



Family Handbook 2024-2025

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 thirty successful and creative years!

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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

count 0

HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR 2024-25

count

3

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

FEBRUARY						
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	

15

19

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

MARCH						
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					

21

22

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

APRIL						
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			

17

16

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

MAY						
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

21

15

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

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

JUNE						
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					

11

20

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
 4 Independence Day

JULY						
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		

0

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

updated 4/4/23

180 days for students

190 days for teachers (incl. 1 summer day)

185 days for TAs

New Teachers: Aug. 23;

Returning Teachers: Aug. 24 + 1 day between July 1-August 24

180

HCCPS PERSONNEL - 2024-2025

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF	SPECIAL EDUCATION & RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS (SERS)
Chris Kusek, Head of School	Andrea Hearn, Reading Specialist
Rebecca Belcher-Timme, Director of Teaching and Learning, Section 504/ADA Coordinator , Civil Rights Coordinator	Emilie Woodward, School counselor, Social skills and Mental Health educator
Monique Bourgeois, Administrative Assistant	Emily Lees, Special Education Teacher
Nicole Marcotte, Logistics/Kids' Club Coordinator	Mary Price, School nurse, Health Educator
Carla Clark, Finance Manager	Gaby Blaustein, Special Education Teacher
Tiffany Ross, C&F Engagement Coordinator	Kate Kamins, Special Education Teacher
Grace Mrowicki, Technology Coordinator	Kate Saccento, Special Education Teacher
Jess Williamson, Behavior Support Coordinator	
Amy Linnell, Academic Support Coordinator; Title IX Coordinator	
CLASSROOM TEACHERS	TEACHING ASSISTANTS
Kerri Pollard, Blues Teacher	Clara Kohrman, Blues TA
Cecilia Darby, Indigos Teacher	Adam Hargraves, Indigos TA
Nan Childs, Greens Teacher	Jennifer Santiago, Yellows TA
Julianne Clarke, Yellows Teacher	Seana Lamothe, Greens TA
Emily Endris, Reds Teacher	Marilyn Rivera, 1:1 Student Support
Missy Kubacka, Oranges Teacher	Michaela Wuethrich, Reds TA
Peter Kennedy, Purples ELA/Humanities	Brenda Sotelo, Oranges TA
Andrea Hermans, Purples Math/Science	Dawson Clark, Purples TA
Joe Keppler, Prisms Science	Bailey Costin- Shaw, Purples TA
Joe Gollosi, Prisms ELA	Debby Ghezzi , Prisms TA
Beth Adel, Prisms Humanities	Cas Meade, Prisms TA
Rachel Merrell, Prisms Math	Damiona Reid, Prisms TA
SPECIAL SUBJECTS TEACHERS	Emma Kaserkie, Prisms TA
Alex Niemiec, PE Teacher, Head Coach	Chrismarie, Special Education TA
Felicia Sloin, Music Teacher 6-8	Liza Eaton, Special Education TA
Cyndy Sperry, Atelierista 7/8	Kaleigh Santiago, Special Education TA
Juan Carlos Carpio, Spanish 7-8	Debra Courage, Atelier TA
Nicole Singer, K-6 Atelierista	Sasi Wallace- Recess TA
Nick Deysher, K-5 Music and Movement	

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 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 Structure

The governance and management of the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School are arranged into realms of responsibility, called "Domains." Members of these domain groups work together, seeking input and participation from each other in most decision-making processes.

Education Domain

The Education Domain is responsible for the educational program at Hilltown and includes the work of the teachers, teaching assistants, special services providers and the Director of Teaching and Learning, Rebecca Belcher-Timme, who supervises and develops all aspects of this domain including coordinating the hiring committees for teaching positions.

Administrative Domain

The Administrative Domain covers the day to day operation at school. The Head of School, Chris Kusek, manages the facility, admissions procedures and school finances and hires and coordinates office staff, the school nurse, custodial staff and the bookkeeper. The Administrative Assistant, Monique Bourgeois, and School Logistics and Kids Club Coordinator, Nicole Marcotte, are responsible for staffing the office, answering the phone, and coordinating the day to day procedures in the school office.

Community Domain

The Community Domain is responsible for ensuring full community participation in the school's functioning and governance and for maintaining both the "sense of community" within the school and a school connection with the local community. The Community and Family Engagement Coordinator administers this domain, developing systems to serve and include caregivers and other volunteers, overseeing Community Service Learning for the students and other programs, facilitating meetings of the Cooperative, and coordinating the school's event and fundraising calendar.

Domain Council

The Domain Council meets bi-weekly 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 working 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.

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. Rebecca also serves as the Civil Rights and 540 coordinator for the school.

