



Midland Park Public Schools

# WEEK OF RESPECT

OCTOBER 3-7, 2022

OCTOBER 2022



Take Action Peer Leaders 2022

## 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 amended in January 2022. The ABR addresses the requirements school districts and schools must follow in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB.) The Midland Park district remains in compliance with the mandates of this critical legislation and 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.

NJ.gov provides detailed information about the ABR, including updates regarding recent amendments, such as the new requirements for the way that local education agencies (LEAs) address incidents of HIB in schools. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, LEAs must revise their policies and procedures to reflect amendments made to the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR) in January 2022. Here is a brief summary of these recent changes (from NJ.gov):

- 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](http://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.

Parent Resources on Bullying

[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

[www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)



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

We are entering our twelfth 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 2022, students (with parental consent) participated in a school climate survey for the twelfth year in a row. Dr. Heindel was able to interpret the data and compare and contrast the results of the 2022 survey with the data from the previous eleven surveys. Dr. Heindel will be making a presentation to the community on the results of the School Climate Survey on the evening of November 14th, 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 2021 - 2022 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 "Getting Back to Normal" and "Caring 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 middle school students received an annual "Cyberbullying" assembly provided by the Bergen County Prosecutors Office.

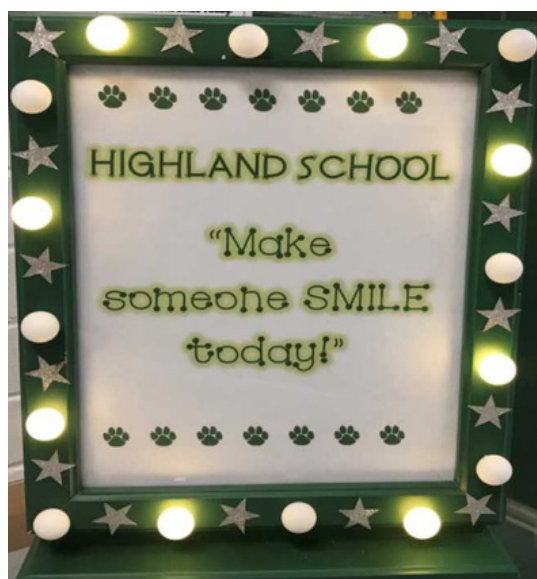
In the classroom, our teachers used curriculum-based infused lessons to provide "teachable moments" in bullying prevention throughout the academic disciplines. In the spring, Mr. Capuano hosted the Holocaust Study Tour to Washington, DC for interested juniors and seniors. Our students are exposed to 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

"Diversity" is a concept that that is often researched and discussed in our country. Based on the 2020 US Census, 75.8% of the nation's population is white, 13.6% Black, 18.9% Hispanic, and 6.1% Asian. New Jersey is the 4th most diverse state in America.

Diversity ebbs and flows from town to town in our state. In Midland Park, the census data reveals: 90.9% white, 1.2% Black, 9.4% Hispanic, and 2% Asian.

Our school system has a long history of diversity. In 1977, Bergen County Special Services formed a partnership with Midland Park Public Schools by forming HIP/SHIP—our deaf and hard of hearing program. This program set a framework for cultural sensitivity, as deaf and hard of hearing students from across Bergen County, shared experiences and friendships with students from Midland Park.

This year, as we recognize the "Week of Respect," our theme is diversity and inclusion. We have a lot of informative programs recognizing cultural awareness:

- Mr. June Chang, our former Assistant Principal and Director of Curriculum 2011-2014, will be speaking about "acceptance" from the perspective of an Asian American. Grades 7 -12.
- Rwandan genocide survivor, Ms. Jaqueline Murekatete, will be our Keynote Speaker for the week. She previously presented at Midland Park High School in the fall of 2011. Grades 7-12.
- Later in October, Polish Holocaust survivor, Mr. Mark Schonwetter, will share his personal story with our eighth grade students.
- The Bergen County Prosecutors Office will offer a new presentation, "Bias Crimes," for our ninth and tenth grade students.
- Last spring, select students visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Students from the broadcasting class documented this trip. On Friday, October 21, this documentary will be shown in an assembly to our juniors and seniors.

