main school number and press "0." If we have not yet heard from a caregiver by 9:00 am, we will contact parents.

Absence Due to Student Illness

To minimize the spread of infectious disease and to provide for a safe environment, students should be kept home from school for:

- Fever greater than 100 within the last 24 hours (fever should be under 100 for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications before returning to school)
- Vomiting/diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- A communicable disease
- An upper respiratory illness with significant coughing and/or nasal discharge
- Pain that requires the use of narcotic medications

HEALTH & SAFETY

Mary Price is the school nurse. She can be reached by email at: Mprice@hilltowncharter.org or by phone at 413-529-7178 X113. Please feel free to reach out any time with questions or concerns.

The school nurse should be notified by the parent/guardian of any:

- Serious injury, illness or hospitalization
- Planned surgery
- Communicable diseases
- New diagnosis or change in your child's health status
- Fracture, sprain, stitches, cast, or crutches
- New medication and/or dosing change.
- Need to be excused from Physical Education

Student Illness

To minimize the spread of infectious disease and to provide for a safe environment, students should be kept home from school for:

- Fever greater than 100 within the last 24 hours (fever should be under 100 for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications before returning to school)
- Vomiting/diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- A communicable disease
- An upper respiratory illness with significant coughing and/or nasal discharge
- Pain that requires the use of narcotic medications

Medication Policy

HCCPS follows the Massachusetts Regulation 105 CMR 210 which regulates the administration of prescription medications in schools.

1. Over the Counter Medications

Standing orders from the school physician are on file for several commonly used over the counter (OTC) medications. Caregivers are asked to review their child's permissions for these medications each school year. If you have any questions or would like to see the current list of medications available or change your permissions mid-year, please contact the school nurse, Mary Price: 413-529-7178 x113, mprice@hilltowncharter.org. The OTC medications available include

Acetaminophen
Triple Antibiotic Ointment
Benadryl
Caladryl Clear
Calcium Carbonate
(Turns)
Hydrocortisone Cream

Ibuprofen
Orajel
Cough drops
Vaseline
Benadryl Itch Stopping
Antiseptic wound wash
Aloe vera gel

Sterile eye drops
Cetirizine (Zyrtec)
Sunscreen SPF 30
DEET containing Insect
Repellent
Alcohol based hand sanitizer

2. Prescription Medications

All prescription medications that need to be administered during the school day need a medication order from the child's physician and a permission form signed by the parent. Medication must be brought to school in the original container provided by the pharmacist.

Students may not carry any sort of supplement or medication with them at school. The only exception to this rule is students who need immediate access to an inhaler or epipen.

If a parent needs to come to school during the school day to administer medication, they will be asked to meet their student in the nurse's office.

Food Policy

Our school makes every effort to reduce the risk of life threatening allergic reactions caused by accidental allergen exposure during the day. **We are not a nut-free school.** Therefore, we have:

- No food sharing or trading during snack or lunch in K-6 classrooms
- Handwashing before eating
- All tables will be washed before/after lunch and snack
- No eating on the play structure.
- Limited use of food for classroom celebrations, and curriculum instructions.
Nut free food is encouraged and all food is labeled with an ingredient list.
- An allergen-free table to be established as needed in applicable classrooms.

Families will be notified if it is necessary to restrict particular foods, based on student needs in a classroom.

Pets/Animals

Due to student and staff allergies, and health concerns, family pets and other animals are not allowed in the school at any time unless specifically pre-approved by staff for educational purposes.

Medical Records, Physical Examinations, Immunizations

A medical record is kept for your student from kindergarten through 8th grade. The State of Massachusetts requires a periodic examination of every school-age child. HCCPS complies with this regulation by requiring physical examinations for all incoming students and in 4th and 7th grade.

Health Screenings

According to Massachusetts general laws, all students in grades Pre-K-8 are required to be screened for vision, hearing, and height and weight. In certain grades, body mass index (BMI) and postural screening are also performed. Additionally, a substance abuse screening is conducted at certain grades in middle school.

The schedule for health screenings in school is as follows:

- Vision: K through grade 5 and once in grade 6-8
- Hearing: K through grade 3 and once in grade 6-8

- Growth Screening—Growth screening is conducted for students in grades 1, 4, and 7th. Heights and weights are measured and calculated into BMI or Body Mass Index.
- Postural: Grades 5 through 8
- SBIRT: Grade 7
- SBIRT is an evidence-based screening to promote prevention and identify early risk for substance use in adolescents.

Lice Protocol

The Centers for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Nurses all recommend that students not be excluded from school for having nits and that the management of head lice should not disrupt a student’s educational process.

The AAP further recommends that since a student with an active head lice infestation has likely had the infestation for a month or more by the time it is discovered, poses little risk to others, and does not have a resulting health problem, he or she should remain in class but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others.

When a student is assessed as having head lice, confidentiality is maintained so the student is not embarrassed. The student’s parent or guardian will be notified that day and educated on the prompt, proper treatment of head lice. The student will be allowed to return to school after proper treatment.

The School Nurse will identify close contacts. Close contacts may include members of the same household, peers that may have had direct head-to-head contact, or shared personal items (such as hair tools) within the past 48 hours. For young students close contacts may include students who sit and play together often. Screening of close contacts will be at the discretion of the school nurse.

Classroom checks and letters home regarding individual lice cases will be discontinued unless three or more students of the class are affected.

Head Injury/Concussions

What is a Concussion?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head, or a hit to the body that causes the brain to move or shift in the skull and causes a functional disturbance and chemical changes to brain cells. Concussions typically result in the rapid onset of signs and symptoms, although in some cases symptoms may evolve over minutes to hours.

Communicating with School Following a Concussion

It is important to notify the school nurse following a head injury/concussion diagnosis. Full recovery from a concussion may take several days to several weeks or even months. There are physical and emotional symptoms that may continue during a recovery.

Returning to School Following a Concussion

HCCPS requires students returning to school, post-concussion, to submit a re-entry plan from a healthcare provider.

Please Note: Students who are diagnosed with a concussion as the result of participation in Hilltown Extracurricular Athletics must submit a Post Sports-Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form prior to resuming the athletic activity.

Parents or legal guardians of students who participate in any extracurricular athletic activity and the students themselves, are required by 105 CMR 201.007 to acknowledge in writing that they have read and understood DPH approved training materials on Sports Head Injury and Concussion Awareness.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Teaching Staff

We are fortunate to have a highly qualified teaching faculty at Hilltown, whose individual strengths and collective experience show in the quality of their work. Caregivers may request information about any teacher's credentials from Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Director of Teaching and Learning.

Classroom Structure and Class Assignments

Class groups at Hilltown are single-grade in Kindergarten, first grade, and sixth grade, which supports teachers to focus on supporting the transition into the school, and the transition into the middle school program. Kindergarten and first grade students are mixed for special subject classes and recess. Grades 2-5 have mixed-age class groups, and students stay in the same classroom for two years. Students in grades 7-8 are in single-grade groups for ELA, mathematics, and Spanish to accommodate the sequential nature of these curricula, and in mixed-grade groups for social studies, science, atelier, music, physical education, and technology.

The process for placing students entering second, fourth, and seventh grades—where they will be entering a new mixed-age grade band—is as follows: each spring administrators and educational staff members meet to discuss each student individually and plan the make-up of each classroom for the following year. This is a thoughtful, time-consuming process that takes into account a wide range of factors. Caregivers are invited to provide input about their students' social and educational strengths and needs prior to these conversations, and this input is included in the process. The Director of Teaching and Learning and the Head of School are responsible for final decisions. Only in very rare circumstances will they consider moving a student to a different classroom for the second year in a two-year sequence.

Curriculum

As a public school we are obligated to integrate the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks with our pedagogy. We balance this requirement with our core philosophy to create our own approach to curriculum. These elements come together in the integration of arts across all subjects, careful documentation of students' work and processes, and projects that draw from students' interests.

Whenever possible, and primarily in the areas of social studies and science, Hilltown students explore subjects in depth using a particular theme as a point of departure for an integrated curriculum. They develop skills in art, music, mathematics, science, reading, writing, problem-solving, and critical thinking as they work with central themes. Problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills are a thread that weaves all subject areas together, and creates a standard for questioning and seeking answers whenever a new topic is approached.

All grades, K-8, use the Illustrative Math curriculum, which is designed to help students to build understanding of mathematical concepts, build procedural fluency, develop academic language, and solve real-life problems. Grades K-5 use the Being a Reader and Being a Writer curricula from Collaborative Classroom. The reading curriculum is designed to develop comprehension, fluency, decoding strategies, word analysis, spelling, vocabulary, and independent reading. The writing curriculum combines a writing process approach with guided instruction. Students are provided many opportunities to read and write within these lessons as well as integrated into other subjects such as social studies and science. Hilltown has a reading specialist who assesses all students in grades K-3 using the DIBELS assessment system, and works with students who have identified reading challenges. Examples of these supports include SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words), which is a research-based foundational skills program, and Read Naturally, which supports reading fluency.

