

ENGINEERING
MATH
ARTS
TECHNOLOGY
SMART
TECHNOLOGY
ENGINEERING
MATH
ARTS

Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

Brooklyn Center Community Schools



**BROOKLYN
CENTER
COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS**

Mission, Vision, Core Values

Mission Statement

To become a justice-centered school community that fuels the unique genius of each student

Vision Statement

Brooklyn Center Community Schools endeavors to be a collective who demonstrates passion, pride and perseverance.

We will fiercely lead the way in justice-centered education, striving against the permanence of racism and oppressive systems while embracing a future where our diversity fuels learning.

With every breath in our bodies, every ounce of influence we possess, and through every challenge, we stand front and center with the young people we love and serve.

Core Values

- **We Stand Front and Center**
In Brooklyn Center Community Schools, we listen, relate, advocate and affirm, understanding that our role is to be a catalyst for student growth and unity.
- **We Demonstrate Passion, Pride and Perseverance**
BCCS is a family, full of struggle and success. Through the heights of joy and the valleys of unrest, we rally for one another, believe in one another and make room to learn from mistakes.
- **We Acknowledge and Disrupt Oppressive Systems**
We have inherited systems of learning that were set up to further disadvantage already marginalized and silenced communities. Our response is to dismantle harmful practices and replace them with healthy power dynamics that amplify and embrace student voices. We will align our resources in ways that continuously fight the permanence of racism.
- **Our Diversity Fuels Learning**
We see each student as they are — capable of unique, lasting and critical contributions to our community. In BCCS we uphold our unique gifts and talents; our greatest hope is that each and every student is able to self-determine a joyful path.
- **We Fiercely Lead in Justice-Centered Education**
Our classrooms will reflect the students who populate these spaces. We insist that students have a voice in their learning and in resolving conflict and harm. As a district, we invite our students and surrounding community into conversations that affect curriculum and culture.

Superintendent Letter to Community

Hello, BCCS Community:

I'm proud to present to you an updated version of our Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) handbook for BCCS students.

In previous iterations, this document served as a means for us adults to manage students. It largely sat on a shelf, however, when it was used it caused harm to the people we have committed to serving: the young people of Brooklyn Center. This document upheld an unequal power dynamic in our system. Whether intentionally or not, it was used to further reinforce the power and control adults had over our students.

We are committed to thoughtfully and intentionally embedding anti-racist and anti-oppressive in what we create, what we decide, and what we do. Abolishing and replacing the old R&R system was a critical step for us in upholding our commitment. In order to get the right product, we brought staff, students, parents and caregivers together to ask, "what do you want and need from your school district?" Taking this feedback, we tasked our students with writing this document. I am incredibly proud of our students for being courageous and speaking their truth. I am thrilled that we centered students in the work of this document. After all, they are the very reason we are here.

Now, this document will serve as the covenant grounded in the relationship we're committed to upholding between young people and adults. We will prioritize empowering our students over punishing them. We will seek justice-centered decision making that puts relationships within our community as the top priority.

I want to recognize that, for many of our staff members, this will be a significant departure from the way things used to be. I am calling on my BCCS colleagues to set aside the compulsion of the status quo for the locus of control in our system to rest squarely on us. Let's teach our students how to use their voices. Let's teach our students about advocating for justice. Let's build a community where we stand front and center for and with our young people.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carly Baker, Superintendent
Brooklyn Center Community Schools

Purpose: Rights and Responsibilities through Civic Engagement

This Document

The use of this document is to:

- Decentralize authority and shift power to be collective
- Sit as the foundation for school to build systems and operations
- Develop preventative frameworks to build community
- Develop responsive framework for responding to harm in the community
- Provide clarity around support models and communication
- Ground our work in theories of anti-racism and anti-oppression

The Issue

Contemporary research has shown a failing in civic education for specifically youth of color in low-income communities, wherein civic engagement, the active participation in a given community, is conflated with adult demands for compliance (Levinson, 2010; Love, 2019). Subsequently, engagement is falsely seen as a person's ability to follow directions rather than actively participate in improving the school community. To acknowledge and work against this becomes the moral imperative of BCCS's responses to community issues as they pertain to rights and responsibilities.