This is the twelfth year that the state of New Jersey has recognized the "Week of Respect." This signifies that our current seniors have celebrated the "Week of Respect" for the entire time they have been in school.

Over the last twelve years, I have personally witnessed positive changes in our school climate and culture. I have noticed more kindness, more respect for others. This has been reflected in our discipline reports and suspension rates which have improved markedly. We established clubs to help promote this positive message, such as Take Action Peer Leadership, Spectrum Diversity Club, THRIVE Club, and the Diversity Council. We continue to see positive improvements in our school climate and culture. For the first time in 14 years, Midland Park High School will have a foreign exchange student. This student is from Jordan, and we look forward to sharing friendship, culture and ideas.

I am proud of who we are at Midland Park. Midland Park is an environment where we come together to remember our past, celebrate the present, and prepare for the future. As a community, we can be proud of student accomplishments and performances. 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.



Take Action Peer Leaders at Camp Nyoda 2022



## OVERCOMING YOUR “LIZARD BRAIN”

BY MR. JASON WHELPLEY  
MPHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



The limbic system is the part of the brain that controls your survival instinct. Those primitive thoughts that give you the urge to fight, flee, to be afraid, and to even freeze up or hesitate. These split-second feelings can be important and have kept living things alive for millions of years. Psychologists refer to this as “the lizard brain” because this survival instinct is basically all a lizard has going on inside of its head.

Despite the importance of this survival instinct, it has not really evolved with us, meaning it does not understand our social society or that we are no longer frequently outrunning predators. Instead, your “lizard brain” tells you to be afraid to try something new, it tells you to hesitate instead of act, and it tries to keep you inside of your comfort zone.

To many, a new school year is a nightmare for your “lizard brain.” You are in a new grade, have new teachers, have new classes, and maybe even have some new classmates. What I am encouraging you to do is to fight that “lizard brain” instinct and take risks this school year. I want you to look at this new school year as having endless new possibilities and opportunities. Try out for the sport you have wanted to play, audition for the drama or musical that you have always been too afraid to go for, or just talk to some new people and try to make some new friends.

As you know, this school year, I have transitioned from eighth grade teacher to the new Assistant Principal. I am unbelievably excited to be in this new role at Midland Park Jr./Sr. High School, but I still had to fight my “lizard brain” instinct. It is hard leaving your comfort zone and taking on new challenges and risks, but you just need to remember that your “lizard brain” is the thing telling you to hesitate or be afraid. At the end of the day, you are a much more sophisticated and fancy mammal, meaning your lizard brain has no power! Have a fantastic school year and remember to take risks!

### MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM 2022-2023

Nick Capuano, *Principal*  
Craig Rush, *Anti-Bullying Coordinator*  
Liz Wall, *Anti-Bullying Specialist*  
Chessie Owens - *Anti-Bullying Specialist*  
Morgan Altemus, *MS Teacher*  
Hanora Bellucco, *HS Teacher*  
Matt Jimenez, *MS/HS Teacher*  
Tara Nafash, *HS Teacher*  
Melissa Brockway, *SHIP Representative*  
Jason Tillson, *School Resource Officer*  
Tracey Birney, *Parent*

## RESPECT ON THE FIELD BUILDS CHARACTER

BY MR. GLENN STOKES  
MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL &  
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

When Midland Park athletic teams are practicing and competing it is so important that we always represent our high school with pride, sportsmanship, respect and enthusiasm. During New Jersey's “Week of Respect,” we should all take a few minutes to think about the importance of these qualities and understand that not only do they help build successful athletic programs, but also contribute to the success of our high school.

It is great to see our high school teams win, but it is even more rewarding when we contribute to a positive school culture. Midland Park High School will continue the wonderful tradition of great sports teams and exemplary sportsmanship!

Go Panthers!



