



Midland Park Public Schools

WEEK OF RESPECT

OCTOBER 2-6, 2023

OCTOBER 2023



Take Action Peer Leaders 2023

ANTI-BULLYING BILL OF RIGHTS LEGISLATION

BY DR. MARIE CIRASELLA - SUPERINTENDENT

New Jersey's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR) was authorized in January 2011 and addresses the requirements districts and schools must follow in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB.) The Midland Park Public School district remains in compliance with this critical legislation and strictly adheres to its responsibilities in this regard. In doing so, we periodically advise families to review the law and other factors that have amplified the scope of the statute.

Please know the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is actively revising the Guidance for Parents on the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR.) It is important to note that much of the information included in the current guidance remains applicable. The NJDOE anticipates the revised guidance will be released to districts in Fall 2023. Once the revised guidance is uploaded to the district website, we will notify parents/guardians of these valuable resources.

NJ.gov provides detailed information about the ABR and our district has revised its policies and procedures to reflect the most recent amendments. To help families remain aware of the most recent amendments to the HIB process, we ask you to review the following summary:

- If the school district's policy permits the use of a preliminary determination for reports of HIB, then the superintendent must annually report to the Board of Education the number of times the preliminary determination was found to be outside the scope of HIB.
- If an alleged incident of HIB is later founded as a verified incident of HIB, copies of the results of the investigation shall be placed in the student's record.
- If a student is founded to have committed three incidents of HIB, then a principal, in consultation with appropriate school staff, shall develop an individual student intervention plan that shall be approved by the superintendent of schools or the superintendent's designee. Each subsequent act of verified HIB would also require a principal, in consultation with appropriate school staff, to develop an individual student intervention plan that would be approved by the superintendent of schools or the superintendent's designee.
- When submitting a written report of HIB to the principal, the written report shall be on the HIB 338 Form.
- The LEA shall provide a means for a parent or guardian to complete the HIB 338 Form, specified for Families and Caregivers, online and confidentially to report an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. (Both the policy and the HIB 338 form may be found on the district website: www.mpsnj.org)

Be assured our district remains committed to collaborating with students, staff, and community partners to develop a common understanding of variables that define HIB incidents and those which are more correctly addressed under the student Code of Conduct. Further, know that ongoing staff training, survey analyses, and the support of our School Safety/Climate Committees, make our district schools instructional environments where everyone feels safe, valued, and welcomed.



A MESSAGE FROM MR. CRAIG RUSH DISTRICT ANTI-BULLYING COORDINATOR

We are entering our thirteenth school year since the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act was signed into law. Our school district continues its mission to maintain a climate that fosters a caring and inclusive community for all of our students.

In 2011, Midland Park Public Schools set the goal to become a New Jersey school of excellence in the area of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) prevention. Dr. Patricia Heindel, Director of The School Culture and Climate Initiative, at Saint Elizabeth University, serves as our consultant on best-practices program implementation when addressing school climate. In the spring of 2023, students (with parental consent) participated in a school climate survey for the thirteenth year in a row. Dr. Heindel was able to interpret the data and compare and contrast the results of the 2023 survey with the data from the previous twelve surveys. Dr. Heindel will be making a presentation to the community on the results of the School Climate Survey on Monday evening, November 27, as part of our annual HIB Community Presentation. All parents and interested community members are invited to attend.

As the district Student Assistance Counselor and Anti-Bullying Coordinator, I am proud to say that Midland Park remains committed to expanding its prevention efforts and initiatives. During the 2022 - 2023 school year, our members of the elementary and secondary School Safety/Climate Committees created Action Plans for each building. Our high school Take Action Peer Leaders held "Open Meetings" for High School and Middle School students on the topics of "Managing Stress and Burnout" and "Calming Crafts Night." Our High School Spectrums Diversity Club and Diversity Council created a safe and caring environment for our students to celebrate the diversity of all students. Our Thrive Club focused on wellness and mental health. Our middle

school students received an annual "Cyberbullying" assembly provided by the Bergen County Prosecutors Office. The Prosecutors Office also provided an assembly on "Bias Crime" for our freshman and sophomores. In the classroom, our teachers used curriculum-based infused lessons to provide "teachable moments" in bullying prevention throughout the academic disciplines. We continue to offer a Holocaust Studies elective at the high school level. Our students are exposed to powerful and thought-provoking learning opportunities as they formulate their philosophies and prepare to be the leaders of tomorrow.