The Hilltown curriculum also includes the social aspects of life. Teachers work to create and support a cooperative environment based on mutual respect and problem solving when differences arise. Students learn and have opportunities to practice social and emotional skills in every class. The adjustment counselor provides lessons on social and emotional skills and concepts to all grades using resources from the Zones of Regulation curriculum and other sources. Students in grades 6-8 participate in a weekly Advisory program, which is based on a Circle structure that emphasizes equitable and safe participation through shared norms and values.

Evaluation

Evaluation of a student's progress is multi-faceted. Teachers use observation and discussion in combination with developmentally appropriate formal and informal assessments to identify student strengths and next steps. Drawings, written work samples, presentations, and other types of student work are used to measure growth and development. Students' progress in mathematics is measured by assessments built into the Illustrative Math curriculum. Students' yearly progress in writing is assessed using a standard writing rubric. Standards-based progress reports are provided to caregivers three times a year with narrative comments included on the mid-year reports in addition to scores for each standard. Teacher-family conferences are offered in the fall to give caregivers the opportunity to speak directly with teachers. Students in grades 7 and 8 are included in the fall conferences, and take a lead role. Caregivers may request additional meetings with teachers at any time.

Hilltown uses two different nationally-normed screening assessments to check students' progress. All students in grades K-3 are assessed three times per year using the DIBELS benchmark reading assessment. All students in grades 3-8 are assessed three times per year using the Fastbridge aReading and aMath benchmark assessments. All students in grades 3-8 participate in MCAS testing as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Homework Guidelines

For the most part, students complete schoolwork at school where teachers and staff are available to provide time, space, and support. When home study is assigned, it is a thoughtful choice. We do not believe in busy work, and we are aware of equity issues that can be exacerbated by an overemphasis on homework.

In all grades, we encourage independent reading, or reading with a caregiver, for at least 20 minutes a day. This is one of the few home study practices that research has proven to be an important predictor of background knowledge, vocabulary, sustained attention, and literacy.

In the youngest grades (K-3), there is generally no assigned home study. Teachers may give students optional activities that they can choose to do. In fourth grade, students begin to bring novels home to read in preparation for reading groups. In the older grades (6-8), students have assignments in research, writing, reading, and math practice.

Learning Challenges and Special Education

If you are concerned that your student is struggling to make progress in school, you can first reach out to the classroom teacher to explain your concerns and ask the teacher to share their observations and insights. Teachers may elect to initiate a Response to Supports (RTS) process. This is a team approach during which the general education teachers and other members of the education domain discuss concerns about the student's learning, then determine a goal for improvement over a 6-8-week period and strategies to meet that goal. Over the next 6-8 weeks, the teacher implements these strategies, monitors the student's progress, and reports back to the team. If the strategies were effective, the teacher will typically choose to keep these classroom accommodations in place. If they were not effective, the team may discuss other options to put in place.

If a student continues to have difficulty with schoolwork, parents/guardians may, at any time, submit a written request for a special education evaluation to Amy Linnell, Academic Support Coordinator and Chris Kusek, Head of School. This evaluation can involve a range of testing and assessments conducted by special education and related services staff. When complete, the results of the evaluation are shared at a Team Meeting with the parents/guardians, and Special Education eligibility is determined.

English Language Learners

Hilltown has an instructional program in place for students at all levels who have a primary language other than English. The school uses standardized assessments to identify these students and then provides the necessary services.

SCHOOL-WIDE BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School is built on a strong sense of community. All members of the school—students, teachers, staff, caregivers, and community members—are encouraged to develop strong communication skills and respect for each other. From this base, students learn to respect their peers, teachers, other staff members, and school environment. Treating others as they want to be treated and taking care of our school helps students, caregivers, and staff members define appropriate behaviors that meet those ends. We expect relations between adults within the community—caregivers, teachers, staff, and volunteers—to be respectful and provide a model for the students.

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School is committed to maintaining a work and learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing status. Questions and concerns should be directed to our Civil Rights Coordinator, Chris Kusek.

Code of Cooperation

The Hilltown Code of Cooperation outlines basic behavioral expectations for all students, staff members, and community members. Early each year, teachers review the Code of Cooperation with students, and define what these behaviors look like in various settings around the school.

- Treat others with kindness
- Include everyone
- Be safe with your body
- Talk one at a time and listen to each other
- Take care of materials and property

Community Agreements (formerly the “Community Compact”)

Hilltown has had a “Community Compact” in place each year (see appendix A), which is a formalization of the commitment that we have to one another to build an environment for learning filled with respect, responsibility and openness. This agreement, along with clear definitions for students of its meaning, has typically been reviewed with students by teachers in each classroom at the beginning of the year and then sent home for caregivers to read as well. In September 2023, Hilltown will engage in a process to revise and update this important document, and to change the title to “Community Agreements” to emphasize the spirit of all members of the community agreeing to the same set of expectations. Students, staff members, and parents/caregivers will have the opportunity to share ideas that will be incorporated into the new Community Agreements. When the new document is ready, caregivers, students, teachers, and administrators at Hilltown will be asked to sign the new Community Agreements as a way of showing that they have read and understood the basic ways that each of us can contribute to maintaining our cooperative school.

Supporting Student Behavior

Student behavior expectations are based on the Code of Cooperation and Community Agreements. Hilltown's approach to supporting student behavior is based on three foundational elements. These include:

Relationship-building & Community-building

Strong and trusting relationships are at the heart of any school's efforts to support student behavior. Connections among students and adults foster positive social interaction and establish a safe and supportive learning environment. Research shows that students who feel connected to school have better attendance, grades, and test scores. Successful relationships are focused on positive attitudes and beliefs about others, and cultural competence. Relationship-building is part of the Reggio Emilia approach, which is foundational at Hilltown. All teachers and supportive adults strive to create an environment that communicates the belief that all students are capable, competent, and creative.

Norms, Rules & Expectations

Students need to know what is expected of them in order to meet expectations. Educators lay a strong foundation for the year by explicitly teaching, modeling, and reinforcing norms, rules, and expectations in the first several weeks of school. Students of all ages are more likely to buy in when they have been included in creating, defining, and refining norms, rules, and expectations. Safe and supportive environments—essential for students who have experienced trauma or chronic stress—are characterized by clear and consistent expectations and routines.

Support & Accountability

Any behavior support system requires strategies that support individuals to meet expectations, as well as strategies to hold them accountable to those expectations. Support paired with accountability keeps the learning community safe and predictable.

School-wide Norms, Rules & Expectations

Lunch Expectations

- Delivered lunch pick-up:
 - In grades K-5, a student from each classroom goes to the main office to pick up lunches, and returns the basket when finished
 - In grades 6-8, an administrative staff member will deliver lunches to the classrooms
- **The adult on duty distributes school lunches**
- Students must wipe tables, sweep floors, and push in chairs before the end of lunch
- **Students must not share or trade food due to food allergies family preference**
- Glass containers are not allowed for safety reasons (glass-lined water bottles are acceptable)
- Electronic devices are not allowed during lunch
- Students must sit in the same seat until clean-up (i.e., no wandering or standing)
- One student may leave the lunch room at a time
- We have a “pack it in, pack it out” system to reduce trash, and help parents to know what their child is and isn't eating

Recess/Playground Expectations

- The Code of Cooperation is in place at all times and settings
- Recess is outside unless the “real feel” temperature is at or below 18 degrees, or it is pouring rain (a director will make this decision each day)
- There are designated areas outside of the school building where students can play:
 - The blacktop area/equipment shed near the school building
 - The play structures/swings

- The field and far parking lot area
- The side yard by O'Neil Street
- The strip of grass in front of the school

Students must stay within the designated play areas, and be in sight at all times (e.g., not behind buildings or in the woods). Students in grades K-5 must ask an adult to get equipment that goes into a parking lot. Purples and Prisms students may retrieve their own equipment from a parking lot as long as they do it safely

- Three staff members are assigned at scheduled recess times to be responsible for a section of the playground. This includes:
 - the blacktop area/equipment shed near the school building
 - the play structures/swings
 - the field and far parking lot area

If there are only two adults outside (e.g., for “extra” class recess time), one is responsible for the blacktop/shed area, and the other chooses which second area to use. Students are then restricted to those areas

