

Understanding HIB Law & Fostering Responsibility in Middle School

Presented by:

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Welcome & Purpose

Why We're Here Tonight:

- Build awareness of the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (HIB Law)
- Address concerns about students' and parents' diminishing responsibility
- Partner together to help students grow emotionally, socially, and academically

What Is HIB? (Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying)

Defined under NJ law as any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or electronic communication that:

- Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by a real or perceived distinguishing characteristic (race, gender, disability, etc.)
- Causes harm or distress
- Creates a hostile school environment
- Disrupts the orderly operation of the school

HIB Examples vs. Peer Conflict

HIB:

- Name-calling linked to identity (e.g., race, gender, disability)
- Social media threats
- Targeted exclusion or rumors with intent to harm

Not HIB (but still addressed):

- One-time argument between equals
- Accidental exclusion
- Conflict not based on power imbalance

“Roasting” and the Fine Line Between Humor and Harm

What We’re Hearing:

- “We’re just joking.”
- “It’s a roast.”
- “They know I didn’t mean it.”

The Problem:

- Comments often target sensitive personal traits
- Repetition makes it harmful—even if disguised as humor
- Bystanders may join in or stay silent

Intent vs. Impact

Intent:

- “I didn’t mean it.”
- “It was a joke.”

Impact:

- Student feels humiliated, unsafe, or excluded
- Trust and relationships are damaged
- “Joking” doesn’t excuse behavior if harm is caused

HIB Reporting Process

Reports can be made by staff, students, or parents

Verbal report followed by written form

Investigation begins within **1 school day**, completed in **10 days**

Superintendent and families notified of outcome

Board of Education reviews every case

Why HIB Law Matters

Protects every child's right to a safe learning environment

Teaches accountability, empathy, and boundaries

Builds school culture based on respect

Legally required for schools to act on credible reports

Shift in Responsibility – What We're Seeing

Students often expect adults to manage all challenges

Phrases like:

- “No one told me.”
- “It wasn’t my fault.”
- “Can my mom email the teacher?”

Less resilience and personal initiative

Signs of Diminished Responsibility

Missing assignments or forgetting materials repeatedly

Avoiding communication with teachers

Blaming others instead of problem-solving

Passive attitude toward school expectations

Why It Matters

Independence builds confidence and emotional strength

Responsibility is key to academic success

Teaches ownership and life skills

Prepares students for high school and adult life

How Families Can Help

Encourage students to:

- Speak directly to teachers
- Pack their own bags and plan for the next day
- Manage digital and social life respectfully

Let them feel the natural consequences of small mistakes

Praise follow-through and effort

What the School Is Doing

Teaching organization, goal-setting, and reflection

Offering lessons on conflict resolution and digital citizenship

Meeting with students to build accountability

Supporting families through proactive communication

Final Thoughts

Middle school is a bridge to independence

Let's support students by holding them capable

A strong school-family partnership makes the difference

Safe, respectful, and responsible = ready to thrive

Questions & Partnership

**We're here to support you.
Let's talk!**

Karin Kidd – Principal

Lauryn MacLeod – Counselor

Resources for Families

[Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
\(HIB\): Information for Families and
Caregivers](#)