During adolescence, students make "social mistakes." These mistakes are developmental and part of maturing. As educators, we will always dedicate ourselves to addressing these issues as they arise and strive to continue to raise expectations for tolerance, acceptance and kindness towards one another.

The Week of Respect serves to remind our community that kindness does matter as we celebrate our diversity and treat one another with dignity throughout the year.

DISTRICT ANTI-BULLYING COORDINATOR

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A MESSAGE FROM MR. CAPUANO MIDLAND PARK JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

"As we embark on the "Week of Respect," our dedication to the community in the high school should be highlighted and celebrated. Our pride is reflected in physical improvements to the building, student academic performance, and perhaps most importantly, through the respect and dignity we share with one another.

When you enter our high school at the start of each new school year, you will notice a variety of improvements. We have recently installed air-conditioning in the gymnasium, and many of the classrooms have air purifiers and air conditioning. Every student can now learn in a comfortable classroom environment that is fresh and climate controlled throughout the year.

As you walked the halls during Back to School Night you may have noticed that many of the classrooms have new doors, drop ceilings and LED lighting. In addition, the lights in the auditorium have been upgraded to LED. These improvements combine to make MPHS one of the nicest high schools in Bergen County. Our annual improvements instill aesthetic pride...and Panther Pride.

Our academic commitment to excellence continues with AP scores (92% passing rate,) two newly renovated art classrooms, and the creation of a STEM LAB. This year, we have new course offerings, including Innovative Design 1 & 2 and AP Pre-Calculus. We also have a new dual enrollment class, Film Studies. This summer was the first time we offered an online financial literacy class for students who wanted to get ahead. These classes provide students with a uniquely personal approach and help them navigate the college process and consider career choices.

Midland Park was again honored with a Best Communities for Music Education 2023 designation from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education. The Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students. This is the ninth time the district has been awarded this prestigious honor.

This year, as we recognize the "Week of Respect," and celebrate our theme of diversity and inclusion. We have planned several informative programs recognizing cultural awareness, including:

- On October 13, students will hear keynote presenter, Mr. Shamiel Gary on "Gametime Excellence".
- Also in October, Polish Holocaust survivor, Mr. Mark Schonwetter will share his personal story with eighth grade students.
- Teachers will have professional development with Chief Investigator David D'Amico on "Identifying Stereotyping & Bias in Schools."
- The Bergen County Prosecutor's Office will offer a new presentation, "Bias Crimes," for ninth and tenth grade students.
- This spring, select students will visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. and students from the broadcasting class will document the trip. On Friday, October 20, we will share this opportunity in an assembly for juniors and seniors.

This is the thirteenth year that the state of New Jersey has recognized the "Week of Respect," making our current senior class the first group of students who have celebrated this important week throughout their entire school experience.

Over the last thirteen years, I have personally witnessed positive changes in our school climate and culture. I have observed students demonstrating more kindness and respect for others. This has been reflected in our discipline reports and suspension rates, which have markedly improved. We established clubs to help promote this positive message, such as Take Action Peer Leadership, Spectrum Diversity Club, Thrive Club, and the Diversity Council, and we continue to see positive improvements in our school climate and culture.

I am proud of who we are at Midland Park, a school district where we come together to remember our past, celebrate the present, and prepare for the future. As a community, we know we can be proud of student academic achievement, their extra-curricular accomplishments, and their efforts in athletics and fine and performing arts. Perhaps we can be most proud of the way our students are emotionally and socially developing, as we strive and endeavor to treat one another with kindness, dignity, and respect.