- Students must ask an adult to get equipment out of the shed for them, and return all equipment to that adult at the end of outside time
- In all grades, an adult must lead students to the playground and back to ensure adequate supervision while outside
- Healthy competition can be a fun part of recess. At Hilltown, we follow the guidelines:
 - Play hard
 - Play fair
 - Play safe

Students who are not following these guidelines, or any part of the Code of Cooperation, will be removed from an activity for a period of time determined by the adult in charge

- Equipment is not allowed on the play structures
- Do not climb trees
- Do not climb on the outside of play structures
- Students must get adult permission to go inside, one at a time. This should be the adult supervising the shed/blacktop area when using that area
- Some equipment has specific rules to ensure safety:
 - Log Swing
 - NO WALKING BETWEEN LOG SWING AND TIRE SWING WHILE IN MOTION
 - Two hands and two feet on the swing at all times
 - No acrobatics, grabbing or swinging from the red lines
 - No swinging higher than the painted lines on the posts
 - Students can sit on the rope swing to slow the swing down by dragging feet - no jumping off or on while swing is really moving
 - No sitting or standing on the ends of the log
 - Tire Swings
 - Three students on black tire swings at a time
 - One student at a time on the red tire swing
 - Students must sit when riding the tire swing
 - Students may not position themselves on the inner part of the tire
 - Students must not have items with them on any of the swings (e.g., pencils, pens, notebooks)
 - Spinners
 - One person at a time
 - Must sit in chair

- Trolley
 - One person at a time
 - Two hands on the bar
- Basketball Hoops
 - No hanging on the pole
 - No “dunking,” or hanging on the rim/net
 - Only an adult is allowed to change the height of the hoops

Winter Recess Expectations

- There is no indoor winter recess option except for medical reasons approved by the school nurse
- Do not throw snow or ice (students will be removed from recess activities for a period of time determined by the adult in charge)
- Do not run or slide on ice
- Students may play on the snow banks next to the field and along the parking lot by the fence. Do not play on the snowbank by the dumpsters
- Students may not dig tunnels
- Winter clothing requirements for grades K-5 (encouraged for everyone):
 - Long sleeves or a vest if temperature is 32-40 degrees
 - At least one layer of outerwear and gloves if temperatures is below 32 degrees
 - Snow boots (K-5) and snow pants (K-3) are required to play in the snow

Before-school Playground Expectations

- Blacktop and platform only (no swings, play structure)
- No running if wet or icy
- No ball games
- No electronic devices
- No equipment from shed
- Wait for whistle to enter building (Purples & Prisms)

Hallway Expectations

- Walking feet
- Quiet voices
- Hands to self
- No eating
- Do not distract others
- Head directly to destination

Water Fountain Expectations

- Be quick - count to 5
- Mouth off the spout
- No washing hands
- Do not dump liquids

Student Clothing Guidelines

- Sneakers are required for PE (no boots, sandals or heels)
- Students’ eyes and ears must be showing if wearing anything on their head
- Hate speech and hate symbols are not permitted (we refer to the ADL for clarification on what constitutes hate speech and hate symbols)
- No references to violence/weapons, controlled substances, and offensive language/symbols

Personal Electronic Devices

This policy aims to establish clear guidelines regarding the use of personal electronic devices ("PEDs") by students during the school day at Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School to minimize distractions, promote a focused learning environment, and ensure the safety and well-being of all students. PEDs include, but are not limited to, smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, e-readers, headphones, and portable gaming devices.

- **General Prohibition**

The use of PEDs is strictly prohibited during the school day, unless explicitly authorized by a teacher or administrator for educational purposes. The school day is defined as the period from arrival on school grounds to pick up, including instructional time, lunch, recess, and any school-sponsored activities during those hours.

- **Device Registration and Storage**

- Families who choose to allow their children to bring PEDs to school must register these devices with the school at the beginning of each academic year or when a new device is purchased. Registration will include providing the device type(s), make and model of devices brought to school on a regular basis.
- Students who bring PEDs to school must turn them in each morning at a designated location. ● The school will provide a secure storage system for PEDs, ensuring their safety and protection throughout the school day.
- PEDs will be returned to students at the end of the school day upon dismissal.

- After dismissal, students may use their PEDs to communicate with caregivers regarding pick-up arrangements or after-school plans, but only with staff permission. Otherwise, PEDs must remain off until students have been picked up.

- **Consequences for Non-Compliance**

Students who fail to comply with this policy will be subject to the following consequences:

- **First Offense:** Confiscation of the PED. The device will be stored securely and returned to the student at the end of the day. A written warning will be issued to the student and a record of the incident will be maintained.
- **Second Offense:** Confiscation of the PED. The device will only be released to a parent or legal guardian. A meeting may be scheduled with the student and parent/guardian to review the policy and discuss expectations.
- **Third Offense:** Confiscation of the PED and a mandatory meeting with the student, parent/guardian, and school administrator. Alternatives to bringing the device to school will be explored, and a temporary ban on bringing the device to school may be implemented.

- **Exceptions and Special Circumstances**

- **Educational Use:** Teachers may authorize the use of PEDs for specific classroom activities or projects.
- **Medical Needs:** Students with documented medical needs requiring the use of a PED will be granted an exception, subject to approval by the school administration and the provision of appropriate documentation.
- **Accessibility:** Students requiring the use of PEDs for accessibility purposes will be accommodated in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

- **Communication and Education**

- This policy will be communicated clearly to all students, families, and staff through the Family Handbook, school website, and other appropriate channels.
- The school will provide education and training to students and staff on responsible PED use, digital citizenship, and online safety.

- **Policy Review**
This policy will be reviewed and updated periodically by the Board of Trustees to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with current best practices and legal requirements.
- **Disclaimer**
The school is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of PEDs brought onto school grounds. Students and families are encouraged to ensure their devices are adequately insured.
- **Enforcement**
This policy will be enforced by all school staff, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on school property.

Weapons and Controlled Substances

Weapons and controlled substances are not permitted on school property or at school-sponsored or school-related events. According to Massachusetts Law Chapter 71: Section 37H " Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

Tiered System of Support and Accountability for Student Behavior

Hilltown uses a three-tiered system of support and accountability for student behavior:

1. TIER 1 - UNIVERSAL supports that benefit all students to function within the classroom
2. TIER 2 - TARGETED supports for students who struggle to manage their behavior
3. TIER 3:
 - a. EMERGENCY RESPONSE to significantly physically and/or emotionally unsafe or hostile behavior
 - b. INDIVIDUALIZED supports for students who struggle daily with big emotions and the requirements of school

TIER 1 Supports

These are UNIVERSAL supports that benefit all students to function within the classroom.

The overarching goals of Tier 1 supports are to:

1. Support students in a fair and consistent manner to understand and meet expectations;
2. Handle off-task and disruptive behavior respectfully, fairly, and consistently to help students get back on track; and
3. Build students' self-reflection skills and repair harm to individuals and the community.

All staff members:

- Model expectations
- Reinforce and remind students about expectations
- Use proximity and visual cues to redirect and remind nonverbally
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection
- Teach self-regulation strategies, and support students to use them
- Point out examples of students meeting expectations

When problematic behavior occurs, staff members will:

- Name the behavior
- Remind about the expectation (avoiding blaming or shaming language/tone)
- State the consequence if the behavior continues (see below)
- If the behavior continues, the staff member will then give consequences and reintegrate students after incidents are resolved

Tier 1 consequences may include:

- Move seat/work area/activity
- Loss of relevant activities, materials, or equipment
- Break it/fix it
- Loss of computer privileges
- Loss of privilege to work independently in common spaces
- Restricted space at recess
- Recess in the directors' corner with an adult available to discuss behavior
- Community service (e.g., helping in the classroom)

If the behavior is part of an emerging pattern, a staff member will inform parents and enlist their support. Staff members will also inform parents about successes and resolutions and when things are going well.

Restorative Dialogue - Staff members will ask restorative questions when incidents occur in order to facilitate restorative dialogue and harm repair between students:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected?
- In what way?
- What do you need to do to make things right?

...and also ask restorative questions to help those affected:

- What did you think about when it happened?
- What impact has this had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What needs to happen to make things right?

TIER 2 Supports

These are TARGETED supports for students who struggle to manage their behavior.

Sometimes student behavior is significantly disruptive and prevents others from engaging in activities. This requires additional support from a director, the behaviorist, the counselor, or another teacher. All involved staff members use the same Tier 1 tools and strategies to redirect student behavior.

After the challenging behavior has been resolved, the staff member and a director will engage in a follow-up conversation with the student to:

- remind about expectations (e.g., the Code of Cooperation, and school-wide rules)
- state the consequence if the behavior occurs in the future
- work with the student to identify supportive strategies
- discuss harm repair options (if applicable)

After a Tier 2-level incident, a staff member will inform parents and enlist their support. Teachers will reintegrate the student into school activities, and inform parents about successes and resolutions.

