



Midland Public Schools
Inspiring Excellence

Superintendent Communiqué

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SPECIAL EDITION

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Student Created Racial Video

It is a bit irregular for MPS or any school district to send a communication out to their community in regard to student discipline; however, Midland Public Schools is compelled to do so regarding a recent student-created racial, vile video that has made its way onto social media sites.

Student discipline is protected under The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). I am not permitted to give specifics of this student discipline case, but I will explain the steps that Midland High and Midland Public Schools has taken and the actions we have in place in an attempt to prevent students from making such terrible choices.

Let me start by saying Midland Public Schools has amazing students who embrace diversity and seek to foster and celebrate the differences in each other. A great example is the One Billion Rising march hosted by Midland High just a week or so ago. Through the years, I believe MPS has assisted to bring out acceptance of our differences through curriculum and instructional practices that teach respect and inclusion; for example, the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) Learner Profile traits that are the core of all MPS elementary and pre-school curriculum. In addition, MPS is currently partnering with Dow Chemical to develop an Inclusion and Diversity task force and strategic plan. Dow Chemical has been an incredible partner on this initiative as well as so many others, and we look forward to implementing this very soon. We believe Inclusion and Diversity fits into our staff and student wellness plan, as well as our plan of social/emotional learning and wellbeing.

Please know our Inclusion & Diversity Committee will review this recent racial video incident and adjust our future I & D plan as we continue to work toward a school community culture where everyone is safe, valued, treated with kindness and respect.

I believe we can all agree that in the recent past, our society has struggled, and continues to struggle, with inclusion, diversity and social issues. Young people are affected by what they see in society and often model what they see as acceptable. We have seen schools nation-wide reflecting what they view as societal norms. I am not aware of anyone who has the perfect solution or exact fix for these major issues and horrific events we have been experiencing in our schools, community, state and nation. However, we must continue to work together to find initiatives/solutions to help create the inclusive society we desire.

MPS uses discipline, counseling, restorative practices and more when student behavior issues occur. The Michigan Department of Education and our Legislature has required school districts to move away from "zero tolerance" practices as data and research has not only proven these to be ineffective in changing future student behavior, but, in many cases, assists in compounding negative behaviors.



Please be assured that Midland Public Schools has and will always take these student issues seriously. We do not give a student consequences without following through. In fact, it is our belief that we are obligated to continue to work with all students and families on these issues to attempt to create systematic changes through curriculum, instruction and programming. Making changes of this magnitude are difficult and often take time, but are imperative!

In the case of the recent video incident, the District has used discipline, is requiring counseling and has used restoration practices. The District has worked with students and the family of the creator of the video as well as the student and family who have been victimized. The families have been very cooperative and concerned with how to proceed going forward to foster a climate of inclusivity in our entire student body so issues such as this don't ever occur again. I hope all of us will follow their lead and focus on assisting the student to become open-minded and respectful to make better future decisions as well as supporting the victim today and in the future.

I know our staff at Midland High and Midland Public Schools are extremely upset that one of our students would create such a horrific piece. However, at the same time, MPS is dedicated to educating children on how this action was wrong, and how this student and we, as a school district and all of us as a society, must do better than this. I hope our community will do the same.

Educationally yours,

Michael E. Sharrow

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Superintendent of Schools