

Somerville Public Schools

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Dear Parents and Members of the School Community,

As you know, one of the main goals of the Somerville School District is the prevention of harassment, intimidation and bullying (sometimes referred to as "HIB"). Additionally, State Legislation passed the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, which was then signed into law by Governor Christie. While the law brought the issue of HIB to the forefront of the challenges facing school districts throughout New Jersey, the Somerville School District has always taken a proactive approach in the fight against HIB. However, we can only truly accomplish this goal with your help.

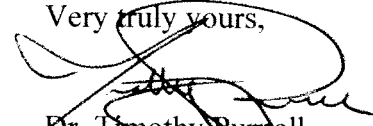
The Board of Education has an extensive policy (Policy #5512) concerning the reporting of, and response to, allegations of HIB. Each staff member is familiar with the reporting procedure as well as signs of HIB. With this in mind, and the wide range of assistance available to students in school, we believe that the District is well-prepared to address the effects of, and underlying reasons for, incidents of HIB between students. Nevertheless, the education of our students concerning the recognition and prevention of HIB must begin in the home. As a reminder, we ask that you please speak to your children about their expected behavior while at school and the importance of respect towards others, so that no student feels harassed or intimidated by his or her peers.

Despite our best efforts, incidents of HIB have occurred, and will likely continue to occur in the future. The District investigates and responds to each incident as appropriate, which may include intervention and support services for the involved students or even discipline for the aggressor(s) who commit an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying, up to and including suspension or expulsion. If you are aware of any incident of HIB, we request that you report it to the school principal or to my office, so that we are able to conduct a proper investigation into the allegations.

Additionally, on rare occasions, harassment, intimidation or bullying may constitute a criminal act. If our investigation reveals evidence of criminality, we report the incident to the appropriate authorities, including the Somerville Police Department and the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office. For more information on the potential criminal implications of HIB, or to report an incident to these departments in addition to the school, please contact Det. Jeanne Trillhaase of the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office Computer Crimes Unit at (908) 541-5059 or Det. Christopher Gelardi of the Somerville Police Department at (908) 725-6900. Anonymous reports may also be made to the authorities at 1-888-577-TIPS (8477) or at www.scpo.net or www.somersetcountycrimestoppers.org.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. For more information, the District's policy regarding HIB, Policy #5512, and other related information is available under the "Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying" link on the District's website at <http://www.somervillenjk12.org>.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Funnell", written over the printed name.

Dr. Timothy Funnell
Superintendent of Schools