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Hasbrouck Heights Honors HIB Mandates
By Hasbrouck Heights Anti-Bullying Coordinator
Dr. Nicole Fried

Hasbrouck Heights has been working hard this summer to meet all of the new state mandates regarding Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB). Dr. Mark Porto, Superintendent of Schools, appointed Dr. Nicole Fried, district school psychologist to the role of the district Anti-Bullying Coordinator in June 2011. Since then, district forms and policies have been revised to reflect the mandates and plans have been set into action to make this a successful year.

First, in August, the Board of Education approved the new district HIB policy, which meets all of the state mandates in terms of reporting procedures, the roles of the Anti-Bullying Coordinator and other key components. Second, district forms that have been utilized in the district regarding HIB have been revised to reflect the current changes. Forms that were developed in the nineties no longer reflect the issues of students today, particularly when it comes to cyber-bullying. The definition of HIB has not changed much over the years, but the tools students use to communicate these offenses have changed significantly. The district forms were also revised for consistency. The language that we use regarding HIB needs to be uniform so that we are all clear about what we are speaking about.

This summer, the superintendent and principals have discussed the creation of school safety teams that will be most effective in working with and assisting the students. In collaboration with the teachers and PTSA, the principals will determine the members of the team. The school safety team will consist of the building principal or designee, anti-bullying specialist, parent of a student or students in the school, and any other member as determined by the building principal. The goal of the school safety team is to help develop, foster, and maintain a positive school climate by focusing on the practices in the school by looking at district policies and reports of bullying. The state wants us to take a more global look at the problem rather than a narrow focus by just addressing each individual incident in isolation. The school safety team will be looking for trends. If they notice that there are more instances of social bullying in the middle school for example, then that will be an area that we can target with bullying curriculum and programs. This first year will really be about gathering the information and determining next steps.

In addition to the Anti-Bullying Coordinator, each building has been assigned an Anti-Bullying Specialist. This person will act as the primary school resource for identifying and addressing incidents of HIB in the building. Basically, this allows for a consistent information source in each building, so that teachers feel supported and know who to speak to when they suspect an incident has occurred.

In order to begin to get the students engaged, Dr. Fried, Mr. DelCalzo, Assistant High school Principal and Barbara Christianson, SAC will be presenting to all High School students during the first week of school about the HIB policy and code of conduct. The research is clear that school climate and culture is key to reducing bullying, therefore we need to begin to focus on a school wide environment that builds connections and caring. The students need to know what we are expecting of them in terms of their behavior and what will happen if they do not comply.

Lastly, the Week of Respect is being planned for the first week in October in order to recognize the importance of character education and the prevention of bullying. Lesa Brinker, Principal of Lincoln School, has already begun working with her PTA to organize theme days such as "Pair Up Against Bullying (Dress like a twin day)" and "Sock it to Bullying (Wear socks day)" for the Week of Respect. In

addition, Lincoln School has scheduled the Building Bridges Program in October that will address peaceful conflict resolution.

“Overall, I am excited for this challenge and proud to be a part of this district as I have seen first hand staff and administrators who take what kids say seriously and do something about it. That is what this initiative is all about. As a school psychologist for the past ten years, I am happy to be working at the district level to help with initiatives that will hopefully be around for years to come.”