Grounding Assumptions:

Moving from code of conduct to Rights and Responsibilities:

- 1) Rights and responsibilities handbooks in schools have historically been from the perspective of adults in the school, with little to no input from youth.
- 2) Rights are inalienable elements of humanity (e.g., right to life, right to joy, right to freedom)
- 3) Responsibilities are community-bound and relational. As such they are ethical and must be treated with the care and efficacy of ethical questions.
- 4) Harm is an inevitability. We strive to eliminate it and work with an understanding that it already exists.
- 5) Safety is subjective and historically situated in race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and religious affiliation. We understand because harm is inevitable, that seeking safety is an expression of power to protect certain groups from harm that have the privilege to avoid harm's reach due to the functions of power and authority. Safety is not a singularly desirable outcome because it avoids the needs of the community to confront harm collectively, responsively, and sustainably.

Guiding Question:

To center notions of rights and responsibilities in our community:

- What agency do youth have in the disciplinary process?
- Do youth have the right to refuse adult authority?
- Do youth have the right to disagree/contest the story being told?
- Who advocates for youth in the moments of crisis?

Preventative framework that builds and sustains a community using our core values.

Community is at the core of our values, as members of the BCCS community, the preventative framework begins with every staff member looking at themselves to reflect on how they are showing up in their community. These questions offer a start to that process:

Guiding Questions

These are questions for ALL community members to ask of themselves:

- Self-understanding (Self-to-self)
 - What do I know about myself?
 - What don't I know about myself?
- Self-understanding (self-to-others)
 - How do I see myself in relation to others
 - What don't I know about myself in relation to others?

Because responsibilities are ethical in nature, preventative efforts are grounded in relational lines of inquiry:

- Why are relationships important to you?
- Are relationships with people you don't know important to you?
- How do you get to know those you don't know?
- How do you show people you're there for them with words and actions?
- What do you feel/think when relationships don't feel mutual?

Building Capacity

Everyone at BCCS will be developed around the following concepts (definitions can be found on page 9).

- Anti-Oppressive community building in classrooms, common spaces, and building wide expectations.
- The concepts of justice and freedom as the purpose of school
- Restorative practices through restorative justice
- A focus on space for identity development
- A focus on skills development
- A focus on intellectual practices and engagement not compliance
- A focus on criticality through the pursuit of justice
- Discipline as means of practice not solely consequence
- Accountability for all and from within

Preventative Framework

Application for school sites:

1. Design professional development for all adults in the community to build capacity in the concepts above
2. Create spaces for students to build capacity in the concepts above
3. Design systems that support this framework
4. Create teams to review data and adjust systems for decentralized accountability
5. Power will be shifted and spread amongst community members.

Responsive framework that responds to sustain and improve culture using our core values.

We understand that our students are growing and will make mistakes. Adults will model how we respond to mistakes and the inevitable harm that will occur as we continue to build a community. We seek to eliminate harm and work towards healing knowing that it is happening. This framework ensures that these responses are just and aligned with our core values:

Guiding Questions

When harm occurs:

- What harm has occurred?
- What was your immediate emotional response? Why?
- How did authority get used? Who benefitted? Who was harmed?
- Have I created/sustained a space for healing to occur?
- How will repair begin?
- How will repair be sustained?
- What space for community reflection has taken place?

Building Capacity

Everyone at BCCS will be developed around the following concepts (definitions can be found on page 9). As we respond to harm, we will adapt our work around building capacity with these components.

- Anti-Oppressive community building in classrooms, common spaces, and building wide expectations.
- The concepts of justice and freedom as the purpose of school
- Restorative practices through restorative justice
- A focus on space for identity development
- A focus on skills development
- A focus on intellectual practices and engagement not compliance
- A focus on criticality through the pursuit of justice
- Discipline as means of practice not solely consequence
- Accountability for all and from within

Responsive Framework

Application for school sites:

1. Design professional development for all adults in the community
2. Design systems for collecting community based data: both qualitative and quantitative.
3. Review response data as a full community and with transparency
4. Design systems that respond to the data
5. Power will be shifted and spread amongst community members.

Support Teams and Site Support

Support teams are not a way to opt out of the work but rather should be utilized to assist in building community and relationships with our learners. The intellectual and emotional labor of being in community is a weight we all share and we will work to build community and respond to harm within the community.

Team for support at each site:

- Support Specialists (trained in restorative practices)
- Social Workers
- Assistant Principals
- School Psychologist
- Teachers/Staff
- Student Services Staff



Support Model

Our model is grounded on a restorative culture. The ways in which we determine expectations and responses to harm will be driven through our aims reflected in the visual above. With the following guidelines, not guaranteed to follow the order described, each school site will create structures that result in the health and safety of our students and staff while maintaining our aims of dismantling the traditional systems of discipline and power.