Head of School

Chris Kusek is responsible for the administrative domain of the school, including state reporting, facilities management, admissions procedures and school finances, supervision of administrative staff, school nurse, and all staff at the Director and Coordinator levels.

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 comprise the board of 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 does not discriminate in admission on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, or proficiency in the English language or a foreign language or academic achievement. M.G.L. c. 71, § 89(m). 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, pregnancy or parenting status, disability, or housing status. M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. *For additional information regarding HCCPS' non-discrimination policies and grievance procedures, please see Appendix K.*

Our enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year is 218 students, kindergarten through grade 8, in twelve mixed-age classrooms. In January of 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)
- School Facebook page
- Hilltown Portal (see below)
- Posting 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

Parents/guardians must provide the school with a home, work, or other emergency telephone number where they can be contacted during the school day. M. G. L. c. 76, § 1A. Please be sure to inform the main office of any change in address, email or phone number 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 and other interested individuals 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 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. While efforts will be made to reunite students with lost personal items, the school is not responsible for lost property.

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 \(www.hilltowncharter.org\)](http://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](mailto: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 or van 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 law requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school regularly. M.G.L. c. 76, § 1. 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 their children attend school regularly and on time.

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 absences, and we strongly encourage families to use scheduled vacation days for this purpose. Students who were not in attendance at school during the school day are not permitted to participate in school-sponsored after-school activities (e.g., Kids' Club, sports, theater) on the day of the absence.

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." These actions may include, but are not limited to, the filing of a Child Requiring Assistance application with the Juvenile Court, the filing of a complaint for failure to send with the District Court, or the filing of a suspected report of neglect with the Department of Children and Families. In addition, the student's school district of residence shall be notified of the student's truancy. 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 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, the parents/guardians will be contacted regarding the student's absence.

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 medication.

Absence Notification Procedures

Where a student has accumulated five (5) or more unexcused absences during the school year, or has missed two (2) or more classes over five (5) cumulative school days due to unexcused tardies, the parents/guardians will be notified and invited to a meeting to develop an action plan to address the student's attendance.

In the event that a student is absent without excuse in excess of ten (10) consecutive school days, the student will be subject to administrative disenrollment from Hilltown. Prior to a student's disenrollment under such circumstances, an Exit Interview meeting will be conducted with the parents/guardians and student in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, § 18.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Mary Price is the school's full time school nurse. She can be reached by email [at: Mprice@hilltowncharter.org](mailto: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, medical condition, 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	Ibuprofen	Sterile eye drops
Triple Antibiotic Ointment	Orajel	Cetirizine (Zyrtec)
Benadryl	Cough drops	Sunscreen SPF 30
Caladryl Clear	Vaseline	DEET containing Insect
Calcium Carbonate (Turns)	Benadryl Itch Stopping	Repellent
Hydrocortisone Cream	Antiseptic wound wash	Alcohol based hand sanitizer
	Aloe vera gel	

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, however, a nut-free school. Therefore, we have:

- No food sharing or trading during snack or lunch in K-6 classrooms
- Handwashing before and after 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 required 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 or in accordance with state and federal requirements relative to service animals.

Health Records, Physical Examinations, Immunizations

A health 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 for students in 4th and 7th grades.

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.

As with all mandated screenings conducted in school, if you would prefer that your child not participate in scheduled screenings, a signed and dated letter identifying the screening from which you seek your child's exemption should be submitted to the school nurse and the Head of School at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the scheduled screening.

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 /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.

Physical Restraint of Students

Physical restraint of a student is an emergency procedure of last resort and will be used only as a last resort and when a student's behavior poses a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm to self or others and the student is not responsive to verbal directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances. Any use of physical restraint will be administered in compliance with 603 CMR 46.00, and parents/guardians will be notified both orally and in writing in the event of a physical restraint of their child in accordance with the requirements of applicable state regulations. The use of mechanical restraint, medication restraint, and/or seclusion is strictly prohibited.

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 the Director of Teaching and Learning or the Head of School.

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.

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.

Home Study 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 occasional 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 an evaluation of the student's eligibility for special education services to the Academic Support Coordinator and/or the Head of School. This evaluation can involve a range of testing and assessments conducted, with the informed written consent of a parent/guardian, 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. If the student is determined to be eligible for special education services, an individualized education program (IEP) will be developed for the student by the Team.

For additional information regarding the evaluation of students with suspected disabilities for special education services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, M.G.L. c. 71B, or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact the Academic Support Coordinator directly.

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. M. G. L. c. 71A; 603 C.M.R. 14.00

SCHOOL-WIDE BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

The 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. M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. Questions and concerns should be directed to our Civil Rights Coordinator, Rebecca Belcher-Timme rbelcher-timme@hilltowncharter.org.