REFLECTIONS ON RESPECT AT MPHS

BY MR. JASON WHELPLEY
MPHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Having served as the Assistant Principal for a full school year, I have been able to see MPHS through a different lens than my previous years as a classroom teacher. I have walked the hallways during class periods and witnessed so many positive interactions between students. I have visited classrooms observing students working collaboratively and genuinely helping one another. Shockingly, I have enjoyed attending sports ball events and witnessing first hand our athletic talent, sportsmanship, and school spirit. I have also continued to appreciate our performing arts programs and the showcasing of talent MPHS possesses. Ultimately, I have seen the respect that our students and staff have for each other and the values that bind us as a school community.

Respect is not just a word; it's a guiding principle that shapes the way we interact with one another. It reminds us that each person we encounter has their own unique experiences, challenges, and dreams. By respecting one another, we create a harmonious and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

During the Week of Respect, we encourage each and every one of you to take a moment to reflect on the power of respect and how it can make a difference in our lives and the world around us. In a school environment we need to have respect for ourselves, respect for others, and respect for knowledge.

Respect for Ourselves:

Self-respect is the most important kind since we must first respect ourselves to be able to respect others. Take time to appreciate your unique qualities and talents and acknowledge what you bring to our community.

Respect for Others:

Think about the vibrant community we have here at MPHS. Our students, teachers, staff, and families come from all walks of life, bringing with them distinctive experiences and perspectives. It is so important that we recognize those varying perspectives and try to learn from each other. Be a good listener, show kindness, and choose your words carefully. Small acts of kindness, whether it's holding the door open, giving a friendly smile, or offering help to a classmate, can go a long way in making someone's day better.

Respect for Knowledge:

Respect for education and knowledge is crucial for personal growth and how we progress as a community. Be curious, ask questions, and engage in learning with enthusiasm. Respect the knowledge that your teachers and peers bring to the classroom, and remember that we are all here to learn and grow together.

Thank you for being a part of our MPHS community, where respect and kindness are at the heart of everything we do. Welcome back and have a wonderful school year.

Harassment, intimidation and bullying are serious offenses that will not be tolerated in the Midland Park Public Schools. To report an incident of alleged harassment, intimidation and/or bullying, please contact the school principal, the school's Anti-Bullying Specialist, and/or the District Anti-Bullying Coordinator. Contact information for these staff members may be found on our district website: www.mpsnj.org



A MESSAGE FROM MR. CLARK

BY MR. PATRICK CLARK
MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL & ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

I am excited to become a part of your vibrant school community, and I want to introduce myself to all of you. With 19 years of experience as the head wrestling coach at Bogota High School, along with 16 years as the assistant softball coach and 10 years as the assistant football coach, I bring a deep passion for both teaching and coaching to our school. But more than that, I have a vision, a philosophy that centers around good sportsmanship and the importance of respecting others. We call this "Panther Pride."

My philosophy on good sportsmanship goes beyond the wins and losses. It's about instilling values like respect, fair play, and camaraderie in our student-athletes. I believe that by fostering an environment where every athlete understands the significance of not just striving for victory but also respecting their opponents, we can create well-rounded individuals who excel not only on the field but also in life.



Take Action Peer Leaders at Camp Nyoda 2023

**MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL
SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM
2023-2024**

- Mr. Capuano, Principal**
- Mr. Rush, Anti-Bullying Coordinator**
- Mrs. Wall, Anti-Bullying Specialist**
- Ms. Owens - Anti-Bullying Specialist**
- Ms. Altemus, MS Teacher**
- Mrs. Bellucco, HS Teacher**
- Mr. Jimenez, MS/HS Teacher**
- Ms. Brockway, SHIP Representative**
- Officer Van Vliet, School Resource Officer**
- Mrs. Birney, Parent**
- Mrs. Derwin, Parent**

Furthermore, I believe in the power of respect. In a world filled with differences, treating every person with dignity and kindness is not just a moral imperative but also a crucial life skill. My commitment to instilling these principles in our students aligns with our school's mission to prepare them not only academically but also as responsible and compassionate citizens.

With your support, I am confident that we can nurture a community that embodies "Panther Pride," where every student-athlete takes pride in representing our school and understands the significance of respect, not just for themselves but for others as well. Here's to a future filled with achievement, unity, and respect in the name of Panther Pride!



