



BUNKER HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

372 PITMAN DOWNER ROAD
SEWELL, NJ 08080

856.881.7007
Fax 856.881.5414

"Bulldog...It's more than our mascot; it's our character"

*Michael J. D'Ostilio
Principal*

*Gregory Muscelli, Ed.D.
Assistant Principal*

December 12, 2022

Dear Bulldog Families,

Over the last four years, Washington Township Schools has established a proud partnership with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) out of Philadelphia and their sponsored program No Place For Hate. We have earned the honor as a school supported through the ADL. Through No Place for Hate, we are fortunate to have the ADL as support as well as access to lessons that help our school continue to move toward not only having No Place for Hate Programs but using those programs to eradicate hate in our schools. ADL and No Place for Hate supports three (3) or more approved lessons throughout the year and supports our Building Better People Activities as well each month.

You can see all of our monthly Building Better "Bulldogs" Activities Here: [2022-23 Building Better Bulldogs Activities](#). This includes our Social Emotional Surveys that help provide an understanding of the students' experiences at BHMS (anonymous) and No Place for Hate lessons.

Over the years and through our surveys and tracking our discipline data and harassment, intimidation, and bullying data, we have learned that what tends to happen in media and on social networking sites mirrors what happens in public schools. As you know, we have seen a growing number of racial and antisemitic jokes and statements by our students at times. It is our job as educators to help children understand that derogatory and racially or ethnically stereotypical jokes are harmful to those who have to endure them. We also have a responsibility to continue to bolster those who call out the hate and seek our assistance to help rid our school of these instances. These are the courageous children and future leaders.

We have 600 students in our building. A large majority of the students are entirely cognizant of their words, understand the impact of their actions, and strive to be an ally to others. The sad truth however is that some of our students seem to mimic what they see in media or social networking. Unfortunately, Dr. Muscelli and I have had our fair share in dealing with and educating a handful of students personally on the impact of their words and how their words are hurtful. Free speech does not mean speech devoid of consequences, and racially based rhetoric and antisemitism, while on the rise in the United States, has no place in the walls of Bunker Hill Middle School.

As you were aware, in late October/early November, Dr. Muscelli, Officer Hamilton, the counselors, the teachers and I started noticing that jokes based on ethnic stereotypes were growing among a few students. It was happening frequently enough that we addressed all 600 students about our expectations as a school community. We reiterated the qualities of a Bulldog and explained the

consequences of such behavior. Please see the letter here that goes into detail about those assemblies: [Letter to Families Regarding Assemblies on 11.9.22](#)

We informed the students that we would be doing activities to help us understand the impact of our words and actions. However, before we did that, we would need the support and training as a staff to best support the students. Therefore, to begin this journey, we at BHMS partnered with NJ Heart. Please see their website and vision here: [NJ Heart: Helping Educate Anti Racist Educators](#). NJ Heart is a non-profit organization endorsed by the state and the New Jersey Educators Association (NJEA) to support teachers in this work. NJ Heart will be starting training for our staff on December 12.

After the training and prior to the winter break, our math teachers will then apply those strategies to supporting the students through a No Place For Hate Lesson entitled “Intent v Impact”. See the link here: [Intent v Impact](#).

The math teachers have met with me and have discussed any modifications for their classes. I applaud the math teachers for taking this on. This alone conveys how intent creates a lasting impact. So often these discussions/teachable moments are relegated to counselors, administrators, social studies, or ELA teachers because of the content and historical relevance that may surface. However, to have math teachers take the initiative to engage in this discourse with our children shows that our desire to “build better Bulldogs” is not just a social studies, counseling, ELA, or administrator thing. It is everyone’s responsibility to have this discussion because we all have an important role to support the growth of a child. They are poised to do a great job with this lesson.

As always, I want to thank you personally for supporting this work and realizing that academics as well as social emotional support is vital to our students’ growth and journey. The partnership we have with you helps guide the children to be the best versions of themselves, and that is all we ask of the Bulldogs. You have wonderful, reflective children who routinely seek to do what is right.

I apologize for the length of this letter. I thank you for taking the time to read it. I thank you for supporting this work in the home as well. As always if you have any questions or concerns as it relates to your child, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or Dr. Muscelli.

Have a wonderful last few weeks until winter break and wishing all of you very restful break and opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike D'Ostilio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike D'Ostilio