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## Identity-Based Incidents Policy and Protocol

True to its Episcopal identity, Porter-Gaud “seeks to be a community that celebrates and worships God as the center of life and loves our neighbors as ourselves, serving all persons, striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being” (Board Approved Episcopal Identity). The Office of Community Engagement and Belonging, anchored by our Episcopal identity, seeks to “create an equitable and inclusive community in which all individuals can contribute to school life and develop a sense of belonging” (Board Approved Statement on DEI). Human dignity and a sense of belonging are affected when identity-based incidents take place. An identity-based incident (IBI) is an intentional or unintentional situation that negatively affects individuals or groups based on one or several identity markers. Therefore, Porter-Gaud has established the IBI Report Protocol (“Protocol”) to champion a culture of inclusion and equitable experiences in alignment with our school mission, vision, and values.

The IBI report protocol activates a transformation cycle (Safir & Dugan, 2021), which represents “a fluid yet structured process that is grounded in [...] inclusion, curiosity, creativity, and courage.” We see it as transformation because it seeks to transform the experience of those affected by an identity-based incident and those who might have intentionally or unintentionally caused it. When a student submits an IBI report, we **listen deeply** to the narrative of the student, respecting confidentiality and reaching out to gather any further information and provide any necessary support. Once we have the information, we **uncover the root causes** of the incident with a mindset of curiosity and withholding judgment. The next step involves **reimagining the approach** to solve the situation in partnership with the students involved, their families, and the student-support professionals at the school. Finally, we **move to action** with courage to rebuild trust, learn from the situation, and heal and grow from the overall experience.

### Specific Aims

The IBI report protocol aims to nurture an “upstander intervention culture” to achieve the following outcomes:

- Champion a culture of inclusion and equitable experiences.
- Intervene safely when an identity-based incident has taken place.
- Delegate the situation to the school administrators, who will collectively support the students involved.
- Support the students who were affected by the incident.
- Implement preventive learning opportunities for the members of the community.
- Provide a fair and equitable process for addressing and investigating incidents.
- Implement disciplinary actions on a case-by-case basis, according to the student handbook.
- In alignment with our Episcopal Identity, implement redemptive learning opportunities for those who engage in identity-based misbehavior.

## Important Terms

**Dignity:** Dignity speaks to the inherent and unconditional worth of all human beings and the primary lens through which we view each community member.

**Belonging:** Belonging is an outcome. It means different things to different people and implies the feeling of security, appreciation, support, fair treatment, and acceptance as a beloved member of the community.

**Identity markers:** Different aspects of our identity. They embody characteristics that have meaning to us and the society in which we exist. (e.g., appearance, age, ability/disability, race/ethnicity, language, citizenship/immigration status, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, family structure, religion, etc.)

**Identity-based incidents:** Intentional or unintentional situations that negatively target individuals or groups based on one or several identity markers

**Listening:** A physical, socio-emotional, mental, cognitive, and spiritual act to understand the lived experiences of the students.

**Upstander intervention culture:** A school culture in which community members (faculty, staff, students) support a person being affected by an identity-based incident.

**Preventive learning opportunities:** Developmentally appropriate and research/ data-based student programming that aims at developing an understanding of the situations, empathy for those affected, and the skills needed to create a more inclusive community (e.g., Intercultural Competence lessons in Life 101, Upstander Intervention Training in the 9th-grade experience programming, advisory lessons, etc.)

**Redemptive learning opportunities:** On a case-by-case basis, redemptive learning opportunities will be offered for those who engaged in an identity-based incident to strengthen the individual(s), support growth, and provide a system of accountability and mentorship that sets the stage for repairing relationships, activating agency, and healing from the situation to move forward.

## How can an identity-based incident affect the person experiencing it?

Porter-Gaud recognizes the irreplaceable worth of each person. An identity-based incident signals a lack of recognition of this inherent human worth and presents a misalignment with our school mission, vision, values, and Episcopal identity. An identity-based incident may affect the social and emotional wellness of the person experiencing it (e.g., anxiety, absenteeism, acting out, suicidal ideation, isolation, and feeling unsafe). It also produces a sense of othering instead of belonging and may deny or limit a student's ability to participate in Porter-Gaud's educational program or activities.