HELLO & WELCOME BACK!

BY CHESSIE OWENS & LIZ WALL MPHS ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALISTS

At first glance, the concept of "Mana," a term from Polynesian and Oceanic cultures, might seem unrelated to New Jersey's Week of Respect. However, if you look a little more deeply, the connection becomes clear.

Mana refers to a spiritual essence or power that permeates everything in the natural world. It is believed to be alive in people, objects, and the environment, and is a cornerstone of many Pacific Islander cultures. Its significance is not only spiritual but also deeply intertwined with the idea of respect. We would like to outline a few ways you can recognize Mana in the Midland Park community.

One of the most enjoyable parts about being a school counselor is meeting the new students who move into Midland Park. Even in my short tenure here at Midland Park Jr./Sr. High School, I have seen this community welcome new families of very diverse backgrounds and cultural heritages. Recognizing the Mana in each culture emphasizes the unique value that each tradition brings to the collective human experience.

Mana is also reflected in the individual--in other words, each person is believed to possess their own unique essence or power. During the Week of Respect, we focus on promoting respect for each individual, regardless of our differences. Mana reminds us that every person carries their own unique qualities and strengths that deserve acknowledgment and respect. When you meet someone new, don't be intimidated by how you are different--instead, ask the question, "What can I learn from this person?"

In Pacific Islander cultures, nature is considered to possess Mana. We should hold a profound respect for the environment in which we live. As Midland Park students, you can recognize Mana in the natural world and the environment by respecting our school grounds, keeping your



All students in grades 7-12 are invited to Join Thrive, the mental health awareness club at MPHS

homes and neighborhoods clean, and maybe participating in an Earth-conscious activity at school, such as joining the Bio-Recycling Club or participating in the Earth Day project in the Art Club.

We can draw inspiration from the concept of Mana to enhance our commitment to respect, inclusivity, and diversity. Remember that respect is not just a week-long observance but a way of life, deeply rooted in our beliefs and actions.

We are all connected through Mana. It helps us see the common thread that runs through various cultures and traditions. In other words, despite our differences, we are all part of a broader human family. By embracing these values year-round, we can create a more inclusive and harmonious society where diversity is celebrated and respected.

We wish you a wonderful year!

MPHS Anti-Bullying Specialists

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A MESSAGE FROM MR. GALASSO AND MRS. SCALA

BY MR. PETE GALASSO - HIGHLAND SCHOOL PRINCIPAL &
MRS. KELLY SCALA - ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALIST

The Climate Committee at Highland School has been working with staff, parents and students for several years to improve the school climate. We are continuing to implement our Mentor Program with 3rd and 6th grade students. The 3rd grade students will be assigned a 6th grade buddy and join them once every quarter for a 6th grade “specials class.” The students will work on a project or an activity together, such as writing and producing a song, or creating blankets for a local foster care facility. This program provides students the opportunity to engage in team-building activities and foster positive role-model relationships.

We are excited to be able to book our annual field trips for all students this year, while exploring some new trips as well. The 4th and 5th grade students will be going on the Ropes Course and the 6th graders will be going to the YMCA Camp. As part of our 6th grade community outreach program, we will schedule local trips to Mill Gardens Assisted Living Home, and also to the CTC Academy, a school for students with developmental disabilities. Mrs. Scala has also developed an “intergenerational” program with two of the 3rd grade classes, which consists of monthly trips to the Mill Gardens Assisted Living Home.



HIGHLAND SCHOOL SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM 2023-2024

Mr. Galasso, *Principal*
Mr. Rush, *Anti-Bullying Coordinator*
Mrs. Scala, *Anti-Bullying Specialist*
Ms. Dispoto, *HIP Representative*
Mr. Winters, *Teacher*
Mrs. Mullady, *Teacher*
Mrs. McCarthy, *Parent*
Mrs. Tarleton, *Parent*
Officer Van Vliet, *SRO*

Mr. Galasso will continue Highland’s annual “Do the Right Thing” assemblies. At these assemblies, teachers and staff recommend students who are making positive contributions to the school climate and culture and celebrate their efforts.