To address patterns of challenging behavior, teachers will develop proactive strategies ahead of time with support from a director or service provider (e.g., the behaviorist or adjustment counselor). For example: regular check-ins to reinforce expectations; scheduled opportunities for structured reflection; or a behavior incentive plan.

TIER 3A Emergency Response

This is an EMERGENCY RESPONSE to significantly physically and/or emotionally unsafe or hostile behavior.

If student behavior occurs that is significantly physically and/or emotionally unsafe or hostile, involves harassment, involves violence, physical or verbal assault, and/or involves a weapon or a controlled substance, the nearest staff member will request immediate support from a director. The director will move the student(s) to a safe space (or otherwise ensure adult supervision), then convene all or part of the Response Team to manage the incident, collect information, and determine next steps. The Response Team includes the director of teaching and learning, the Head of School, the academic support coordinator, the family and community engagement coordinator, the adjustment counselor, and the behaviorist.

If the Response Team determines that the student has engaged in behavior that is significantly physically and/or emotionally unsafe or hostile, and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the educational environment, and there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption, the next step will be **emergency removal from school**. The director of teaching and learning informs parents and makes arrangements for pick-up as soon as possible.

Emergency removal is followed by a **notice of proposed suspension**, which describes the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, the potential length of the suspension, and an opportunity for the student and parents to have a suspension hearing with the director of teaching and learning (See Appendix I, Due Process for Suspensions, and Appendix J: Policy Concerning Discipline of Students Receiving Special Education Services).

After the suspension hearing determination and resulting suspension (if applicable), the director of teaching and learning will facilitate a restorative process to repair harm to individuals and the community. Any restorative process requires voluntary participation from all parties. Students will be welcomed back and reintegrated into school activities after all disciplinary actions. Parents will be informed about the outcome of any restorative process.

TIER 3B Supports

These are INDIVIDUALIZED supports for students who regularly struggle with big emotions and the requirements of school.

When a student is known to have significant behavioral challenges, staff members develop proactive strategies and response plans with support from a director and special education or service provider, and with parent input and collaboration. These strategies may include more intensive and/or frequent Tier 1 strategies, a Behavior Support Plan (typically developed through a behavior assessment), and/or an established crisis plan. This process may occur within the context of special education.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

School Lunch Program

Despite our best efforts to join the National School Lunch Program we have determined it is not feasible for our school for many factors, including limited space, limited funds and no willing sponsors. Unfortunately this means our families are not able to take advantage of the "free lunch for all" opportunity for most Massachusetts public schools. We do not have the budget to allow us to provide free lunches for everyone without joining the NSLP. We will continue to offer lunches from Papa George at a cost (Families eligible for Free/Reduced lunch will receive free lunches). All menu options are available every day of the week. See the form for more details. Questions? Contact lunch@hilltowncharter.org

Most students bring their own snack and lunch each day. We encourage caregivers to pack plenty of healthy, low-sugar items. We recommend packing silverware and re-closable, reusable containers that can be taken home and washed. ***Please do not pack any glass, as this poses a safety risk.*** Students are expected to rinse and recycle any disposable containers. No refrigeration or warming facilities are available. We encourage students to bring home all trash and uneaten food.

School lunches are available to order. Lunches are currently provided by Papa George Pizza, a local restaurant. Order forms can be found in your Hilltown Portal or picked up at school. Order forms should be printed and dropped off with payment at least one school day in advance, or payments can be submitted online. Applications for free or reduced-cost lunches are available in the school's main entry-way or can be downloaded from the Portal.

School-wide Activities

All activities of the school, except where restricted by age, are open to all students regardless of race, color, sex, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or ability.

All School Gathering

Hilltown sustains its strong sense of school community by holding a weekly All School gathering of all the classrooms in the All-School Space, usually on Friday afternoons. Content varies from week to week and involves some combination of singing, announcements, birthday celebrations and sharing of something learned during the week. Caregivers and families are encouraged to attend and join in the singing whenever they can. Specifics and time or location changes are published in the weekly newsletter and in Hilltown's ongoing Google calendar.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special occasions and are celebrated by the whole community with a song at the "All-School" closest to the actual day. Summer birthdays are celebrated during the months of June and September. Each classroom teacher will determine if and how other in-school birthday celebrations might happen this year. Please check with your student's teacher.

Celebrations / Holidays

Hilltown holds three special school-wide celebrations: The Welcome Ceremony at the beginning of the year, a secular Winter Solstice Celebration just before break in December and a Summer Celebration just before the break in June. Other than these, and recognitions of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Earth Day, the school does not celebrate holidays in any organized way, although classroom sharing of diverse family traditions is encouraged.

“Il Teatro”

Several times a year, students are encouraged to share music performances, poems that they write or love, dance, skits or other self-initiated creative performances with the entire student body at a designated All School. These productions are rehearsed outside of school hours and the performances are greatly anticipated within all of the classes. Caregivers and other family members are invited to perform with their students. Due-dates for performance proposals, screening schedules and performance times are included in the newsletter.

Mini Courses

Mini courses are an opportunity for students to explore an activity in depth, with students of all ages, and with an adult other than their own teacher. They are offered in 3-4 week sessions three times a year – watch the newsletter and the Hilltown Google calendar for dates. All students select from the options offered by the teachers, caregivers or community members. Past offerings have included playwriting, drumming, mural painting, nature studies, newspaper production or yoga.

Special Events

School-wide events that include whole families are one of the ways that our community grows and stays strong. They are a great opportunity to make connections with other caregivers and get involved in the school community. Some of our most loved events include the Winter Solstice Celebration, and our Martin Luther King Jr. Day All School. Caregiver ideas, suggestions and assistance remain always welcome!

After-school Programs

Hilltown has always offered several after school enrichment and childcare options for a minimal fee. Some ongoing programs may cost a flat “activities fee” for a semester’s participation. All of the specifics and sign-up forms will be available in your Portal. Families eligible for free or reduced lunch may also qualify for fee reductions or waivers. Application forms are available in the main entry-way and in the portal. For more information, contact the Head of School, Chris Kusek.

Kids' Club

The HCCPS Kids Club Program is a daily after-school child care offering for students K-8, running from 3:00-5 (Mon, Tues, Thur., Fri) and 12:30-5 on Wed. The activities children engage in outside of school hours are critical to their overall development. This supervised unstructured time is a chance for students to play with students of all ages - furthering our mission for Community within our school. Some examples of activities are outside/playground time, drawing, and board games. Students will need to pack an additional snack for the afternoon to be eaten at Kids Club. Snacks will be available to children who receive free and reduced lunch. Forms are available in the main office or online in the portal, prepayment is required. Please see the sign up forms for more information. Questions? Contact kidsclub@hilltowncharter.org

Theater

On Tuesday afternoons we typically have a Theater program offering from Seana, our Theater Specialist. In the fall we have 9 weeks of Kaleidoscope Troupe which teaches improv (unplanned/unscripted, often comedic) available to all ages. Starting in January there is an All School Musical offering, where students create and perform a musical from the ground up, often loosely based on a fairy tale or legend. In between, Seana works with the Prisms to create a Mummings play to be performed at the Winter Solstice. (See forms for more details) Questions? Contact Seána at slamothe@hilltowncharter.org.

Sports

We offer two different sports over the course of the year. Cross Country for grades 4-8 happens in Summer/Fall and Ultimate Frisbee for grades 5-8 happens in Spring. Coach Alex will send out registration packets soon for Cross Country, which will have a short 15 minute info session on Sept 12th, and officially begin on September 14th. Sports generally happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-5 during their sessions. See registrations for exact dates/times. Contact Alex with any questions: (aniemiec@hilltowncharter.org)

Chorus

Chorus happens on Wednesdays from 12:30-2pm in 2 Sessions over the year - Summer/Fall Session will run from Sept 11 - Dec 11 with performances at the Winter Fair. Chorus is open to all students Grades 3-5 for this session, and we will be happy to accept new members in Grades 2-5 for the Winter/Spring session beginning in January. Interested students are welcome to "try out" a rehearsal before committing to joining for the session. The cost per session is \$75 Contact Nick: ndeysher@hilltowncharter.org with any questions. (See forms for more details)

Hilltown Harmonies

Hilltown Harmonies is a singing group for Purples and Prisms (6th-8th grade) also happening in 2 sessions. All voices are welcome!! Our 6-8 music teacher Felicia will be starting the Summer/Fall Harmonies session on September 11th. This program will be on Wednesdays from 3:00-4:15 until December 11 in the Music Room. The cost is \$75 per student per session. Be on the lookout for an email from Felicia soon with a google sign up. Questions? Email Felicia Sloin (fsloin@hilltowncharter.org)

Rock Band

Rock Band is an instrumental group for Purples and Prisms (6th-8th grade) also happening in 2 sessions. All abilities are welcome!! K-5 Music teacher Nick Deysher leads this group which will be meeting Mondays beginning on September 16th from 3:00-4:15 until December 16 in the Music Room. The cost is \$75 per student per session. Be on the lookout for an email from Nick soon with a google sign up. Questions? Email Nick Deysher (ndeysher@hilltowncharter.org)

Community Service Learning

Hilltown is committed to bringing CSL into every classroom every year as a way of helping students engage with the world around them and feel their efficacy in addressing the needs of the community. This year we will be exploring ways that we can take action remotely and support those causes and institutions that students value.

