

William Penn Charter School

BIAS RESPONSE PROTOCOL

“A bias incident does not define a school. It is, in many ways, a test of the school’s culture and climate. How you respond is the true measure of a school’s character.” ~ Teaching Tolerance

The William Penn Charter School honors difference and seeks to be a place where diversity is understood, represented and valued. We believe that learning is optimized when community members feel accepted and valued, and we strive to foster a safe and open learning environment, free of slurs, hate, and all forms of harmful bias. We expect our community members will help create a school culture of inclusion and respect, and when mistakes are made, we respond by addressing and hopefully resolving the incident for all involved parties.

A harmful incident (when one or more persons feels hurt by the words or actions of others) related, but not limited to ability, age, appearance, culture, gender, gender expression, gender identity, home language, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or social class is a serious matter that may be considered a bias incident and will require follow up by our School Inclusion Committee (SIC) or other administrators.

Students, faculty and staff, administrators, and families are expected to be upstanders in the face of bigotry and hate. To manage and effectively respond to harmful incidents related to bias we have created the School Inclusion Committee, which includes the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, division and assistant division directors, and school counselors. The SIC’s purpose is to:

- Respond to all bias-related incidents
- Create and share proactive measures in maintaining a positive and inclusive school climate
- Take restorative measures as needed

- Have a finger on the pulse of the school culture
- Maintain the connection between students, administrators, and faculty around topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Discuss support options for students
- Provide support to the Division Directors and Assistant Division Directors
- Provide support and share resources with faculty and students

The Bias Response Protocol was created to provide a guideline on how to address and report a bias incident. Regardless if the person witnessed or if it was reported to them, it is our responsibility as upstanding members of the community to act. The steps laid out in the protocol will assist faculty and administrators in the process. The school does not tolerate harassment of individuals based on race, age, national origin, mental disability, physical disability, religion, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, home language, ethnicity, social class, or any other group protected by federal, state or local law.

This protocol was not created to circumvent the disciplinary process but to run parallel to any disciplinary actions taken by the school. The purpose of the Bias Response Protocol is clearly to identify the steps faculty and administrators should take in the event of a bias incident. Any incident of [harassment](#) will follow the policy found in the handbook.

What are the steps that should be taken when a bias incident occurs?

- Step 1 - **R- Respond** - “In the moment”
- Step 2 - **R- Report** - “Gather information and Communicate”
- Step 3 - **A- Assess** “ Convene School Inclusion Committee”
- Step 4 - **P- Problem-Solve**
- Step 5 - **S- Support**

Step 1: Respond - “In the moment.”

“Every moment that bias goes unanswered is a moment that allows its roots to grow deeper and stronger. Bias left unanswered is bias tacitly approved.” ~ Teaching Tolerance

Respond - [The Teaching Tolerance Pocket Guide](#)

1. **Safety first**
2. **Interrupt** -- Every time. In the moment. Without exception.
Denounce the act with phrases like: *“I don’t like words like that.” “That phrase is hurtful.” “Using that word/phrase doesn’t help others feel safe or accepted here.” “That type of language or behavior does not honor the light of God in everyone.”*
 - a. Isolate offenders as quickly as possible
 - b. Direct uninvolved students back to classrooms
 - c. Assure all that matters are being dealt with and that more information about the incident will be provided as soon as possible.
2. **Question** -- Tone matters in these moments. Your goal is to understand the roots of the speaker’s prejudices, then help add context and information to dispel them. *“Why do you say that?” “What do you mean?” “Tell me more.” “I am curious about...” “Help me understand...” “Walk me through that.”*
 - a. Be mindful of personal stress, bias, and reactions.
 - i. It is ok to take your time to process information, ask for help, and pause.
 - b. This information is vital to understanding the situation and should be factually recorded.
3. **Educate** (if applicable)-- Hate isn’t behind all hateful speech. Sometimes ignorance or lack of exposure is at work. Some people do not know the negative power behind certain words, phrases, or gestures. If you are comfortable and confident, ask questions, such as, *“Do you know the history of that word?”*

“Do you know what that word/phrase means?” Provide concise and accurate information.

- a. If you do not feel comfortable or confident in this role, denounce the act again with a phrase such as, *“We do not use this offensive language.”*

4. **Echo** (if applicable) -- As the echoing voice, you can reiterate the anti-bias message or you can thank the first person for speaking up - or both. It is important to encourage students to be upstanders in the community. *“Thank you for speaking up.”*
“I agree that word is offensive.”

5. Discuss next steps

Students should be made aware that...

- a. The incident will be reported as per standard protocol.
- b. They may be called into a meeting to discuss the events.
- c. Other administrators and staff, who are members of the SIC, will be involved in the discussion.
- d. Parents will be notified about the situation.

Step 2: Report (*Gather information and communicate*)

School counselors protect the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals who seek their services. When information is shared within the course of their professional service, the school counselors must follow the standards of confidentiality. If valid consent is given, the counselor may then share and discuss information when appropriate.

Report - Using [the form](#) linked in the Hub, provide as much accurate information as possible. The sole purpose of the report is to gather information.

- Date, Time, Location
 - On campus, off campus, in person, social media
- Persons directly involved
- Witnesses
- Critical incident description
 - Was this incident violent?

- Was property damaged?
- When and to whom was this event initially reported?
- Were any steps taken to address the incident?
 - When were these steps taken?
 - What was the outcome?
- Was anything about this incident communicated to other students or parents?
 - What and by whom?
- Is there evidence that this incident is part of a larger pattern of bullying or bias?
- Have there been subsequent incidents? If so, describe in detail.