- Develop side by side expectations and support for each learning space and common space. This must be agreed upon and approved by students and families
- Develop a response to harm protocol for the space. This can be in the form of justice circles, social contracts meetings, morning meetings and more researched based strategies.
- Synthesize classroom expectations and support models and develop the school-wide version with students leadership teams and family involvement
- Develop the response to harm team made up of support staff who are trained in restorative approaches and whose aim is to repair the harm within the learning spaces and where removal of students is a last resort from the classroom or from the school.
- Develop a Justice Coalition group of students and families to review responses to harm and data in regards to removal from class and removal from school in the forms of referrals and suspensions. This group will develop developmentally appropriate consequences and supports.
- Share and review data with school board, community and other stakeholders for feedback
- Make adjustments to the support model
- Integrate our community schools support model

Accountability and Justice

Our aim for a restorative culture and building discipline in generative ways alongside the community we serve comes with an explicit notion of power shifting. While we still hold traditional positions of power and control (Administration, Support Roles, Teachers), our responsibility to the community is to share power in decision making, accountability and establishing priorities that lead to a more just space, a space where dealing with harm is a natural component of our learning environment. To accomplish this aim, we must establish a culture of civic engagement in regards to our rules, or expectations, our support models. Below, is the framework for each school site to ensure that power is being shifted in ways that support and improve the culture of civic engagement from our students, our families and our staff.

Action	Site	Purpose
Justice Coalition: Students	ALL	Team of students selected by peers to decentralize authority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop side-by-side expectations. • Review discipline data each month • Set priorities to act on in the short and long term • Run Support Circles • Develop Mentorship Opportunities • Support Professional Development
Justice Coalition: Families	ALL	Team of families to decentralize authority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop side-by-side expectations • Review discipline data each month • Set priorities to act on in the short and long term • Support Professional Development
Justice Coalition: Staff	ALL	Team of staff to decentralize authority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop side-by-side expectations. • Review discipline data each month • Set priorities to act on in the short and long term • Support Professional Development
Community Review Board	ALL	Team of staff, students and families that review priorities and establish new direction based on data.
School Board Representation	ECA/BCHS	Selected students representing the student body at the board level.
Community Town Hall	ALL	Space for the community to come together to ask questions, review outcomes and set priorities.

Guiding Research

Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto Schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. Teachers College Press.

Brewer, R.M., & Heitzeg, N.A. (2008). The racialization of crime and punishment: Criminal justice, color-blind racism, and the political economy of the prison industrial complex. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(5), 625-644.

Casey, Z., Lozenski, B., & McManimon, S. (2013). From neoliberal policy to neoliberal pedagogy: Racializing and historicizing classroom management. *Journal of Pedagogy*, 4(1), 36-58.

Chhuon, V., & Wallace, T. (2014). Creating connectedness through being known: Fulfilling the need to belong in U.S. high schools. *Youth & Society*, 46(3), 379-401.

Dumas, M.J. (2016). Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse. *Theory into Practice*, 55(1), 11-19.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R.J., & Nogera, P.A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39, 59-68.

Irby, D.J. (2014). Revealing racial purity ideology: Fear of black-white intimacy as a framework for understanding school discipline in post-Brown schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(5), 783-795.

Khalifa, M., Gooden, M., & Davis, J. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1272-1311.

Levinson, M. (2010). The civic empowerment gap: Defining the problem and locating solutions. In L.R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C.A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth* (pp. 331-361). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Losen, D. (2011). Discipline politics, successful schools, and racial justice.

Love, B. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

Martell, C., & Stevens, K. (2019). Culturally sustaining social studies teachers: Understanding models of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 1-11.

Milner, R. (2020). Fifteenth Annual AERA Brown lecture in education research: Disrupting punitive practices and policies: Rac(e)ing back to teaching, teacher preparation, and Brown. *Educational Researcher*, 49(3), 147-160.

Rubin, B. (2007). "There's still not justice": Youth civic identity development amid distinct school and community contexts. *Teachers College Record*, 109(2), 449-481.

Shalaby, C. (2017). *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at school*. The New Press.

Vickery, A. (2017). "You excluded us for so long and now you want us to be patriotic?": African American women teachers navigating the quandary of citizenship. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 45(3), 318-348.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), 197-214.