

UNDERSTANDING HIB: HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

Voorhees Township Public Schools – Elementary Schools

E.T. Hamilton

Kresson

Osage

Signal Hill



The purpose of this presentation is to inform the Voorhees community on student conflict and bullying under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. The social and emotional welfare of our students is paramount and education is critical in fostering a safe learning environment. Please understand our goal in educating on the entire process. There will be conflict among peers that does not meet the criteria for bullying, yet results in an infringement of student rights and results in consequences that adhere to the school discipline code.

Thank you for your involvement and support of the Voorhees Schools!



FORMAL DEFINITION:

HIB means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or series of incidents, that:

* is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic AND

*takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or off school grounds if it can be shown to impact school performance

*substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students, and that: a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property

*has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students

*creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

KEY COMPONENTS OF NJ HIB LAW:

- Stresses the importance of School Safety and Climate Teams
- Requires an Anti-Bullying Specialist in every school
- Requires an Anti-Bullying Coordinator for the district (Mrs. Sue Donnelly)
- Calls for outlined procedures for all investigation, reporting, discipline, and any appeals
- Involves reporting requirements on incidents of bullying
- Requires grading procedure for schools and districts
- Calls for HIB training requirements (Staff Training must occur on a yearly basis)

ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALISTS AT EACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

Mr. Derek Myers

E.T. Hamilton School Counselor

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ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALIST RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Are the people you can access to ask questions and get help from if you think your student is involved in a HIB
- Is part of the school safety team
- Leads the investigation of reported HIB
- Acts as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and addressing incidents of HIB in the school
- Assists the principal in appropriately applying the range of ways for responding to HIB established by the school board
- Provides input to local school board on annual re-evaluation, reassessment, review of policy

HOW A HIB COMPLAINT IS CONDUCTED

- HIB report is made-verbally or in electronic form (via email). Reports can be made by anyone: victim, teacher, parent, administration, etc.
- Initial HIB report is submitted to Principal on the same day the HIB incident is reported.
- Formal investigation begins within one school day of initial HIB report and the entire investigation is to be completed within ten school days.
- Vice Principal(s) notifies parents of students (bully and victim) involved in potential HIB incident that a report has been initiated and an investigation with begin.
- Determination is made by the Anti-Bullying Specialist, if action displayed is a Code of Conduct violation or a HIB
- The completed investigation goes to the Principal
- One the Principal receives the report, they then send it to the Superintendent and the Board of Education
- The Principal informs the parents of both the victim and the bully the result of the HIB
- If report is deemed a Code of Conduct violation; Principal or Vice Principal decides disciplinary action



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORMAL CONFLICT AND BULLYING

Normal Conflict:

- A normal part of growing up and of life
- Involves people with similar degrees of power
- Involves a mutual disagreement or difference in interests or goals
- Happens occasionally
- Is reciprocal; both parties participate in the conflict
- Both parties are responsible for wrongdoing
- Can be fairly resolved by compromise or negotiation
- Willing to resolve problem between each other
- Remorseful-both parties will take responsibility for actions

Bullying:

- Bully targets due to a distinguishing characteristic
- Involves an imbalance of power
- Is one-sided
- Involves hurtful behavior on behalf of one party against another
- No remorse-blames the victim
- Bully is responsible for wrongdoing
- The intent is to physically or emotionally hurt someone
- Can be an isolated incident
- No effort to resolve the problem

PEER CONFLICT EXAMPLE

- Two, 8th grade girls, are very competitive with each other. Recently, during a school science fair, one of the girls accused the other one – in front of a group of other girls – of copying her science project. The next day, during a class discussion about the fair, the accused girl talked about what had happened and started crying because she felt so humiliated

- *Why is this a peer conflict?*

- *the girls seem fairly equal in terms of power, as evidenced by their competitiveness with each other*
- *the incident occurred only once; there is no pattern and no repetition*
- *the girl who felt her science project was copied did not (necessarily) intend to humiliate the other girl*
- *she seemed to have the intention to express and vent her anger and gain support for her plight*
- *the accused girl cried and said that she felt humiliated, so clearly the incident had a negative impact upon her; however, there is no evidence that she is afraid of the girl who made the accusation.*