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

At the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School, we believe that education works best as a cooperative process among teachers and other staff members, caregivers, students, and the community at large. The agreements outlined below state our commitment to creating a collaborative learning community that supports all of its members to thrive, and to fulfill the school's mission.

All HCCPS community members will strive to enact the school's mission:

- 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
- Sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program
- Cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us

Students will:

- Follow the Hilltown Code of Cooperation:
 - 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
- Do their best to learn in school and at home

- Advocate for themselves when they need help
- Take ownership of their mistakes and make repairs

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 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). Clothing must not state, imply, or depict speech or imagery that target, demean and/ or disparage groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, religious affiliation, or any other protected classification.
- No references to violence/weapons, controlled substances, and offensive language/symbols

Personal Electronic Devices

Personal electronic devices—including phones, smart watches, and wireless earbuds—may not be used by students during the school day or after school activities, or while waiting outside at dismissal time. Parents must contact the school through the main office to communicate with their students. Students must ask for help from staff to contact parents while at school.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on school property. Students found to be in possession of tobacco/nicotine products will be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Weapons and Controlled Substances

Weapons and controlled substances are not permitted on school property or at school-sponsored or school-related events. 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. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H

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
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 2 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 or threats of 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. Depending upon the nature of the offense, a student may be removed on an emergency basis for between two and ten school days, prior to a hearing being conducted to consider the student's possible suspension or expulsion. See M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H1/2 and 37H3/4.

Emergency removal is followed by a **notice of hearing**, which describes the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, the potential length of the suspension or expulsion for the offense(s) of which the student is accused,, and an opportunity for the student and parents to participate in a due process hearing with the Director of Teaching and Learning, who serves as the school principal for purposes of proceedings conducted in accordance with See M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H1/2 and 37H3/4 (See Appendix I, Due Process for Suspensions, and Appendix J: Policy Concerning Discipline of Students Receiving Special Education Services).

After the hearing determination and notice of the disciplinary consequences imposed (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. The student may also be referred for an evaluation of the student's eligibility for special education services.

Student Conduct – Additional Disciplinary Procedures and Consequences

Please see information provided in Appendix I

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. Lunch is 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 provided 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 Mumpers play to be performed at the Winter Solstice. (See forms details) Questions? Contact Seána [at slamothe@hilltowncharter.org](mailto: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. through Dec. 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 in September. This program will be on Wednesdays from 3:00-4:15 through mid December 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 in mid September from 3:00-4:15 through mid December 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 Agreements

Revised with community input October 2023

At the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School, we believe that education works best as a cooperative process among teachers and other staff members, caregivers, students, and the community at large. The agreements outlined below state our commitment to creating a collaborative learning community that supports all of its members to thrive, and to fulfill the school's mission.

All HCCPS community members will strive to enact the school's mission:

- 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
- Sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program
- Cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us

Students will:

- Follow the Hilltown Code of Cooperation:
 - 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
- Do their best to learn in school and at home
- Advocate for themselves when they need help
- Take ownership of their mistakes and make repairs

Parents and caregivers will:

- Support the Hilltown community through active participation and mutual respect
- Ensure their child is present in school, on time, ready to learn and participate
- Support their child to engage in schoolwork in school and at home
- Monitor their child's academic and social progress
- Engage in two-way communication with teachers and staff members
- Stay informed about school policies, guidelines, news, and events
- Participate in decisions relating to their child's education

HCCPS administration, faculty, and staff members will:

- Provide a safe and supportive school environment where all students can learn and succeed
- Support a welcoming school community in which all members feel included and a sense of belonging
- Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction that enables students to make academic progress
- Nurture each student's creativity, self-expression, and well-being
- Engage in effective home-school communication in support of each student's learning
- Work to improve programs through cycles of planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement

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 instruments
- 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

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.

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 support 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
 - a. Referral for counseling
 - c. Summer work
 - d. 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 Juvenile Court
- File a 51 A with Department of Children and Families

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 Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Technology provides tools and connections to other computer systems located worldwide. Caregivers 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. Some of the information available is controversial and may be offensive. The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School and the staff will make an effort to restrict access to sites it considers inappropriate for HCCPS students.

