

Dear Parents of Mokena Intermediate School,

Content from Friday's Rocket Report was removed soon after publication. After further reflection once "send" was pressed, the Rocket Report was not the place to bring forth the information and requests that were within this section. A separate and standalone communication is necessary to share and discuss the severity of the contents.

We have had several reports at MIS of students utilizing a racial slur at school through obtaining a "pass" from classmates. I want all of our students and families to understand that no one may use or grant permission to others to use language which is derogatory to an individual's race, color, religion, gender, disability, etc. There is **zero tolerance** for any words or actions that violate our Board of Education Policy: *7:20 Harassment of Students Prohibited*. This policy states:

No person, including a School District employee or agent, or student, shall harass, intimidate, or bully a student on the basis of actual or perceived: race; color; national origin; military status; unfavorable discharge status from military service; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity; gender-related identity or expression; ancestry; age; religion; physical or mental disability; order of protection status; status of being homeless; actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy; association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics; or any other distinguishing characteristic.

The District will not tolerate harassing, intimidating conduct, or bullying whether verbal, physical, sexual, or visual, that affects the tangible benefits of education, that unreasonably interferes with a student's educational performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. Examples of prohibited conduct include name-calling, using derogatory slurs, stalking, sexual violence, causing psychological harm, threatening or causing physical harm, threatened or actual destruction of property, or wearing or possessing items depicting or implying hatred or prejudice of one of the characteristics stated above.

We ask you to partner with us to talk with your children about this. These conversations are often not easy to have, but are very important. We specifically request that you discuss the use of words that are offensive and share that even with permission, these words cannot be used. Many of our students do not know nor understand the hatred and hurt behind these words.

While we acknowledge this conversation will look different from family to family, here are some talking points to consider:

- Initiate the conversation with your children and do not wait for them to bring up the topic; parents have the greatest influence on young children's beliefs
- Discuss with your child words that are offensive, including racial slurs, and even with the consent of others, these words cannot be used and can make people feel bad, scared, hurt, and unsafe
- Encourage your child to tell you or another trusted adult if they experience or witness intolerable behaviors from others
- Help your child understand in a way that builds compassion the hurtful impact of their ways if they say something that is offensive to another person

Again, these words and actions are not and will not be tolerated in Mokena School District 159. It is important we stand together with our children to educate them and ensure our school is a safe and welcoming learning environment for every student and family.

Partners in Education,