NON-PHYSICAL BULLYING



- **Indirect Bullying:**
 - *Bullying doesn't always have to be directed at one specific individual and it isn't always as obvious as you might think.*
 - **Example:**
 - The “popular kids” at school won't allow non-clique members to sit at their lunch table. At first glance this may not seem like a bullying scenario, but in reality these kids are bullying by excluding others in a social environment. By refusing to let others join them, the popular kids are publicly rejecting and ignoring others.
- **Direct Bullying:**
 - *Bullying is the use of greater strength and influence directed to one specific person, as a way to intimidate and force someone to do what the bully wants them to do.*
 - **Example:**
 - A couple of boys create a false e-mail account using the information of a fellow student. They send e-mails to other male students in the form of fraudulent love letters. They then print the e-mails and display them both on and off the school campus and proceed to verbally tease the student against whom they committed fraud. This type of action can be extremely embarrassing and traumatic for the student who is being bullied.



PHYSICAL BULLYING



- Physical bullying can be just as emotionally traumatizing with the addition of the actual trauma to the body.
- Examples:
 - A few of the school jocks are standing in a hallway joking when they spot a smaller classmate struggling to carry his school books. One of the jocks sticks his foot out and deliberately trips the smaller boy and they all laugh and call the boy names, like “clumsy” and “dork.”
 - A boy has had trouble coping with things since his parents got divorced. Over the last few months he has neglected his school work, started wearing all-black clothing, and has gotten a few face piercings. A few of his schoolmates have become hostile towards him because of the sudden physical changes and his lack of social etiquette. The altercations have suddenly escalated as they have pushed him onto the ground, kicked him in the stomach, and locked him in the bathroom.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BULLYING

- Strong need for power and dominance
- Rewarded for their behavior (material or psychological rewards)
- Intentional in nature; imbalance of power (i.e. physical size)
- Negative family factors (i.e. divorce, mental health issues/concerns)
- Home environments (i.e. lack of parental support)



COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLIES AND VICTIMS

Reactive Bullies:

- Automatic, defensive response to an immediate and often misperceived threat
- Emotionally driven



Passive Victims:

- Are quiet, cautious and/or sensitive
- Lack confidence
- Are physically weaker than peers (boys)
- Mature physically earlier (girls)
- Are afraid of getting hurt
- Find it easier to associate with adults rather than peers

Proactive Bullies:

- Organized; purposeful, and often premeditated
- Driven by insecurity
- No remorse

At-Risk Victims:

- Who have disabilities or other health related needs
- Children who are LGBTQ
- Children who are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Children who are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem
- Children who are less popular than others and have few friends

CONSEQUENCES

- Consequences for bullying can be given in multiple forms, for example:
 - 1) School: loss of demerits for School Code of Conduct Violation, In-School Suspension (ISS), Out of School Suspension, Peer Mediation to promote self-expression, understanding and practicing/applying empathy for others.
 - 2) Community-Police Involvement: Formal Harassment report which could have legal action attached to it; possible criminal record





WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE SITUATION ON AN INDIVIDUAL?

“I’m not okay.”

“Things keep happening.”=
Significant Effect!!!

- If situations continue, first and foremost, **REPORT** situation **IMMEDIATELY** to the nearest teacher, counselor or administrator.
- Further discipline action will ensue from School Administration; possibly resulting in a second HIB violation.

“I’m fine.”

“Things are better.”=
No Significant Effect!!!

- If a student reports, “I’m feeling fine.” after being asked after the investigation how they feel, it does not mean that the bully is getting away without a consequence. **THIS IS THE RESULT WE WANT!** Consequences apply even if the HIB is found to be negative. There may also be Peer Mediation and ongoing counseling for all involved.

The MOST important concern is making sure student’s feel SAFE!!!!