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School will provide instruction in appropriate use of computer technology. Students must agree to follow the rules of this Acceptable Use Policy. The nature of computer technology provides many educational opportunities, but also necessitates personal responsibility for its use. Caregivers will be asked to help ensure proper use of the Internet by reviewing this policy with their child(ren). Students will not be allowed access to computer technology unless this Acceptable Use Policy has been signed by both caregiver(s) and the student. At HCCPS we value computers, technological tools, and access to online resources as a way to support and advance teaching and learning. We have made a considerable investment to ensure that members of our community have on demand access to these resources and in return we expect everyone to be responsible and respectful users. Students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

As a student at HCCPS, I will:

1. Use the on-line resources provided by my school only for activities and projects known to be approved by my teacher(s).
1. Handle computer technology carefully and with respect – computers should only be used while sitting at a desk, not used while eating or drinking.
2. Not use computer technology for socializing, e.g., personal email, instant messaging, chatting, etc., or for downloading or streaming music, video, or other media unless I have explicit teacher permission.
3. Only use my HCCPS 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.
4. Not change or alter any computer, for example by installing software, removing hardware, adding extensions, or changing configurations, etc.
5. Only use printers with the approval of a teacher, and only print documents related to school work and activities.
6. Use language on-line which is consistent with school policy.
7. Not tamper with equipment or software, nor alter the network interface, nor attempt to gain access to the data and files of others, nor violate any copyright laws, and log on only under my own user name.
8. Not use school equipment to subscribe to outside email services, newsgroups, bulletin board services or other commercial accounts unless with explicit permission by an HCPSS teacher.
9. Not reveal personal information such as home addresses or phone numbers of self or others.
10. Not transmit or download material in violation of state or federal regulations.
11. Not use language or retrieve information that is profane, obscene, abusive or threatening.
12. Not use school equipment of the school network to engage in bullying or discriminatory harassment or other violations of school rules.
13. Report any problems or breaches of this agreement to a teacher or school administrator.

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

- Losing computer technology privileges within the school setting
- Being subject to disciplinary measures under HCPSS 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 composed 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: State and Federal Education Laws

Special Education Laws and Principles

Special education is specially designed instruction and/or 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 enable the student to successfully develop their individual educational potential.

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 the Director of Teaching and Learning or the Head of School.

Appendix G: Bullying Prevention and Intervention

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.

Students or staff members determined to have engaged in bullying of a student will be subject to disciplinary consequences including but not limited to suspension from school (students) and termination of employment (school staff).

All complaints of bullying will be responded to in accordance with HCCPS' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

HCCPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

I. 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, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional 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, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or 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.

II. 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.

III. 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 Director of Teaching and Learning of the school where the child attends. This may be done verbally 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 Director of Teaching and Learning where the child attends. 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning shall (i) notify local law enforcement if the Director of Teaching and Learning 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; and, to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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, the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 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 Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning has determined that there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or individuals, the Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning must document the disclosure and the reasons that the Director of Teaching and Learning determined that a health and safety emergency exists.

IV. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The 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.

Appendix H: Student Conduct and Due Process for Suspensions

Student Discipline

All students will be afforded due process before disciplinary consequences are imposed. The amount of process due will be determined based upon the potential consequences for the violation of which the student is accused. At a minimum, however, all students will be provided with the following prior to the imposition of disciplinary consequences:

- Notice of the violation of which the student is accused and the basis for the charge;
- An opportunity for the student to present their perspective of the facts concerning the charge(s) and to explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, including any mitigating facts.

Students who are suspended or expelled from school shall not be eligible to participate in any school functions for the duration of such disciplinary action. Students who are suspended or expelled and return to school grounds or attend school sponsored events will be subject to further suspension and may be referred to the police or other proper authorities for trespassing. The period of suspension ends as of the beginning of the school day on which the student is authorized to return to school.

Summary of the Rules for Student Conduct:

A student shall be subject to disciplinary consequences, which may include suspension or expulsion (where permitted under Massachusetts law) from school for any of the following violations:

Academic Dishonesty

Unauthorized Absences

Theft

Disruption of the School Environment

Damaging the Property of Another

Damaging School property

Vandalism

Fighting

Inappropriate Displays of Affection/Physical Touching

Disrespect/Defiance Toward School Staff

Making Threats

Possession of Prohibited Items/Materials

Possession, Distribution, and/or Being Under the Influence of a Controlled Substance

Possession, Distribution, and/or Being under the Influence of Alcohol

Violations of Tobacco Policy

Assault of a Fellow Student

Assault of a School Staff Member

Bullying

Violation of Non-Discrimination Policies

Discriminatory Harassment

Hazing

Violations of Acceptable Use Policy

The Issuance of Felony/Felony Delinquency Charges / Conviction of, or Admission to, a Felony or Felony Delinquency

Offense

Other Violations of the Rules set forth in this Handbook, state or federal laws and regulations, or Hilltown policies.

**The above summarizes the general rules for student conduct. The Administration reserves its right and authority to impose disciplinary consequences or additional acts of misconduct not specifically identified above.*

Disciplinary Due Process

EMERGENCY REMOVAL

A student may be temporarily removed prior to written 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.

