



HIB SELF-ASSESSMENT FOLLOW-UP

**Board of Education Meeting
October 19, 2015**

Five Most Important Priorities

1. Clarification of the Definition of HIB

- In its report of January, 2014, the State Anti-Bullying Task Force stated “The single greatest continuing challenge to identifying and addressing “bullying” or “Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying” is the difficulty in defining these terms.”
- Practitioners continue to become mired in the legalese of the statutory definition. The Task Force recommends highlighting the concept of **power differential** in every conversation about the definition of HIB.

2. The High School and Middle Schools Need More Attention

- The past three years of Self-Assessment scores demonstrate that the high and middle schools have consistently scored lower than the elementary schools. While instances of HIB in the elementary schools cannot be minimized, it should not be surprising that our more serious cases generally occur in the middle schools and the high school. We must redouble our efforts to support the middle schools and high school in all areas of HIB work.

3. School/Community

Communication Must Be Improved

- We have received too many complaints from community members regarding lapses in communication during various stages of the HIB investigation process. The investigations are generally very stressful on all involved. Timely communication is key to successful outcomes of HIB investigations.

4. Our Community Needs A Greater Understanding of the Anti-Bullying Law

- When speaking with parents and guardians about the Anti-Bullying Law, it is clear that many lack a real understanding of the law's requirements. Reaching out to our community to ensure comprehension **before** being involved in an HIB case will enhance the chances of successful outcomes.

5. The Letter and Spirit of the HIB Law Must Be Incorporated Into Our Daily Programs

- In every school, we see pockets of inclusion of the HIB laws into the daily curriculum, which helps to generate positive change in the climate and culture of the District. On the other hand, we also fall prey to the “Assembly Syndrome,” where enthusiasm for a given topic is limited to an assembly, or a “Week of Respect,” among other activities. The true test of the viability and meaningfulness of the HIB law will be measured by how well we incorporate the law into the way we do business with one another on a daily basis.

Professional Development Priorities

1. All Staff Must be Trained on Definitional Issues

- There is no substitute for face-to-face conversation when it comes to understanding critical issues. Utilizing faculty meetings, District Administrative Team meetings, District SAM, and periodic professional development days, we must make sure there is a unified, thorough understanding of the meaning of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

2. Appropriate Staff Must be Trained on Data Collection and School Climate Plans

- Our progress regarding anti-HIB efforts must be data-driven. The State Department of Education has provided us with a free data collection tool called “the New Jersey School Climate Survey.” We must train staff on the use of the survey instrument, and the analysis of school climate data. Once we have the data analyzed, we must have people trained in the development and implementation of school climate improvement plans. I see this support involving our Anti-Bullying Specialists, and our School Safety Teams. School Safety Teams consist of the principal, or his/her designee, a teacher in the school, the anti-bullying specialist, a parent of a student in the school, and other members to be determined by the principal.

3. We Must Facilitate Anti-Bullying Workshops for the SOMSD Community

- The District's Parenting Center does some wonderful outreach on anti-bullying issues from the perspective of the social worker. We need more outreach regarding the "ABCs" of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. In so doing, we will help parents and guardians better understand the goals and procedures of the law.

4. Administrators Must Be Trained

- We have many relatively new administrators in our buildings, particularly our high school and middle schools. We should take no knowledge for granted regarding the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, and must make sure we are orienting them towards plans, activities and procedures consistent with the law's mandates.

5. Anti-HIB Efforts Must Involve Every SOMSD Activity

- The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act requires attention to anti-bullying efforts in every activity we provide – curricular and otherwise. For example, the concept of anti-bullying efforts in athletics is a new and exciting area for our attention. We have an opportunity to put our District on the map as a leader in anti-bullying efforts in all extra-curricular programs. We have already initiated training sessions for all coaches on anti-bullying issues, and we are in the process of reaching out to the New Jersey Department of Education for assistance on this issue.