## Recognizing an Identity-Based Incident

An identity-based incident is any intentional or unintentional hostile act or behavior directed toward an individual or group based on any aspect of the individual's or group's identity within the Porter-Gaud community or within a space that affects the members of the community (e.g., comments or pictures in online platforms). Identity-based incidents may take the form of, but are not limited to:

Confrontation, physical or verbal  
Bullying  
Text messages / Phone calls harassment / Messages  
Unwelcome Harassment  
Written or verbal racial/ethnic/religious/cultural slurs or threats  
Inappropriate jokes  
Crude gestures  
Graffiti and signs  
Defacing public property  
Harmful physical or digital communications

Note: Expressing an idea or point of view that can be considered offensive is not necessarily an identity-based incident if the dignity of human beings is recognized and the opinion is presented with respect and civil discourse. A member of the Office of Community Engagement and Belonging will support the students/teachers/staff in trying to understand the situation to determine the action steps.

## Intervening when an incident occurs

When intervening in an identity-based incident as a third party, you should always prioritize your well-being. If you do not feel comfortable safely intervening, you should get someone else to help you and consider filing a report. Here are some strategies to foster an Upstander Intervention Culture (adapted from <https://righttobe.org/>.) There is no specific order to use these strategies. You have to choose them based on the context and your safety.

**Distract:** Take an indirect approach to de-escalate the situation. Start a conversation with the person experiencing the inappropriate behavior or find another way to draw attention away from them.

**Delegate:** Get help from someone else. In school, get help from another student, a teacher, a counselor, the division head, the dean of students, a grade level dean, director of community engagement and belonging. Filing an IBI incident report is a safe way to delegate.

**Document:** It is helpful to have documentation. Create a written record of the incident by emailing a counselor, the division head, the dean of students, a grade level dean, director of community

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engagement and belonging. When the situation is happening online, screenshot instances of inappropriate behavior. You can submit the documentation in the IBI incident report.

Delay: After the incident, check in with the person who experienced the inappropriate behavior.

Direct: Speak up about the inappropriate behavior when it's happening. (e.g., You can directly name the behavior, "that's not funny;" you can name what you observe, "They look upset, why don't you leave them alone;" you can ask a question in hopes that they will self correct, "what do you mean when you say that?"

## Reporting an Identity-Based Incident

Any Porter-Gaud student, faculty, and staff can complete and submit an online IBI Report. The IBI report is not anonymous since it seeks to transform the experience of those involved in the situations reported. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed under law and school policies. If a student initially reports in person, a trusted faculty and staff member (e.g., teachers, Division Head, Assistant Head, dean, counselor, dean of wellness, CEB director, chaplain) will assist the student in completing the online form. If a faculty or staff member reports in person or via email, they will also be prompted to complete the online form. Reporters are expected to provide honest and complete information in good faith and engage in the Protocol once a report is made. Failure to participate in an interview may result in a determination or resolution made without that information.

In a timely manner, the division head will convene a student support committee tailored to each situation, including but not limited to the division counselor, chaplain, advisor, grade-level dean, member of the CEB office, dean of wellness, head of school, etc. Both the person who completed the form and the person(s) accused of engaging in an identity-based incident will be contacted to meet with the division head and members of the convened committee. The division head or designee will take additional steps, including but not limited to:

- review and analyze the report
- gather additional information or data, such as pictures, emails, documents, or screenshots
- seek to clarify information received in the report
- obtain names of witnesses
- assess whether any interim measures are needed to secure the physical or emotional safety of those involved
- explain the process and possible resolution procedures.

Families will be notified accordingly at the division head's discretion. To the extent possible, the school will consider the wishes of the person filing the report when determining an appropriate response, but the final decision will be at the school's discretion.

The student support committee will determine whether an identity-based incident occurred based on a preponderance of the evidence and will notify the reporter and the accused. Porter-Gaud will utilize this Protocol to recommend preventative learning opportunities, redemptive learning opportunities, or other support. Failure to participate or cooperate in the restorative process may lead to other consequences, including disciplinary action.

For further information on the scope of reports, confidentiality, and prohibition on retaliation, see the Student-Parent/Guardian Handbook.