* In limited situations where a student is charged with a violation of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H, or is subject to suspension in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2, and is determined by the Director of Teaching and Learning to present an immediate threat to persons, property, or the orderly educational environment of the school, the student may be suspended from school on an interim short term basis of ten (10) school days or less pending a formal hearing to consider the student's long-term suspension or expulsion. Prior to the imposition of any disciplinary sanction that might result in a student's interim suspension from school for ten (10) consecutive school days or less pending a long-term suspension/expulsion hearing, the student will be given oral notice of the offense with which he/she is charged and an opportunity to respond. In the event that the Director of Teaching and Learning determines that the student will be suspended from school on an interim, short-term basis pending a formal hearing to consider the student's possible long-term suspension or expulsion, the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified by telephone and in writing. Such interim, short-term removals shall not be subject to appeal.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED SUSPENSION

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H¹/₂ 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;

- A. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student’s suspension;
- C. 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;
- B. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- C. 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, §37H^{3/4}

A student may not be suspended under M.G.L. Chapter 71, §37H^{3/4}, 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 or cumulative school 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;
1. the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school;
4. 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

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 37H^{1/2}

For purposes of disciplinary proceedings conducted in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H and M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H^{1/2}, Hilltown has designated the Director of Teaching and Learning as the “Principal,” the Head of School serves as the “Superintendent.”

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 – M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H

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 the educational staff.

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 (at private expense), along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. Based upon the preponderance of evidence presented at the hearing, the 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) calendar 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 private expense) at the appeal hearing before the Head of School to present evidence and witnesses in support of the appeal. 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.

Issuance of a Felony or Felony Delinquency Complaint – M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H^{1/2}

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.

A student who is convicted of, or makes an admission of guilt to, a felony or felony delinquency offense, will be subject to expulsion from school 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.

Prior to the imposition of any such suspension or expulsion, the student and the parents/guardians will be given written notice of a hearing to be conducted by the Director of Teaching and Learning at which the student and parent/guardian have the right to be represented by an attorney (at private expense), to examine the evidence against the student, and to

present witnesses and documentary evidence in the student's defense. Following such a hearing, a written decision will be issued.

The student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will have the right to appeal any decision imposing a long-term suspension or expulsion from school to the Head of School. The student shall have five (5) calendar days from the effective date of the exclusion to file a written appeal with the Head of School. The Director of Teaching and Learning shall, unless an extension of time is agreed upon, conduct a hearing on the appeal within three (3) calendar days. Pending the outcome of any such appeal, the disciplinary sanction imposed by the Director of Teaching and Learning shall remain in effect.

Educational Services During Removals and School-Wide Education Services Plan – M.G.L. c. 76, § 21

Students who are suspended from school for ten (10) or fewer consecutive school days, whether in or out of school, will be provided with the opportunity to make academic progress during the period of suspension; to complete or make up assignments, homework, quizzes, tests, and projects missed and to continue to earn credit toward their promotion/graduation.

Students who are expelled or suspended from school in excess of ten (10) consecutive school days shall have the right to access services through the School's Education Services Plan to ensure their continued academic progress and earning of credits toward the student's promotion or graduation. Upon the Student's and parent's/guardian's selection of an available alternative educational service, the school shall facilitate and verify the student's enrollment in the service. In addition to the above educational services provisions, students who have been found eligible for special education services will be provided with a free appropriate public education as of the 11th cumulative day of disciplinary removal in the school year.

Student Discipline and Students with Disabilities

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. In addition to those due process protections afforded to all students, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require that additional provisions be made for:

- (a) Students who have been found eligible for special education services under the IDEA.
- (b) A Student who the school knows or has reason to know might be eligible for special education services.
- (c) The school is deemed to have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability if before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred: (1) the student's parent/guardian expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel, or the student's teacher, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (2) the student's parent/guardian requested an evaluation of the child; or (3) the student's teacher, or other school personnel, expressed specific concerns directly to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student.
 - The school is not deemed to have knowledge of a disability if (1) the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation or has refused special education and related services, or (2) the child has been evaluated and determined not to be a child with a disability.
- (d) Students who have been found to have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

These students are generally entitled to increased procedural protections prior to imposing discipline that will result in the student's removal for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or where there is a pattern of short-term removals that exceed ten (10) school days in a given year.

If a request is made for an evaluation of a student's eligibility for special education services during the time period in which the student is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation shall be conducted in an expedited manner. Until the evaluation is completed, the student shall remain in the educational placement determined by school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion without educational services beyond those to which the student may be entitled to under M.G.L. c. 76, §21.