Field Trips

Parents of new students are asked to sign a blanket permission slip at the beginning of their first year authorizing their student to participate in local field trips during their time at Hilltown. Parents will be notified in advance of upcoming trips and sometimes may be required to sign additional forms for specific trips. In some years, the Prisms and Purples may take extended field trips, as conditions allow. For these field trips, some of the funding might come from student and family fundraising efforts.

External Programs

Some of the programs or after-school clubs that take place at the school may be sponsored and run by caregivers or outside organizations. Girls on the Run and Ski Club are two examples. While the school does not administer these programs, we share information about such opportunities in the Community section of the Newsletter as they are scheduled.

FUNDRAISING

Friends of Hilltown, our affiliated 501-c3 non-profit organization, is a vibrant and valuable resource to us as it organizes fundraising to support both operating expenses, and special programs including field trips and a rolling arts grant program for teachers. Hilltown relies on fundraising to help it cover some of the wonderful programs that we offer. In the past, Friends of Hilltown, staff, students and parent volunteers have worked together to host fundraising events such as a Book Fair, a Winter Fair with craft-making and student performances, and Art Spark, an adult evening event in the spring, with performances and an auction. We hope to be able to continue these fun and rewarding community traditions.

The Friends of Hilltown also organizes a successful annual fundraising appeal and Hilltown participates in ongoing school-wide efforts including monthly Dean's Beans coffee sales and purchase programs at Target, Big Y, and Stop & Shop. For more information on Friends of Hilltown, please see Appendix B or visit our website at www.hilltowncharter.org). Watch the school newsletter for news of Friends of Hilltown's activities throughout the year, and ways you can become involved in supporting Hilltown.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: COMMUNITY COMPACT, 2022-2023

(to be updated in fall 2023)

At Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School we believe that education works best as a cooperative process among teachers, staff, caregivers, students and the greater community.

This compact is a way of clearly stating our common commitment to collaboration in creating a learning community that nourishes and supports all of its members. It is through this level of commitment and cooperation that we are able to successfully fulfill the school's mission.

The Student will:

- ❖ Do my best to learn while in classes and when working independently.
- ❖ Show respect, through my words and actions, for myself, my school, my teachers, other people, and materials.
- ❖ Respect and honor the beliefs and cultures of other students and their families.
- ❖ Be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.
- ❖ Take responsibility for my actions and my safety, including getting to school or logging in on time.
- ❖ Believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.

The Caregivers will:

- ❖ Stay informed about policies, guidelines, schedules, school news and school events.
- ❖ Participate at school to the very best of my ability by attending caregiver conferences, class meetings, Coop Meetings, and by volunteering in ways that benefit the school.
- ❖ Ensure my child's practical success at school. Arrive at school or to online classes on time, rested and ready to learn, with the clothing and arrangements for food that they will need to have a successful day.
- ❖ Help my child take responsibility for following through on independent projects.
- ❖ Respect and honor the beliefs and cultures of all students and their families.
- ❖ Through words and actions, support my child, other students and families, the staff, and the school.

The Teachers, Staff and Administration of Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School will:

- ❖ Provide a safe, cooperative and respectful environment for learning.
- ❖ Understand that all students can succeed and learn.
- ❖ Nurture each child's creativity and encourage their self-expression in many ways.
- ❖ Communicate and work with each family to support their child's learning.
- ❖ Seek out and value caregiver participation and input in all areas of the school community.
- ❖ Respect and honor the beliefs and cultures of all students and their families.
- ❖ Work to improve our program through an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and refinement.

What the Community Compact means for students:

The Student will:

Do my best to learn while in classes at school, while online or working independently.

This means:

I will do the work that I am given to do, in or outside of class.

I will not disrupt class with interruptions, side conversations or visually distracting others.

If I take a break, I will come back to my work afterwards.

Show respect, through my words and my actions, for myself, my school, my teachers, other people, and materials.

To show respect for:

The authority of adults: I will listen to and follow adult direction.

Each other: I will not tease or put-down other students.

Equipment: I will care for my tools and supplies and not use other students' without permission.

Our community: I will avoid using hurtful language and making distracting images.

Respect and honor the beliefs and cultures of other students and their families.

Stand up for everyone's right to be who they are.

Stand up for anyone who is not being treated well because of something they believe or value.

Stand up for anyone who is not being treated well because of their appearance, ability, or culture.

Be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.

This means:

I will find a peaceful solution with others if we disagree.

I will not physically hurt other students or teachers.

I will not exclude others, whether in person or online.

Take responsibility for my actions and my safety, including getting to school or logging in on time.

This means:

I will be truthful.

I will follow the safety directions of adults at school.

I will do my part to get myself to school or online classes. I will attend my online classes the best that I can.

Believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.

We want everyone to try it all – just give it a shot, even if it's new.

Appendix B: Friends of Hilltown



Friends of Hilltown (FoH) is the 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the Hilltown Cooperative Charter School in its pursuit of excellence through education, community involvement and the arts.

We raise money to fund program support, we distribute grants, and we host community events.

How we raise funds:

- Sell merchandise; Dean's Beans coffee, tote bags, Klean Kanteen travel mugs, & stickers.
- Participating in programs such as Amazon Smiles, Stop & Shop A+ School Rewards, and BoxTops for Kids.
- Host community events - Like coffee corner at the Winter Fair and an annual silent auction party. We look forward to hosting fundraising and community events in person again when we are able to
- Directly solicit contributions

How we distribute funds:

- Give direct funding to HCCPS, we call this program support and is outlined in the schools budget each year.
- FoH maintains 3 rolling grants each year. Teachers, clubs and in-school program coordinators can apply. The FoH board members review and vote on grant requests.

Arts Grant supports emergent curriculum in the arts

Past grants have...

- helped to fund the Yellows & Greens to create and perform a wonderful opera
- supported a prisms program to build and learn to play cajons

Curriculum Support Grant supports emergent curriculum at HCCPS

Past grants have...

- supported the community service-learning program with funds to purchase bag share program supplies
- funded the purchase of seedlings, trees, and supplies for the climate team

Amplifying Voices Grant supports the incorporation of social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into existing or emergent curriculum (newly added for the 2021-2022 school year)

- This grant is expected to amplify the voices and ideas of social justice, inclusion and diversity at Hilltown
- We had our first application before the school year even started and are hoping for many more as the school year progresses

Appendix C: Attendance Policy

Approved by the BOT 7/29/2015; To be updated at September 2023 BOT Meeting

Regular school attendance is the foundation for a student's school success. With regular attendance, students develop a sense of belonging, build strong friendships, and benefit from daily experiences and support in the classroom.

Irregular school attendance can be the beginning of a pattern. The more students miss school, the less they learn. Frequent absences affect not only the individual child but the entire class. Hilltown's project oriented program requires students to work in small collaborative groups and every member is vital to the success of the group. When several students miss school at different times and for different durations, it has a ripple effect on the pacing of the entire curriculum.

This policy details the necessary steps to be taken by caregivers when attendance is not possible, and the consequences of chronic absences. The school day begins at 8:15 AM. An arrival after 8:20 AM is 5 minutes late and is officially considered tardy unless there is a specific medical appointment. Five tardies (after 8:20 AM), not related to a disability or medical appointments, will constitute one unexcused absence.

Students who are absent for non-disability related reasons, whether excused or unexcused, may not participate in any after-school or other extra-curricular activity on the day they are absent.

Excused Absences

- Illness or chronic health problem
- A death in the immediate family or other significant family crisis
- Court appearances
- Religious Holy Days
- Suspension from school
- Absence related to an ADA defined disability

(If you believe that your child has a defined ADA disability, please contact the school's 504 Coordinator.)

Family vacations are not considered excused absences.