## HELLO & WELCOME BACK!

### BY CHESSIE OWENS & LIZ WALL MPHS ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALISTS

When we talk about mental health, we are very familiar with the idea of getting in touch with our feelings. We use our feelings to guide our actions and decisions. Often, our feelings lead us to making great decisions, but other times, our feelings lead us to making mistakes. That is because, even though our emotions are valid and we are allowed to feel the way we feel, those emotions aren't always reliable. In other words, our feelings don't always tell us the truth.

It's pretty normal to believe that feelings are uncontrollable and we can't help feeling the way that we feel and there's nothing we can do about it. Did you know that you actually have a lot more power over your feelings than maybe you believed?

There are 3 things that occur in our decision-making: 1. Thought → 2. Feeling → 3. Action

Most of us tend to forget about step 1 and jump right to steps 2 and 3. But if we took a moment to be aware of our thoughts, we could actually change our feelings, and, ultimately, change our actions.

For example, suppose you are walking into the cafeteria for lunch and you notice a group of students facing you who start to laugh. You feel anxious and worried that they are laughing at you and you decide to leave and hide in the bathroom.

If we break down the situation above in one way, it might look like this:

**Thought:** "They are making fun of me" or "They don't like me."

**Feeling:** Embarrassed, ashamed, upset

**Action:** Leave and hide

### MPHS Anti-Bullying Specialists

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

But think about it—do you actually have all of the facts and the truth? All you know is that you walked in and they laughed at the same time. It's possible that it had nothing to do with you. Perhaps you could interpret the situation a different way!

**Thought:** "They look like they're having fun" or "Maybe someone told a funny story"

**Feeling:** Curious

**Action:** Continue on and eat lunch in the cafeteria

During this year, we encourage you all to offer respect in the form of giving others the benefit of the doubt. Most people we encounter want the best for us. If you can learn to apply different thoughts to situations where you may feel anxious, stressed, or disrespected, you may be able to come out of the situation feeling much more empowered and confident. We wish you a wonderful 2022-2023 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](http://www.mpsnj.org)



## A MESSAGE FROM MR. GALASSO AND MRS. SCALA

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

The School Safety and Climate Committee at Highland have been working with the staff, parents and students for several years now to improve the school climate. Mrs. Scala and Mr. Galasso continue to look for ways to create warmth, openness and a culture of respect at Highland School.

We are continuing to implement our Mentor Program amongst the 3rd and 6th graders. The 3rd grade students will be assigned a 6th grade buddy and will be joining them once every quarter for one of the 6th grade specials classes. The students will be working on a project or an activity together such as writing and producing a song, creating blankets for a local Foster care facility, and engaging in team-building activities to encourage positive role-model relationships.

We are excited to book our annual field trips for all the grade levels this year, while exploring some new trips as well. Some of the trips will include the 5th grade going on the Therapeutic Ropes Course, which promotes collaboration, team building and perseverance. Likewise, the 6th grade will be engaging similar team building concepts on the trip to the YMCA Camp. During this experience, they build survival shelters, go canoeing, and even do archery. The 6th grade will also be making some local trips to Mill Gardens Assisted Living Home.

## HIGHLAND SCHOOL SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM 2022-2023

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 Jason Tillson, *SRO*

This intergenerational program fosters a connection between elementary students and the older generations. They both learn a lot from each other. Another experiential field trip is our visit to the CTC Academy, which is a school for students with developmental disabilities. Our students serve as mentors for these children. The CTC Academy helps our students to better understand children who are multiply handicapped. It opens their eyes to aspects of life that they would not normally be exposed to. These trips are just part of our community outreach program at Highland School.

Throughout the year, Highland School also facilitates several charitable fundraisers at both schools, to support various causes in an effort to enhance the positive ideals of good character. Mr. Galasso will continue with "Do the Right Thing" assemblies as the staff recognizes those students who exhibit good character and serve as positive role-models. More than ever before, students need to be part of a culture that fosters togetherness, positivity, and communal goals. The 2022-2023 school year is off to a great start because of the students and teachers in this building that promote those same ideals.

