



# KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Mr. Jason Schimpf  
School Business Administrator

Dr. James J. Lavender  
Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Patricia Calandro  
Assistant Superintendent

March 29, 2023

Dear School Community:

Earlier this month, we hosted a virtual community session to discuss a string of hostile and aggressive behaviors experienced at the high school. We shared that some of the more egregious behaviors, spanning grades 7 – 12, came in the form of verbal hostility, physical aggression, and bias-related bullying. We acknowledged that these behaviors are unacceptable and have caused a significant disruption to our school environment.

More than 600 parents/guardians and staff attended the March 7th virtual community session and shared common concerns, frustrations and outrage. We heard your concerns and acknowledge that we must continue to put safeguards in place for our school environment. Today's communication introduces new measures designed to reestablish behavioral expectations at our schools, teach our students appropriate behaviors and impose the strictest disciplinary measures for any student who engages in violence, assault, threatens violence, and/or uses technology with the intent to hurt others.

### **Reestablish Behavioral Expectations**

We hold our students to a very high behavioral standard. Those who meet this standard will have opportunities and privileges to participate in activities outside the classroom. However, those students who do not meet the expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct will be held accountable for their decisions and will no longer have access to various privileges for a specified period. ***Our principals are meeting with every student to reestablish our behavioral expectations. I ask that our parents/guardians partner with us by reinforcing these expectations.***

### **Kingsway Hosts Special Guest Devin Wyman**

We are pleased to welcome former professional football player and Super Bowl Champion Devin Wyman (New England Patriots). Mr. Wyman will speak to our high school students on Thursday, March 30th and our middle school students on Friday, March 31st about ***overcoming adversity, navigating obstacles and making positive choices***. A special community session will be held at the high school theater on Thursday evening at 6:30 pm.

### **No Tolerance for School Threats**

On Tuesday, I communicated the [Superintendent's Message Regarding the Covenant School Shooting](#). In that message, I addressed school threats and our intolerance of any behavior that threatens any person or the school environment. It is necessary that I repeat this message and ***encourage our parents/guardians to engage your children in conversation about Kingsway's intolerance of such behaviors, including the consequences***. The endemic of school violence speaks to a societal problem and minimally requires the partnership of schools and families.

I am also including my [Superintendent's 2015 Letter to the Community](#) I wrote to the school community regarding student and parent use of social media platforms. I share this letter now due to the proliferation of violence-related and bias-related comments posted via social media by our students. This letter summarizes key points students must know before using social media platforms and how parents can teach their children about the pitfalls and permanency of social media use.

### **Student Code of Conduct Amended**

On Thursday, March 23rd, the Board of Education approved my recommendation to amend the [Middle School Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [High School Code of Conduct](#). The changes are effective immediately and allow

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administration to impose stricter disciplinary measures for egregious behaviors. A summary of these changes can be found below.

<b>Behavioral Infraction</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Consequences/Description</b>
Loss of Good Student Standing	High School Only	For any infraction, resulting in OSS (Out of School Suspension), the number of days students will lose good student standing shall be changed from 5 to 10 school days per infraction. This applies to loss of privileges during S.M.A.R.T.
Tier II. B Disturbance to the School and/or Learning Environment	High School Only	Behaviors that result in disturbance during S.M.A.R.T. will additionally result in Loss of Good Student Standing and Removal from S.M.A.R.T. for eight (8) school days.
Tier IV. A. Refusal to Comply with a School Employee	High School & Middle School	New behavioral infraction that will result in (4) OSS for a first offense and (8) OSS for a second offense.
Tier IV. B. Failure to Disperse	High School & Middle School	Move to Tier IV (Major Offense) from Tier III (Misdemeanor). This behavioral infraction will now result in (4) OSS for a first offense and (8) OSS for a second offense.
Tier IV. C. Incitement to Fight/Verbal Altercation	High School & Middle School	Move to Tier IV (Major Offense) from Tier III (Misdemeanor). This behavioral infraction will now result in (4) OSS for a first offense and (8) OSS for a second offense.
Tier IV. D. Unauthorized Social Media Posting/ Inappropriate Use of Technology	High School & Middle School	Move to Tier IV (Major Offense) from Tier III (Misdemeanor). This behavioral infraction has been amended to assign (4) OSS for a first offense and (8) OSS for a second offense.  Descriptive language has been added to ensure that students and parents/guardians understand how we apply the code of conduct to related behaviors: The use of any Electronic Mobile Device that has recording capability, be it video, photo or any other electronic image and audio recording of any kind is strictly prohibited in locker rooms, dressing rooms, bathrooms, or other areas of the school where there may be a reasonable expectation of personal privacy. Any use or attempted use of an Electronic Mobile Device to capture, record, or transfer the image of an individual in any stage of undress is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate referral to police and appropriate disciplinary action as outlined in the district's Student Code of Conduct.
Tier IV. E. Disorderly Conduct/Lewd Behavior	High School & Middle School	New behavioral infraction that will result in (4) OSS for a first offense and (8) OSS for a second offense.
Tier IV. F. Physically Resisting Detainment	High School & Middle School	Move to Tier IV (Major Offense) from Tier III (Misdemeanor). This behavioral infraction will now result in (8) OSS for each offense. Furthermore, the District shall file a formal complaint with the Woolwich Township Police Department. A Principal's hearing will be required prior to reentry.
Tier IV. H. Fighting	High School &	Move to Tier IV (Major Offense) from Tier III (Misdemeanor). This



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(Physical Altercation)	Middle School	behavioral infraction will now result in (8) OSS for each offense. Furthermore, the District shall file a formal complaint with the Woolwich Township Police Department. A Principal's hearing will be required prior to reentry.
Tier IV. O. Bias-Related Acts	High School & Middle School	<p>New behavioral infraction that will result in (8) OSS for a first offense and require a minimum of (3) sessions with a school counselor. Furthermore, the District shall require a Safety Evaluation and/or Psychological evaluation prior to reentry.</p> <p>Incidents determined to be Bias-Related means that it is an incident directed at a person, group of persons, private property, or public property that is motivated in whole or in part by racial, gender, disability, religious, sexual orientation, or ethnic prejudice.</p> <p>A bias-related incident need not involve conduct that constitutes a criminal offense. All bias-related incidents will be reported to law enforcement to determine if the incident rises to bias-intimidation. Bias-Intimidation is an incident that is confirmed by a law enforcement official to be bias-intimidation. New Jersey law defines bias intimidation as threatening or committing an offense (or attempting or conspiring to commit an offense) "with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity."</p>

Our efforts do not stop with today's communication. As an administrative team, we will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures while exploring additional instruction-based programs designed to address the precursors of violence as well as counseling programs that support at-risk students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your continued partnership.

Very truly yours,



Dr. James J. Lavender  
Superintendent of Schools

SVV/jl

#### **Additional Resources**

[Violence in Schools Seems to Be Increasing. Why?](#) by EducationWeek

[Social Media and School Crises by National Association](#) by National Association of School Psychologists

[Lavender's 2015 Letter to the Community Regarding Use of Social Media](#) by James J. Lavender

[Middle School Student Code of Conduct](#) as Amended on March 23, 2023

[High School Code of Conduct](#) as Amended on March 23, 2023



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