In the case of illness/significant family crisis/disability:

1. Caregivers are expected to call in by 8:20 a.m. to inform the school of illness or family emergency. If we have not heard from a caregiver, we will call the home at 9:00 a.m. If we do not hear back from a parent/guardian the absence will be considered unexcused.
2. HCCPS may request from the caregiver documentation from a healthcare provider if the student is ill for more than five (5) consecutive days.
3. When a student has excessive illness related absences (non-consecutive but frequent) that begin to interfere with a student's education, the appropriate staff will contact the parents/guardians. We will work together to clarify the medical situation, request medical documentation and make reasonable accommodations to provide appropriate supports if consistent attendance is not possible. Parents/guardians will be expected to help with make-up work. Significant interference to a student's educational progress may result in grade retention. Students with disability-related absences shall be allowed the opportunity to make up missed work prior to grade retention or summer school.

Religious Holy Days: Parents/guardians must inform the school in advance. Failure to provide such notice will result in the absence being deemed as unexcused.

Unexcused Absences

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School strongly discourages unexcused absences. Family vacations resulting in student absence from school create significant disruption to the educational process. Unexcused absences have consequences for the student, the class and the teacher and create additional responsibilities for parents/guardians. In the event of a planned, unexcused absence parents/guardians must understand and comply with the following:

1. Caregivers should inform teachers and administration, in writing, at least two weeks in advance of a planned unexcused absence.
2. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work for unexcused absences. Parents/guardians are responsible for overseeing the student's educational progress during the unexcused absence.
3. All parents/guardians are informed of their child's attendance record on each progress report.
4. If unexcused absences (more than 5) occur one or more of the following steps may be taken.
 - a. Phone call to caregiver
 - b. Community compact meeting with parents/guardian
 - c. Referral for counseling
 - d. Summer work
 - e. Exclusion from any or all after-school and extracurricular activities

In extreme cases where these steps have not been successful HCCPS may, in its sole discretion, pursue the following actions:

- File a "Failure to Send" complaint with the District Court
- File a "Child Requiring Assistance" complaint with the District Court
- File a 51 A with Department of Children and Families

5. In rare circumstances when a parent/guardian is required to be out of the immediate Pioneer Valley area for career related purposes, parents/guardians may formally request absence from school for up to 20 school days. HCCPS will consider, among other things, the following:

- The impact on a student's academic progress.
- Duration of the absence.
- Frequency of previous absences, especially unexcused absences.

Requests in writing must be submitted to the Directors of Administration and Teaching and Learning at least one month in advance. The directors, following consultation with teachers, will make decisions within ten (10) calendar days of the request. The directors retain sole discretion to make the determination and their decision is not subject to further review.

If approved, the family will be responsible for developing a school work plan. The family will take responsibility for overseeing their child's educational progress. If the request is not approved and the family removes the child from school, the absence will be considered unexcused.

Appendix D: Student Computer Loan Agreement & Acceptable Use Policy

As the HCCPS curriculum has become increasingly reliant on computer and internet access, it becomes the responsibility of the school to make sure that students have access to the necessary equipment to complete their work. In light of that, we are providing a device to each student in the school. Here are the responsibilities that the student/family agrees to and those that the school agrees to in maintaining any digital device loaned by the school.

Student/Family Responsibilities:

- Use the computer primarily for school assignments. The student may use the equipment for other purposes only to the extent that such uses do not interfere with this primary use.
- Run occasional system updates as prompted by the computer.
- Keep the computer in a safe location and in clean, working condition (away from food and drink, no stickers, writing, etc.), with allowance for reasonable wear and tear.
- Report any issues that limit the computer's functionality to the school so that they can be addressed as promptly as possible.
- Return to the school by the last day of the school year for summer maintenance or as requested by school administration.

School Responsibilities:

- Troubleshoot unresolved issues affecting functionality during the school day or by email to ensure student access.
- Perform equipment repairs, upgrades or replacements if necessary.
- Install software necessary to complete school assignments as needed
- Perform a thorough check-up on the computer's condition and capability during the summer.

If the equipment is damaged or lost due to negligence, the school shall have the option of requiring the student/family to incur the total cost to repair the equipment to a state of good working order or to reimburse the school for the replacement cost of such equipment. The student/family agrees to indemnify the school against any claim occurring during or resulting from student's possession or use of the equipment, including, but not limited to, any claim for infringement or violation of applicable trademarks and copyrights attributable to student's use.

Student Computer Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Technology provides tools and connections to other computer systems located worldwide. Parents of students who are users must understand that neither the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School nor its staff controls the content of the information available on these other systems. The school will make an effort to restrict access to sites it considers inappropriate for HCCPS students. Students must agree to follow the rules of this Acceptable Use Policy. The nature of this technology provides many educational opportunities, but also necessitates personal responsibility for its use.

Students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Follow directions from HCCPS staff about computer use during classes/directed study.
- Not use computer for socializing, e.g., personal email, instant messaging, chatting, etc.
- Only use my @hilltowncharter.org email account that has been provided. I understand that the staff at Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School reserves the right to inspect any documents and electronic mail sent from or stored within the HCCPS domain.

- Use language on-line which is consistent with school policy.
- Not tamper with equipment or software, nor alter the network interface, nor attempt to gain access to the data and files or others, nor violate any copyright laws, log on only under my own user name, nor attempt to represent myself as someone else.
- Not use my school account to subscribe to any platforms or services (ex. Apple ID, Instagram, Instructables) unless with explicit permission by an HCCPS teacher.
- Not reveal personal information such as home addresses or phone numbers of self or others.
- Not transmit or download material in violation of state or federal regulations.

If a student uses computer technology inappropriately and in a way that violates these guidelines, I understand that this behavior may result in these consequences:

- Limited access to computer/online resources
- Being subject to disciplinary measures under HCCPS policy and/or
- Being referred to the appropriate legal authorities, if warranted.

If I use computer technology inappropriately and in a way that violates these guidelines, I understand that my behavior may result in these consequences.

Student signature _____ Date _____

As a parent/guardian of this student, I have read the above contract and I agree that my child may use the on-line resources provided by the school if they follow the rules of the contract. I understand that any conduct by my child that is in conflict with the contract will result in the consequences listed above as well as possible disciplinary action under our Code of Conduct.

_____ I have read this policy and understand the expectations of my child.

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Grade Placement Policy

Overview

We generally believe it is appropriate for students to follow the typical K-8 sequence of grades and the accompanying curriculum through the school. Children vary considerably in their academic, social, physical, and emotional development. Therefore our instructional program in each class is adjusted to meet the needs of all students. However, under some circumstances, it may be appropriate to consider repeating or skipping a grade. In these cases, we will use a combination of factors to consider grade placement including chronological age, academic achievement, and social and emotional maturity.

Teacher-initiated requests

Teachers will complete a Request to Change Grades Form, and then discuss issues regarding grade placement with the Director of Teaching and Learning. If the teacher and Director of Teaching and Learning agree, these questions will be shared with caregivers by January 31.

Caregiver-initiated requests

Caregivers requesting a change in grade placement for the following year should complete a Request to Change Grades Form and return it to the Director of Teaching and Learning before the February vacation. The form asks caregivers to address the needs that are not currently being met, and why a change in grade placement would help meet these needs. Forms are available in the school office

Process

Following the initial request, the Director of Teaching and Learning will form a staff committee comprised of the classroom teacher, Director of Teaching and Learning, one other teacher who works directly with the student, and a teacher who does not work directly with the student. The Committee will meet with the family to discuss issues related to the child's grade placement. Staff and caregivers will have the opportunity to comment on specific aspects of the child's academic, social, emotional, and physical development, which relate to questions of grade placement. The committee will review all academic records including progress reports, standardized test results, internal assessment results, any related special education documentation or other relevant materials, if available. The committee will also speak with the previous year's teacher when possible. If deemed appropriate by caregivers and staff, a staff member will meet directly with the student to discuss relevant issues, and obtain feedback from the student.

The committee will present information from the caregiver meeting at a subsequent staff meeting. The purpose will be to allow all staff to ask questions and share insights related to the student and the grade placement.

Following the staff meeting, the committee will meet with the caregivers to share information obtained in the process. Caregivers will have the opportunity to discuss this information, as well as provide additional information, ideas, and opinions. This will be the last meeting before the committee makes its decision. Caregivers will have up to 14 calendar days following the meeting to provide any additional input.

Decision

After all above steps have been completed, the committee will decide on the grade placement of the student for the following year. This decision should be made no later than April 15. The committee will make the decision by consensus, and this decision will be final. If the committee is unable to reach consensus, the Director of Teaching and Learning will make the final decision.

Appendix F: Harassment Policy

It is HCCPS policy to strive for an environment free of discrimination, which includes freedom from harassment of any kind. HCCPS prohibits harassment in any form, by anyone who may be present at the school. Respect for dignity is expected under all circumstances.