The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of students with disabilities:

- (e) Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for ten (10) school days or less in the school year to the extent that such disciplinary sanctions would be applied to all students. Within ten (10) school days of any decision to exclude a student with a disability from his/her program for more than ten (10) consecutive days in a given school year or to impose a disciplinary sanction that would result in a disciplinary change in placement for a student with a disability as defined under applicable federal laws and regulations, building administrators, the parents/guardians and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team will meet to determine the relationship between the student's disability and behavior (Manifestation Determination).
- (f) If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the student's conduct was not caused by or directly and substantially related to the student's disability and did not directly result from a failure on the part of the school to implement the student's current IEP or Section 504 Plan, the school may discipline the student in accordance with the procedures and penalties applicable to all students but will continue to provide a free appropriate public education to those students with IEPs. Under such circumstances, the student's IEP Team will identify the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, review any existing behavior intervention plan or, where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment. Eligible Section 504 students shall be entitled to receive alternative education services in accordance with the school's Education Services Plan during any suspension or expulsion in excess of ten (10) consecutive days.
- (g) If building administrators, the parents/guardians, and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the conduct giving rise to disciplinary action was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will not be subjected to further removal or exclusion from the student's current education program for the incident of misconduct (except for conduct involving weapons, drugs, or resulting in serious bodily injury to others) until the IEP or 504 Team develops, and the parents/guardians consent to, a new placement, or unless the school obtains an order from a court or from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) or a court authorizing a change in the student's placement. The student's Team shall also review, and modify as appropriate, any existing behavior intervention plan or arrange for a functional behavioral assessment.
- (h) If a student with a disability possesses or uses illegal drugs, sells or solicits a controlled substance, possesses a weapon on school grounds, or causes serious bodily injury to another on school grounds or at a school function, the school may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days regardless of whether the conduct was a manifestation of the student's disability. A court or BSEA Hearing Officer may also order the placement of a student who presents a substantial likelihood of injury to self or others in an appropriate interim setting for up to forty-five (45) school days.

Periodic Review and Annual Reporting of Discipline Data

The Director of Teaching and Learning shall periodically review discipline data by selected student populations, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and student with a disability status. In reviewing the data, the Director of Teaching and Learning shall assess the extent of in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, and emergency removals under 603 CMR 53.07, and the impact of such disciplinary action on selected student populations. The Director of Teaching and Learning shall

further determine whether it is necessary or appropriate to modify disciplinary practices due to over-reliance on expulsion, or in-school or out of school suspension, or emergency removals, or the impact of such suspensions, removals, and expulsions on selected student populations compared with other students.

Hilltown shall also collect and annually report data to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, emergency removals under 603 CMR 53.07, access to education services under 603 CMR 53.13, and such other information as may be required by the Department. Such data shall be reported in a manner and form directed by the Department.

Student Searches

School Desks and Lockers: Desks and lockers assigned to (or used by) individual students remain school property and may be inspected or searched by school officials at any time in the performance of their duties. Items found in a student's locker or desk will be treated as though they are in the possession of the student. Students do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the contents of their school desks and/or lockers.

Searches of Students: School administrators and their designees may search a student's personal belongings and/or person (including pockets, book bags, purses, etc.) upon reasonable suspicion that the student is in possession of items or materials which would constitute a violation of school rules or applicable laws. Reasonable suspicion may be gained by observation of the student's behavior, information from reliable sources, and/or other facts leading the school to believe that the student is in possession of contraband. Searches will be made in the presence of a third party, of the same gender as the student to be searched.

Appendix I – Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Massachusetts Student Records regulations (603 CMR 23.00) provide parents/guardians and eligible students certain rights with respect to access to, amendment of and the disclosure of a student's education records. A general overview of those rights is provided below. Parents/guardians and eligible students may obtain a complete copy of their rights by contacting the Director of Teaching and Learning.

Massachusetts regulations related to student records (603 CMR 23.00) ensure a student's (and their parents'/guardians') rights of inspection, amendment, destruction, and confidentiality related to their records. Under 603 CMR 23.01, the rights related to student records belong to the student's parent/guardian if the student is under the age of fourteen (14) and has not started the ninth grade. Upon reaching the age of fourteen (14) or upon starting the ninth grade (whichever occurs first), both the student and their parent/guardian retain the rights related to student records. Either the student or the parent can exercise these rights independently. Once the student reaches the age of eighteen (18), the student exclusively retains the rights related to student records and only they can exercise such rights if they expressly limit the rights of their parent, exclusive of the right to inspect the student record. If, upon turning 18 years of age, a student wishes to limit the rights which are held by their parents/guardians, they must make the request to the Principal or Superintendent in writing.