### Godwin/Highland Anti-Bullying Specialist

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## GODWIN PRIDE: KINDNESS & RESPECT

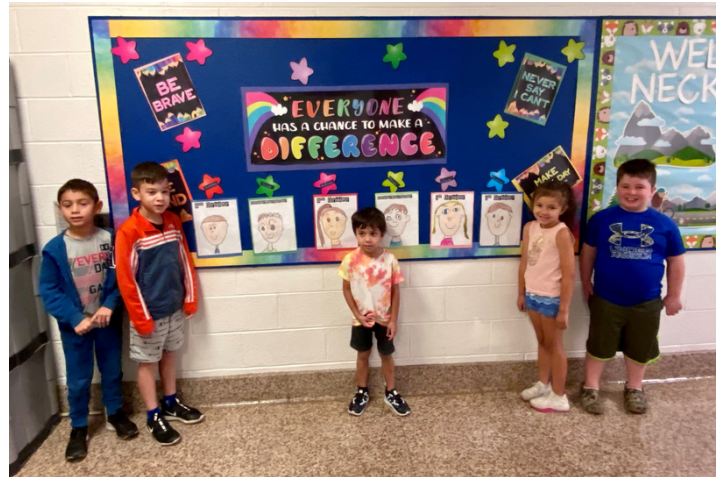
BY MS. BACHE - GODWIN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

As we embark on another school year and "Week of Respect," I pause to reflect on school climate and the message I convey to my students. From my first year in Midland Park as principal of Highland and Godwin Schools, my message was simply: Kindness and Respect. I told students those were my two favorite words and used them as often as possible. Every year, the school adopted a new theme focused on kindness and respect and we planned activities to promote this message: Locked in Kindness, Keys to Kindness, We Are Better Together, Bucket Fillers, THINK, Kindness: Pass It On, The Golden Rule, Be a Superhero, and on and on. Even though the theme changed, the message stayed the same, be kind to each other, respect each other, and include everyone.

As principal of Godwin School for the past nine years, I continued the message of kindness and respect and sought ways to help the primary students understand the word RESPECT. It is not an easy word to define for a youngster, so the staff has found ways to exhibit the definition and model it. Modeling kindness and respect and using teachable moments to reinforce appropriate behavior is a mainstay at the elementary level.

### GODWIN SCHOOL SCHOOL SAFETY & CLIMATE TEAM 2022-2023

Ms. Bache, *Principal*  
Mr. Rush, *Anti-Bullying Coordinator*  
Ms. Scala, *Anti-Bullying Specialist*  
Ms. Soderman, *Elementary Counselor*  
Ms. Dispoto, *HIP Representative*  
Mr. Winters, *Teacher*  
Ms. Martinez, *Teacher*  
Ms. Baiunco, *Parent*  
Officer Jason Tillson, *SRO*



To further exemplify the ideals we sought, the Vision Committee created the slogan Godwin PRIDE:

**P** - Personal Best  
**R** - Respect and Responsibility  
**I** - I Can Make a Difference  
**D** - Dream Big  
**E** - Educational Excellence

Through our school motto, students learn what is expected of them, how to achieve personal greatness, how to function in the school community, and what it means to have PRIDE in themselves. Monthly assemblies focus on each letter of PRIDE, it is reinforced in guidance lessons, and discussed in class.

On a daily basis, we reinforce proper manners with all students and remind them to say please, thank you and you're welcome. We teach children to speak up, respond to greetings, advocate for themselves, and use kind words when interacting with peers. Every day is a learning experience and presents teachable moments at the elementary level. As we move through the school year, students will learn more about Godwin PRIDE and be recognized for exemplifying the various traits.

### Godwin/Highland Anti-Bullying Specialist

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **All Week**

Godwin: Read Aloud & Spirit Days  
Godwin/Highland: Inspirational  
Quote of the Day & Table to Table  
Fundraiser

### **Monday, October 3**

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

### **Tuesday, October 4**

"Acceptance" Assembly  
Mr. June Chang (7-12)

### **Thursday, October 6**

Keynote Presentation  
Ms. Jacqueline Murekatete (7-12)

### **Friday, October 7**

Pirate Dave and the Search for Good  
Character (Godwin)