Specifically, no individual or group shall threaten or insinuate threats either explicitly or implicitly whether physical, verbal or electronic. This includes: slurs, jokes, or degrading comments of any nature. Such conduct will result in disciplinary action.

Any member of the community should report complaints to the Head of School who will conduct an investigation into the alleged offense. The investigator will gather all relevant facts by talking with the complainant and the accused party or parties, reviewing any relevant documents, and interviewing any witnesses. The process will be confidential except that information may be shared on a need to know basis. The investigation will be concluded as promptly as possible.

The sanctions for harassment and discriminatory conduct are dependent on the severity and frequency of the conduct. Anyone engaging in harassment will be subject to disciplinary action.

Appendix G: State and Federal Education Laws

Special Education Laws and Principles

Special education is specially designed instruction and related services that meet the unique needs of an eligible student with a disability or a specific service need that is necessary to allow the student with a disability to access the general curriculum. The purpose of special education is to allow the student to successfully develop their individual educational potential. Along with providing services to the child, if necessary, services are provided to caregivers and to teachers for the student to benefit from special education. Special education is provided by the school district at no cost to caregivers.

In Massachusetts, the special education system is based on the federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in combination with the state's special education law (MGL c. 71B). These laws protect students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and guarantee them an Individualized Education Program (IEP) designed to meet their unique needs.

Teacher Qualifications

Federal law requires that teachers must demonstrate subject matter competency in the areas they teach. You may request information about the qualifications of their child's teacher and teachers:

- Whether your child's teacher has met State qualification for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether your child's teacher is teaching under an emergency license or waiver through which the State qualifications or licensing criteria have been waived.
- The baccalaureate degree major of your child's teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field or discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether your child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, give their qualifications.

If you would like to receive any of the information listed above for your child's teacher, please contact Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Director of Teaching and Learning.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives caregivers certain rights with respect to their children's education records.

Caregivers have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for caregivers to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.

Caregivers have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the caregiver then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the caregiver has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth their view about the contested information.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the caregiver in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. If you do not want your directory information shared, contact Chris Kusek, Head of School.

Appendix H: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

(Revised 12/2024)

HCCPS is committed to creating a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all students and strictly enforces a prohibition against bullying, including without limitation, cyberbullying, of any of its students by anyone and also strictly enforces a prohibition against retaliation on any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses, or has reliable information about bullying. Site-based initiatives, developed collaboratively between school administration and personnel, students, families, and community members will seek to: (1) help students of all ages and abilities stay safe, act wisely, and believe in themselves; and (2) help adults respond effectively to students' reports and their own observations.

1. Definitions

Bullying is defined as the **repeated use** by one or more students or by a member of school staff (including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or teaching assistant) of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target/victim that:

- (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target/victim or damage to the target/victim's property;
 - (ii) places the target/victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to their property;
 - (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim;
 - (iv) infringes on the rights of the target/victim at school; or
 - (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- For purposes of this policy, bullying shall include cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is further defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Aggressor or Perpetrator is defined as a student or a member of school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional, school volunteer or a vendor, contractor or other person working under a contract with the school who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Hostile environment is defined as 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 a student's education.

Retaliation is defined as any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff is defined to include, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, clerical staff, or teaching assistants/paraprofessionals.

School is defined to include the school, school grounds, travel to and from school and/or school-sponsored events or functions, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions, programs whether on or off school grounds (such as social events, trips, sports events, or similar school-sponsored events and functions), at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, on the way to and from school or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school and at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, if the act creates a hostile environment at school for the target/victim or witnesses, infringes on the rights of the victim or witnesses at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Target or Victim is defined as a student or an adult against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

2. Prohibition

Bullying of students occurring in schools is prohibited by law and will not be tolerated by HCCPS.

Bullying can take many forms and can occur in any setting. Bullying can include but is not limited to, intimidation such as name-calling or threatening, social alienation such as shunning or spreading rumors, or physical aggression such as assaults on a student or attacks on a student's property.

Bullying can create an atmosphere of fear for all members of the school community. It also can create unnecessary and unwarranted anxiety that affects the ability of a student to attend school, learn in school, walk in school corridors, eat in the school cafeteria, play in the schoolyard or recreation areas, participate in or attend special or extracurricular activities or travel to and from school.

Bullying behaviors that are not addressed can lead to devastating consequences for young people, including depression, and drops in school performance and attendance. The failure to address bullying behaviors also gives other students the message that it is permissible to engage in negative behaviors.

Consistent with state law, HCCPS 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 one (1) or more of these characteristics.

3. Process and Response

HCCPS takes allegations of bullying seriously and will respond promptly to complaints and allegations of bullying. Additionally, allegations of retaliation against a person who reports bullying provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses; or has reliable information about bullying also shall be taken seriously and HCCPS will respond promptly to such complaints and allegations.

If any student, caregiver/guardian of a student, staff member, or other community member believes that a student has been subjected to bullying, or to retaliation for reporting bullying, providing information during an investigation of bullying or witnessing or having reliable information about bullying, they should bring the matter to the attention of the Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, or Behavior Support Coordinator. This may be done verbally, electronically, or in writing.

Reports of bullying and/or reports of retaliation for reporting bullying, providing information during an investigation of bullying, or witnessing or having reliable information about bullying also may be made anonymously to the Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, or Behavior Support Coordinator. Please note; however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report having been received.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and/or Behavior Support Coordinator 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 not be 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 Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and/or Behavior Support Coordinator will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, if necessary.

Where it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, HCCPS will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and will impose corrective action as necessary, which may range from requiring the aggressor to work with school personnel on better behavior, the recommendation for the provision of counseling or other therapeutic services and/or disciplinary action where appropriate, up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or court involvement.

Additionally, consistent with state law, if it is determined that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Head of School or Director of Teaching and Learning shall:

- (i) notify local law enforcement if school administration believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor
- (ii) take appropriate disciplinary action
- (iii) notify the caregivers/guardians of the aggressor; and
- (iv) notify the caregivers/guardians of the target/victim, to the extent consistent with state and federal law, of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Furthermore, if it is determined that a student has knowingly made a false accusation of bullying or retaliation, they shall be subject to discipline, up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or court involvement.

All students shall be afforded the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

In notifying the caregivers/guardians of the target and the aggressor, the Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Behavioral Support Coordinator must comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Record law and regulations and the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and corresponding regulations.

More specifically, school administration may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a caregiver/guardian unless the information is about the caregiver/guardian's own child.

The Head of School or Director of Teaching and Learning may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency without consent of a student or their parent/guardian, but the school administration shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

Additionally, if the Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, and/or Behavioral Coordinator has determined that there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or individuals, school administration may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals. In this latter situation, the disclosure is limited to the period of the emergency and the Head of School and/or the Director of Teaching and Learning must document the disclosure and the reasons that the Head of School and/or Director of Teaching and Learning determined that a health and safety emergency exists.

4. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Head of School and/or Director of Teaching and Learning will develop and keep updated on at least a biennial basis, as required by law, a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention. Such a plan shall, as required by law, be developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians.

The HCCPS' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will address training and professional development for staff and will also address sharing information with parents/guardians and students about bullying, including information on prevention of bullying, reporting of bullying, and the potential legal consequences of engaging in bullying. Additionally, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include specific steps that schools will take to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying and harassment.

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORT

1. **Name of reporter/Person filing this report:**

Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

2. **Circle whether you are the:** Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

3. **Circle whether you are a:** Student Caregiver Staff Member Other

4. **If student, state your classroom and grade level:**

5. **If staff member, state your position:**

6. **Your contact information/telephone number:**

7. **Name of target (of behavior):**

8. **Name of aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior):**

9. **Date(s), times(s), location(s) of incident(s)** (Be as specific as possible):

10. **Witnesses** (People who saw the incident) or have information about it):

Name: Student Staff Other

Name: Student Staff Other

Name: Student Staff Other

11. **Describe the details of the incident** (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space if necessary.

12. **Date of report:**

13. **Form given to** (Name, Position):

(For official use only) Date received:

Appendix I: Due Process for Suspensions

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 HCCPS and, in the Director of Teaching and Learning'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.

The Director of Teaching and Learning may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

During the emergency removal, the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning, 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 Director of Teaching and Learning's determination in a long-term suspension or short-term suspension, as applicable.

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), HCCPS 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO SUSPENSION UNDER M.G.L. CHAPTER 71, §37H¾

A student may not be suspended under M.G.L. Chapter 71, §37H¾, unless one or more of the following apply:

- A. Alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents.
- B. There are documented specific reasons why alternative remedies are unsuitable or counterproductive.
- C. The situation is such that the student’s continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school.

SHORT-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING DETERMINATION

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from HCCPS 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 HCCPS year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

Director of Teaching and Learning Hearing.