The student record consists of the transcript and the temporary record, including all information on recording and computer tapes, microfilm, microfiche, or any other materials regardless of physical form or characteristics concerning a student that is organized on the basis of the student's name or in a way that such student may be individually identified, and that is kept by the public schools of the Commonwealth as defined under state law. Written and electronic communications relative to a student will only be considered to be student records if printed and placed in the student's record or are deliberately saved to an electronic folder through which the student may be individually identified. The regulations divide the record into two sections, the transcript and the temporary record. The transcript includes only the minimum information necessary to reflect the student's educational progress. This information includes the name, address, course titles, grades, credits, and grade levels completed. The transcript is kept by the school system for at least sixty years after the student leaves the system.

Inspection of the Student Record - A parent, or a student who has entered the ninth grade or is at least fourteen (14) years old, has the right to inspect all portions of the student record upon request. The record must be made available to the parent/guardian or eligible student within ten (10) calendar days of the request, unless the parent/guardian or eligible student consents to a delay. In the event that the parent/guardian/eligible student requests copies of the student record, Hilltown may charge the actual cost of copying the requested records. The parent/guardian and/or eligible student may request to meet with professional qualified school personnel to have any of the contents of the record interpreted. Parents/guardians and eligible students should submit their request for access/inspection to the Director of Teaching and Learning in writing.

With a few exceptions, no individual or organization other than the parent/guardian, student, and authorized school personnel are allowed to have access to information in the student record without the specific, informed, written consent of the parent/guardian or the eligible student. Hilltown protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information of students in accordance with state and federal requirements.

Amendment of Record - The parent/guardian and/or eligible student has the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written materials to the student record. In addition, the parent/guardian and/or eligible student have the right to request in writing that information in the student record be amended or deleted. The parent/guardian and/or eligible student has a right to request a conference with the Director of Teaching and Learning to make their objections known. Within a week after the conference, the Director of Teaching and Learning will issue a decision on such a request in writing. If the parent/guardian and/or eligible student are not satisfied with the decision, the

regulations contain provisions through which the decision may be appealed to the Head of School and, ultimately, to the Board of Trustees.

Directory Information - Federal law requires that the schools release the names, addresses, and telephone listings of students to military recruiters and institutions of higher education upon request for recruitment and scholarship purposes without prior consent. In addition, the school may release the following directory information about a student without prior consent: a student's name, address, major fields of study, dates of attendance, weight and height of members of athletic teams, class participation in officially recognized activities and sports, honors and awards, and directory information such as homeroom assignments. However, in all instances, parents may request that such directory information not be released without prior consent by notifying the Director of Teaching and Learning in writing by the end of September of each school year.

Destruction of Records - The regulations require that certain parts of the student record, such as the temporary record, be destroyed a certain period of time after the student leaves the school. School authorities are also allowed to destroy misleading, outdated, or irrelevant information in the record from time to time while the student is enrolled in the school. Before any such information may be destroyed, the parent/guardian and eligible student must be notified, and have an opportunity to receive a copy of any of the information before its destruction.

Transfer of Records - In accordance with 603 CMR 23.07(4)(g), it is the practice of Hilltown to forward the student record of any student who seeks or intends to enroll, or already has enrolled, in another public school, if the disclosure is for the purpose of the student's enrollment or transfer. Although the informed written consent of the parent/guardian or eligible student is not required prior to releasing records for such purposes, the parent/guardian or eligible student has the right to receive a copy of the school record that is forwarded to the new school.

Non-Custodial Parents - Unless there is a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent (parent without physical custody of the student) of any public school student has the right, subject to certain procedures, to receive information regarding the student's achievements, involvement, behavior, etc. A non-custodial parent who wishes to have this information shall submit a written request to the Director of Teaching and Learning. Upon receipt of such a request, the Director of Teaching and Learning shall send written notification to the custodial parent by certified and first-class mail that the records and information will be provided to the non-custodial parent in twenty-one (21) calendar days unless the custodial parent provides documentation of the non-custodial parent's ineligibility to access such information. In all cases where school records are provided to a non-custodial parent, the electronic and postal address and other contact information for the custodial parent shall be removed from the records provided. Any such records provided to the non-custodial parent shall be marked to indicate that they may not be used to enroll the student in another school. Upon receipt of a court order that prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §34H, the school will notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent. M.G.L. c. 71, §34H; 603 CMR 23.07.

Access of Authorized School Personnel – School personnel including: (a) school administrators, teachers, counselors, and other professionals who are employed by the school committee or who are providing services to the student under an agreement between the school committee and a service provider, and who are working directly with the student in an administrative, teaching, counseling, and/or diagnostic capacity; (b) administrative office staff and clerical personnel, employed by the school committee or under a school committee service contract, and whose duties require them to have access to student records for purposes of processing information for the student record; and (c) the evaluation team which evaluates a student, shall have access to the student record of students to whom they are providing services, when such access is required in the performance of their official duties. The consent of the parent/guardian or eligible student shall not be necessary.