To support various causes and enhance the positive ideals of good character, Mrs. Scala facilitates several charitable fundraisers at both Highland and Godwin. To remain informed about the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR) legislation, parents will have the opportunity to review the ABR and the results of the School Climate Survey at the annual HIB Community Presentation to be held on November 27, 2023.

Highland staff will continue working alongside students, parents and teachers to ensure our students receive the best education possible by adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of each student. Ms. Scala and Mr. Galasso continue to look for innovative ways to create a climate and culture of warmth and openness for all students and staff at Highland School.

Godwin/Highland Anti-Bullying Specialist

Kelly Scala
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(201) 445-3880 x 319



GODWIN PRIDE

BY MS. BACHE - GODWIN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

At Godwin School, Respect and Responsibility are major components of our Godwin PRIDE motto. Students hear these words uttered many times throughout the school year and are taught what it means to be respectful. The Week of Respect provides an opportunity for the Godwin staff to launch the PRIDE motto and the character traits that are associated with it. But it doesn't stop there; we hold assemblies, teach guidance lessons, and read stories all centered on developing these character traits and meeting our students' social and emotional needs.

During the Week of Respect, the PTA is sponsoring the assembly, The Road to Success Six Signs of Character. Your children will learn about Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trust, Friendship, and Good Citizenship in this fun program filled with music, magic, puppets, and more. Your children will learn to set personal standards and goals and the necessary steps to achieve them. A special emphasis is also put on reducing bullying and building teamwork among our students.

In addition to the assembly, Guidance Counselor Miss Christine Soderman, contracted through a grant from West Bergen Mental Health, will lead our Godwin PRIDE assembly. This year, we hope to empower our students to unleash their inner superhero by doing their best to show Godwin Pride each day. We believe it only takes a small act of kindness to turn an ordinary day into an extraordinary one! Throughout the year there will be superhero-themed guidance lessons and assemblies discussing the characteristics of Godwin Pride; and each letter poses a fun challenge and a chance for one child from each class to be recognized and rewarded in front of their peers! The importance of Godwin Pride stretches far beyond the classroom, and we hope that by encouraging our students to always strive to be



the best versions of themselves, they will carry these pillars with them throughout their academic journey and beyond. Please help us by reinforcing these traits at home and encouraging your child to do their personal best every day.

Over the summer, The Yellow Door Art Studio enhanced the front of our school with beautiful colors and words. My favorite words, kindness and respect are painted at the entrance of our school to encourage these traits every day. I teach students how easy it is to be kind to everyone they meet. It doesn't cost anything and a smile or friendly gesture goes a long way. To further instill desirable traits, we added words that all students could understand and work towards attaining: teamwork, empathy, perseverance, honesty, courage, and dream. Throughout the year, Miss Christine will work each of these traits into her guidance lessons and help students fully understand their meaning and impact.

We hope that seeing these words around Godwin School serve as a daily reminder for the students, and community overall, to strive each day to add something positive to the world. We look forward to all of the fun, friendship, learning and growth that this year will bring to our students.



**GODWIN SCHOOL
SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM
2023-2024**

Ms. Bache, *Principal*
 Mr. Rush, *Anti-Bullying Coordinator*
 Mrs. Scala, *Anti-Bullying Specialist*
 Ms. Soderman, *Elementary Counselor*
 Ms. Dispoto, *HIP Representative*
 Officer Van Vliet, *SRO*
 Ms. Hook, *Teacher*
 Ms. Greenberg, *Teacher*
 Ms. Branda, *Parent*
 Ms. McCombs, *Parent*



Godwin/Highland Anti-Bullying Specialist

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, October 2

Orange Ribbons handed out by
Student Senate (7-12)

Wednesday, October 4

Keynote Presentations

- Corey The Dribbler (3-6)
- The Road to Success: Six Signs of Character (K-2)

Friday, October 13

Keynote Presentation: "Gametime Excellence"
Shamiel Gary (7-12)