In the event of a false report:

******A false report, calls for a constructive response as well. In the case of a hoax, address the negative impact of the act anyway, even as you denounce the deception. Clear up any rumors and point out the damaging effects these deceptions have on confidence and trust. Lying about a threat damages the peace and safety of the entire school community. Just because someone has cried wolf does not mean a problem does not exist; continue to look into the issue to see if a pattern of hostility exists.

Step 3 Assess (*Convene the School Inclusion Committee*)

Assess

- **Investigate** -***Inform appropriate community members that you are in a fact-gathering mode and that the issue will be addressed accordingly.
 - Remain calm, firm, and deliberate as you gather facts about a potential bias-based incident.
 - Do not jump to conclusions or make hasty decisions - this can exacerbate the issue.
 - Maintain perspective - approach each incident with an open mind.

- Be ready to listen, ask questions, and accept that you may not fully understand the issue.
- Ask questions to determine ignorance vs. malice
- **Review Incident Reports (on the HUB)**
- **Interview:** witnesses, involved parties (separately),
 - Emphasize the main goal is the safety of individuals, school, and the community.
 - Is this part of a larger pattern?

Step 4: Problem Solve

Problem-Solve

- Holding individuals accountable without shaming or blaming.
- Examine intent versus impact
- Explore consequences -- punitive and restorative actions & practices
- Promote healing
- Questions to ask or things to contemplate as the committee addresses the incident:
 - Plan actions to support those most impacted and or affected by the incident.
 - What support and our resources are needed to implement the above plan of action?
 - Plan remediation for the person(s) who caused harm to our community.
 - What support and our resources are needed to implement the above plan of action?
 - Support the needs of the bystanders, upstanders, and witnesses.
 - What support and our resources are needed to implement the above plan of action?

Step 5: Support

Support

- Provide counseling or other outlets for impacted students.
 - Facilitated sessions with affinity groups, friendship groups, or counselors.
- Communication about the incident with the community.
 - State what happened, denounce the act, provide accurate information and dispel misinformation.
- Promote Healing
 - Discuss how resolving these challenges will lead to growth and opportunity.
- Restoring and rebuilding community trust.
 - Includes reintegrating individuals into the community.

Things to keep in mind through the process:

You must maintain a sense of calmness and confidence. It is important to remember the following:

- Bad news travels fast.
- You are the “point person.”
- Without clear communication, people will rush to judgment.
- Balance the desire for speed with the need for thoroughness.
- Silence or lack of response allows fear, confusion, misinformation, and distrust to grow.
- Use or create tools to spread accurate information.

The steps below should be used in addition to any procedure Penn Charter already has in place.

- Put safety first.
- Denounce the act.
- Gather members of the SIC
 - Provide SIC members with pertinent background information
 - Investigate
 - Problem-solve
 - Discuss potential consequences and restorative measures
- Provide clear communication to students, faculty, and families.
 - Providing faculty and staff with verbiage to convey a consistent message to students and outside communities.
 - Includes information on current status, next steps, and follow-up.
- Provide accurate information and dispel misinformation.
- Support targeted students.
 - Don't put victims on the spot.
 - Don't take offense.
 - Denounce efforts that may reinjure the victim.
 - Apologize on behalf of the school community.
 - Be sensitive to privacy concerns, including anti-LGBTQ+ incidents.
- Seek justice, avoid blame.
- Determine appropriate consequences and restorative measures.
 - Reference and adhere to policies and protocols.
 - Fair and consistent enforcement.
 - A community approach
 - Promote healing

-Post Incident

SIC Debrief: (*Lessons Learned Post Crisis Process*)

Reconvene SIC to review and evaluate.

- Possibly expand the discussion to include students, parents, guardians, and community members.
- Copious note-taking is required by multiple individuals

Questions:

- What worked well?
- Did we implement our plan effectively? If not, why not?
- Was our communication plan sufficient?
- Where are there opportunities for improvement?
 - What could we do differently next time?
- What resources did we have and how did we use them?
- What resources did we lack and how might we introduce and use new resources in the future?
- Was the entire school community appropriately prepared to respond to the incident?

Student Code

Guided by Quaker testimonies of equality and community, we are committed to fostering a safe and open learning environment, free of slurs, hate, and bias. Penn Charter does not tolerate insults or gestures related, but not limited to ability, age, appearance, culture, gender, gender expression, gender identity, home language, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or social class.

Students are expected to be upstanders in the face of bigotry and hate. All incidents, as mentioned above, should be reported to the Division Director or to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Faculty Code

In the Quaker spirit of equality and community, it is our responsibility as adults to foster a safe and open learning environment, free of slurs, hate, and bias. Penn Charter does not tolerate insults or gestures related, but not limited to ability, age, appearance, culture, gender, gender expression, gender identity, home language, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or social class.

Faculty, administrators, and staff are expected to be upstanders in the face of bigotry and hate. All incidents, as mentioned above, should be reported to a member of the School Inclusion Committee (SIC), which includes the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, divisional and assistant divisional directors, and school counselors.

Resources:

ADL Tools and Strategies.

- <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>
- <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/11-ways-schools-can-help-students-feel-safe-in-challenging>

Teaching Tolerance:

- <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/responding-to-hate-and-bias-at-school>
- <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school>

GLSEN:

- <https://www.glsen.org/activity/respect-all-policy-recommendations-support-lgbtq-students>
- <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/GLSEN-Respect-For-All-Policy-Resource.pdf>