The purpose of the hearing with the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The Director of Teaching and Learning will provide notification in writing of their 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning shall send their determination to the Head of School 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING DETERMINATION

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from HCCPS 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 their 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 HCCPS district;
5. the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the Director of Teaching and Learning. 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning;
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 Director of Teaching and Learning's decision to the Head of School or their 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 Head of School decides to reverse the

Director of Teaching and Learning's determination on appeal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the Director of Teaching and Learning shall send their determination to the Head of School 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning's decision to the Head of School if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The hearing 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 Head of School shall grant.

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

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 HCCPS 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 HCCPS year.

The Director of Teaching and Learning may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

The Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning shall make reasonable efforts to notify the caregiver orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The Director of Teaching and Learning shall also invite the caregiver to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such meetings shall be

scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the Director of Teaching and Learning is unable to reach the caregiver after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the caregiver of the in-school suspension.

The Director of Teaching and Learning shall send written notice to the student and caregiver about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the caregiver to a meeting with the Director of Teaching and Learning for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The Director of Teaching and Learning 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 caregiver for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the Director of Teaching and Learning and the caregiver.

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

The Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning may, in their 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 Head of School. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the Head of School of their appeal. The student has the right to counsel at the hearing before the Head of School. 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 Director of Teaching and Learning may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the Director of Teaching and Learning if the Director of Teaching and Learning determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of HCCPS.

The Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning will also provide the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the process for appealing the suspension to the Head of School. 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 Head of School. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel. The Head of School has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Director of Teaching and Learning. The Head of School 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 Director of Teaching and Learning may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the Director of Teaching and Learning determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of HCCPS.

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

The student shall notify the Head of School in writing of their request for an appeal of the decision no later than five (5) calendar days following the date of the expulsion. The Head of School 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 Head of School has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the Director of Teaching and Learning. The Head of School 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.

Appendix J: Policy Concerning Discipline of Students Receiving Special Education Services

Disciplinary Actions and Due Process

Whether or not a student receives special education, HCCPS shall comply with its discipline policy if and when a student misbehaves and violates the school code of conduct. In all situations, discipline must be fair and even-handed.

In general, any student may be suspended or removed from school for disciplinary reasons for a short time, which is no more than 10 days. Before any removal or suspension the Director of Teaching and Learning shall inform the student of the accusations against them. The student shall also provide the student with the opportunity to provide their side of the story. Unless an emergency situation that may affect the safety and well-being of the school, prior to any meeting with a student concerning disciplinary action, the Director of Teaching and Learning shall attempt to notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student, both orally and in writing, of the disciplinary meeting and shall invite the parent/guardian to attend the meeting.

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension may be imposed, the Director of Teaching and Learning shall exercise discretion in deciding the consequence for the offense; consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports

All notices to parent(s)/guardian(s) concerning short-term (less than 10 days) suspensions, shall be in the primary language of the home, if other than English and shall set forth:

- The disciplinary offense;
- The basis for the charge;
- Potential consequences, including potential length of a suspension;
- Notice of the opportunity of the student to have a hearing with the Director of Teaching and Learning concerning the proposed suspension or disciplinary action;
- Notice of the date, time, and location of such hearing; and
- Notice of the right to have an interpreter service attend the hearing

If a student may receive a long-term suspension (more than 10 consecutive school days or a suspension that would amount to the 11th non-consecutive day of suspension during one school year), the notice must include those items listed above, **and** the following:

Notice of the following rights at the hearing:

- Opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the Director of Teaching and Learning may rely upon during the hearing, prior to the hearing;
- Right to be represented by counsel or a lay person chosen by the student during the hearing (at the student's or parent/guardian's expense);
- Right to produce witnesses on behalf of the student and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident;
- Right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school; and

- Right to request that the hearing be recorded by the Director of Teaching and Learning and to receive a copy of the record
- Notice of the right to appeal the Director of Teaching and Learning's Decision to the Board of Trustees

All disciplinary determinations shall be made in writing and sent to the parent(s)/guardians.

Manifestation Determination

HCCPS shall follow the special disciplinary rules for students with disabilities who have been found eligible for special education. These special disciplinary rules apply as soon as a student is removed from their current education placement (whether at HCCPS or off the premises) for more than 10 days in a row, or if a student is removed for disciplinary reasons for more than a total of 10 days in any school year and there is a pattern of removal for comparable behaviors. The Director of Teaching and Learning shall notify the student's parent/guardian as soon as the decision is made to remove the student from their education placement for more than 10 days.

Thereafter, the student's IEP Team shall meet within 10 days of the school's decision to impose the discipline. At this meeting, called a "manifestation determination," the IEP Team, including the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall determine if the misbehavior was caused by or had a direct relationship to the student's disability, or was the direct result of the school's failure to provide the services required by the student's IEP.

In making the manifestation determination, the IEP Team must consider relevant information from the student's file, including the student's IEP, your and the teachers' observations of the student's behavior, and any relevant information that the parent(s)/guardian(s) provide.

If the IEP Team determines that the student's behavior **was not** caused by or directly related to the student's disability or the failure to properly implement the IEP, then a student with a disability can be disciplined in the same manner and for the same length of time as other students are disciplined for the same offense.

The IEP Team, however, must determine the interim alternative educational setting ("IAES") where the student will be placed and the educational services that will be provided. An IAES is a setting other than the student's current placement that enables the student to continue to receive educational services according to their IEP. School personnel may consider the student's unique circumstances in determining whether a change in placement is appropriate for a student with a disability.

If the IEP Team determines that the student's behavior **was** caused by or directly related to the student's disability or the failure to properly implement the IEP, then the student must be returned to the last approved IEP placement unless the IEP Team decides on a different placement. The student shall also undergo a functional behavioral assessment. A functional behavioral assessment is a comprehensive assessment of behavior that provides the IEP Team with information about the student's behavior and identifies behavioral intervention services and program modifications that are designed to address the behavioral violation so it does not recur.

If the student has already had a functional behavioral assessment and has a behavioral intervention plan, then the IEP Team shall determine if any changes should be made to the behavioral intervention plan. If the behavior was caused by the failure to properly implement the IEP, the school shall take immediate steps to remedy the deficiencies.

If the student possessed or used a weapon or drugs, or caused serious bodily injury to another person on school property or at a school event, the student may be placed by the Director of Teaching and Learning in an IAES for up to 45 school days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability. The IEP Team will determine the IAES and the appropriate educational services that will be provided to the student while they are in the IAES.

Instruction Provided to a Student Removed from School

During a short disciplinary removal, the school is not required to provide instruction to a disabled student unless it does so for non-disabled students.

However, once a student with a disability has been removed from the school or from their placement for more than 10 cumulative days during the school year the student must receive educational services that will allow the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and to progress toward the goals set out in their IEP. The Director of Teaching and Learning shall consult with at least one of the student's teachers to determine what services are necessary. These services shall begin on the 11th school day of a student's disciplinary removal during the school year and continue during the disciplinary removal.

Appeal of a Disciplinary Decision

If a parent/guardian disagrees with the Director of Teaching and Learning's decision, the parent/guardian may appeal to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall hold a hearing within three (3) school days upon receipt of the notice of appeal, unless the parent/guardian/student requests an appeal of up to 7 additional calendar days. The Board of Trustees shall send written notice of the time, date, and location of the hearing parent(s)/guardian(s).

During the Board of Trustees' hearing, the student shall have all of the same rights and due process as enumerated in Section 1 of this Policy. The Board of Trustees shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

If a parent/guardian disagrees with the Board of Trustee's decision regarding placement of their student under the disciplinary provisions or disagrees with the manifestation determination, or if HCCPS believes that maintaining the current placement of the student is substantially likely to result in an injury to the student or to others, either the parent or HCCPS may appeal the decision by requesting a hearing with the Board of Special Education Appeals ("BSEA").

The BSEA will convene a hearing on a disciplinary placement or manifestation determination on an expedited schedule. During the appeal of a disciplinary placement or manifestation determination, the student must remain in the IAES until the hearing officer makes a decision or the disciplinary period is completed, unless the caregiver and the school district agree to a different placement.

OTHER DOCUMENTS YOU MAY WANT TO READ

(Available on our website: www.hilltowncharter.org, or in your Hilltown Portal, or ask the main office for a printed copy)

Annual Reports

School By-laws

Long Range Plan for 2014-24

Charter Renewal Application 2019

Hilltown Accountability Plan

Educational Materials selection policy

Board of Trustees officer and committee descriptions

HCCPS Consensus process description

HCCPS Consensus-process articles

Physical Restraint Policy

Grievance Procedure for Students and/or Caregivers

Complaint Procedure for Staff, Caregivers and Students