

Metuchen High School Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Policy

Metuchen High School recognizes that harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) are inappropriate behaviors that have destructive and negative effects on individual students and on the overall climate of a school. Metuchen High School believes that all students are entitled to a safe and secure learning environment; HIB behaviors work against the achievement of that goal. HIB should never be tolerated. It is important that teachers, students, and parents take a stand against all HIB behaviors.

The High School staff is committed to a policy that identifies and punishes those students who become involved in HIB behaviors according to the below-listed procedures/regulations. Metuchen High School expects that all students will refrain from becoming involved in any HIB behaviors. In addition, it is expected that all bystanders (third party witnesses) will refrain from supporting HIB behaviors in either an active or passive manner. It is further expected that bystanders will report the HIB incident(s) to the designated authority. Failure to comply with these expectations will result in disciplinary action according to the established procedures/regulations.

Each year, the Metuchen High School staff will educate students in all grade levels to help them identify and respond to the dangers of HIB.

Bullying Procedures/Regulations

"Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either 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, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds as provided for in section 16 of P.L.2010, CHAPTER 122, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that:

1. 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;
2. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
3. 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.

Students who are victims of HIB should report the incident(s) to the vice principal or submit an "HIB Complaint Form" to the vice principal's office. The vice principal will investigate the complaint and, if warranted, apply appropriate consequences to any and all parties involved in the incident pursuant to the Student Code of Conduct. Written notification will be made to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of all parties involved in the reported incident, the superintendent, and the board of education.

It should be noted that all due process rights will be observed; however, the burden of proof in a disputed case will rest with the bully, not the victim. The victim will not be expected to prove that he/she was bullied, intimidated or harassed; the bully will be expected to prove that he/she did not violate the policy to the satisfaction of the investigating officer.

If after receiving consequences for committing HIB behavior a student continues to inflict this behavior onto another student, the student may be suspended from school for (5) days, and a report will be filed with the Metuchen Police Department. If the HIB behavior persists after the suspension, the offending student will be excluded from school pending an administrative hearing before the superintendent of schools. The determination of the hearing

will include but not be limited to a recommendation for an out-of-school placement or an expulsion proceeding.

This policy and its procedures/regulations will be distributed to all students and mailed to all parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year. It will also be referenced in the current year's **Parent-Student Handbook** and will be available on the school website.