Complaints - A parent or eligible student has a right to file a complaint with the Student Privacy Policy Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-8520, 1-855-249-3072 or with the

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, 781-338-3300. If you have any questions regarding this notice or would like more information and/or a copy of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Student Record Regulations, please contact the Head of School.

Notification of Rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within forty-five (45) calendar days of the day the School receives a request for access.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by HCCPS to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the United States Department of Education's office that administers FERPA are:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5920

Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents certain rights regarding the school's conducting of surveys, the collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey"), if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE): political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent; mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships; legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers; religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parents; and/or income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- Notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of the following: any other protected information survey, regardless of funding; any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

- Inspect, upon request and before administration or use: protected information surveys of students; instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

The above rights transfer from the parents to a student who is eighteen (18) years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

Hilltown will directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parents/guardians of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted above and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation in the specific activity or survey. Hilltown will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the school has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents/guardians will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents/guardians will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys.

Specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement include: the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales or other distribution; the administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by the United States Department of Education, and any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents/guardians and students who believe their rights under PPRA have been violated may file a complaint with:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5901

Appendix J – Prohibition of Discrimination and Harassment

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public Schools (HCCPS) does not tolerate discrimination against students, parents, employees or the general public on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, disability, homelessness, religion, age or immigration status. HCCPS is also committed to maintaining school environments free of harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, age, genetic information, ethnic background, ancestry, disability, or any category protected by state or federal law. In addition, HCCPS provides equal access to all designated youth groups. Consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, HCCPS also does not discriminate against students on the basis of homelessness.

HCCPS does not discriminate based on disability. Program applicants, participants, members of the general public, employees, job applicants, and others are entitled to participate in and benefit from all agency programs, activities, and services without regard to disability. Copies of this notice are available, upon request, in alternate print formats (large print, audiotape, Braille, computer disk, etc.). Our grievance procedure, self-evaluation, as well as ADA policies, practices and procedures are available upon request. Inquiries, requests, and complaints should be directed to the Civil Rights/Section 504/ADA Coordinator.

The Head of School Shall designate at least one administrator to serve as the compliance officer for HCCPS' non-discrimination policies in education-related activities, including but not limited to responding to inquiries related to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Age Act; M.G.L. c. 76, § 5; M.G.L. c. 151B and 151C; and 603 C.M.R. § 26.00. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to HCCPS may be referred to the Title IX Coordinator, to the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, or both.

HCCPS' policy of non-discrimination extends to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in employment, admission to a public school of the school district, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, pregnancy status, age, genetic information, ethnic background, ancestry, disability, or any category protected by state or federal law.

HCCPS implements grievance procedures to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of discrimination and harassment on the basis of membership in any of the above protected classes. The HCCPS' Civil Rights Grievance Procedure may be accessed through the school website or the Head of School's office. Any student, parent, or guardian who believes they have been discriminated against, denied a benefit, or excluded from participation in any HCCPS program or activity on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability in violation of this policy may file a grievance with the Civil Rights Coordinator or the Director of Teaching and Learning.

NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEX

HCCPS does not discriminate on the basis of sex and strictly prohibits sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, in any education program or activity that it operates, including in admission and employment. HCCPS does not discriminate on the basis of pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions in its educational programs and employment activities. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; M.G.L. c. 151B; M.G.L. c. 151C; M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. HCCPS' policy of nondiscrimination extends to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business; no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in employment, admissions, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of sex.

HCCPS has adopted and implements a Title IX Grievance Procedure to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment. A copy of HCCPS' Title IX Grievance Procedure may be accessed on the school website at the following link:

<https://www.hilltowncharter.org/wp-content/uploads/Revised-Grievance-Procedure-Staff-December-2023.pdf> or through the office of the Title IX Coordinator.

For questions related to HCCPS' non-discrimination policy or Title IX Grievance Procedure, to make a report or complaint of sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, or for information relative to accommodations and services for individuals based on pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, please contact the Director of Teaching and Learning, who serves as HCCPS' Title IX Coordinator:

Inquires or complaints relative to sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, may also be directed to the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights:

U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights

8th Floor

5 Post Office Square

Boston, MA 02109-3921

Telephone: (617) 289-0111

Facsimile: (617) 289-0150

[Email: OCR.Boston@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Boston@ed.gov)

Any employee or student found to have engaged in sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Students found to have engaged in sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with procedures set forth in Student Discipline section of this handbook and applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Staff members determined to have engaged in sexual harassment shall be subject to professional discipline including possible termination of employment.

Appendix K - Additional Important Notices and Policies

(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 Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- 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