

Responding to Hate Speech and Discriminatory Acts

East Maine District 63 Hate Speech Protocol

April 2023



Foundational Beliefs & Principles

In January 2023, the District 63 Board of Education approved a **formal Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion [EDI] Statement**:

- **We recognize, embrace, and defend the many identities, abilities, and voices that make up our District 63 community and view them as assets.**
- **We commit to fostering equitable systems, inclusive spaces, and supportive learning environments in which all students, families, and staff experience a true sense of belonging.**

In line with this Belief Statement, District 63 is committed to creating a culture of safety and inclusion for students, families, employees, and all visitors to our buildings and events. We also believe that our schools are places where civil engagement is essential to the ability of students and adults to learn and grow.

Because it directly conflicts with the District's EDI Statement, negatively impacts our ability to maintain this culture of safety and inclusion, and makes civil engagement impossible, **D63 does not tolerate hate speech or acts of discrimination.**

Why a Hate Speech Protocol is Needed

When a member of our school community experiences acts of hate and discrimination having a thoughtful, meaningful, and timely response is our collective responsibility. D63 is committed to addressing hate speech and discriminatory acts swiftly, firmly, and consistently across all schools and for all individuals.

To that end, D63's Hate Speech Protocol outlines a clear set of action steps to be used throughout the District when addressing incidents of hate speech and discriminatory acts. It includes guidelines for notification, reporting, communications, and consequences.

Definitions

Such a protocol is best supported through the use of a common language that facilitates understanding of all stakeholders involved.

The [United Nations](#) defines hate speech as *“any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor.”*

Hate speech can appear as overt hateful statements but can also appear as symbols, numbers, or seemingly meaningless phrases that hate groups use to identify each other and use covertly.

Hate speech – including these phrases – is not protected “political speech” and refusing to tolerate hate speech does not inhibit “free speech.” A range of legally upheld policies support the rights of schools and districts to prohibit hate speech.

Procedures & Protocols: An Overview

When acts of hate and/or discrimination occur, District 63 staff will:

1. **Ensure the physical and psychological safety of those impacted by the act/incident.**
2. **Denounce the act clearly, directly, and as immediately as possible.**
3. **Report the incident to an administrator.**
4. **Investigate the incident.**
5. **Create an action plan that supports all affected individuals.**
6. **Provide clear and timely communication.**

In implementing these steps, actions taken will follow existing District 63 [policies regarding student conduct, as well as procedures for addressing incidents of bullying and harassment](#).