

Highland Park Public School District

435 Mansfield Street
Highland Park, New Jersey 08904



Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 Guidebook

Dear Parents,

We understand that getting a call from your child's principal about a Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) incident can be anxiety provoking. The emotions are the same whether your child is identified as the target or the perpetrator. Besides, understanding and navigating the HIB process can be confusing.

This booklet is designed to provide you with information about the a) Anti Bullying Bill of Rights, b) Highland Park Board of Education HIB policy and procedures, c) the difference between bullying and conflict, d) parental support for students involved with HIB and e) parent advocacy.

All children deserve to learn in a safe and supportive environment and our Board of Education is committed to creating a safe environment where all students can succeed. **The use of the terms “harassment,” “intimidation” or “bullying” will require a HIB investigation.**

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional support or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Asamoah
District Anti-Bullying Coordinator
easamoah@hpschools.net

What is the Anti Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR)?

On January 5, 2011, Governor Chris Christie signed the Anti Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR) in into law. The ABR is intended to strengthen New Jersey's standards and procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) of students that occur on school grounds and off school grounds under specified circumstances. For further information, see the Glossary of Terms at the end of this booklet.

How is Bullying Defined in the ABR?

It is important to understand the type of behavior that is considered HIB under the ABR. All of the criteria in the definition below must be present for an act to be considered HIB.

The ABR defines harassment, intimidation and bullying as any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that:

- A.** Is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as: race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability or by any other distinguishing characteristic.

and

- B.** Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds.

that

- C.** Substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students.

and that

- D.** A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property.

or

- E.** Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students.

or

- F.** Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

How do I know when to report a HIB?

The district staff will automatically initiate a HIB investigation:

- Whenever any of the behaviors or characteristics described in the ABR is present in a reported incident.
- When the words “bullied, harassed or intimidated” are reported.

Parents and students are encouraged to report any incidents that they deem to fall under harassment, intimidation or bullying to the school.

How do I report a HIB to the school?

Parents may call, visit or email the school with their concerns. Parents may also complete a HIB Report if they choose to do so. HIB Report forms are available in the main office of each school and also on the district website.

Who do I contact at the School?

District Anti-Bullying Coordinator (ABC):

Elizabeth Asamoah
732 572 2400 ext. 3020
[easamoah@hpschools.net](mailto: easamoah@hpschools.net)

The ABC is appointed by the superintendent to collaborate with the ABS in each school within the district, the board of education and the CSA to prevent, identify and respond to HIB of students.

School Anti Bullying Specialists:

Irving: Lisa Stevens
732 572 2400 ext. 1307
[lstevens@hpschools.net](mailto: lstevens@hpschools.net)

Bartle: Sarah Kirk
732 572 2400 ext. 2007
[Skirk@hpschools.net](mailto: Skirk@hpschools.net)

Middle School: Marc Lobianco
732 572 2400 ext. 3407
[mlobianco@hpschools.net](mailto: mlobianco@hpschools.net)

High School: Melissa Hayes
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Anti-Bullying Specialists (ABS) are appointed by their principals to lead the investigation of incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in the school.

How Do Schools Decide Whether Conduct is Considered HIB?

The school must first conduct an investigation when bullying is reported.

A school must consider many different factors to decide whether a behavior is HIB as defined in the ABR.

In making this decision, schools must take into account the facts of each case - including presence of the three criteria identified in definition of HIB (please refer to pgs. 2-3).

What happens after a HIB Report is filed?

A school is required to take specific steps when Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) are reported. The steps are provided below:

1. Principal receives HIB report.
2. Principal notifies parents of all students involved.
3. Principal receives written report from staff who first reported.
4. The anti-bullying specialist (ABS) investigates the report. Started within 1 day of the report and completed within 10 days of the written report.
5. The ABS submits findings of the investigation to the principal. The principal shall proceed in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct, as appropriate, based on the investigation findings. The principal submits the report to the superintendent.
6. The superintendent may decide to take other actions based on the investigation report.
7. Superintendent reports results to board of education (BOE) at its meeting after the investigation is completed.
8. Superintendent provides parents with information from the investigation, within 5 days from the report to BOE. The information to be provided to parents shall include the nature of the investigation, whether the district found evidence of harassment, intimidation or bullying and or whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the HIB incident.
9. Parent may request BOE hearing which must occur within 10 days of request.
10. BOE issues written decision to support, disagree or change the superintendent's decision at next board meeting following superintendent's report.

What if I disagree with the Board's Decision?

Parents who disagree with the board's decision may follow the process outline below:

1. Appeal to the Commissioner of Education within 90 days after issuance of the BOE decision.
2. File a complaint with the Division on Civil Rights within 180 days of the HIB incident.

What happens to my child if the school confirms a HIB?

The Board of Education requires its school administrators to implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses for students who commit one or more acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying, consistent with the Code of Student Conduct.

Examples of Remedial Measures for students who commit one or more acts of HIB

1. Develop a behavioral contract with the student. Ensure the student has a voice in the outcome and can identify ways he or she can solve the problem and change behaviors.
2. Provide social skill training, such as impulse control, anger management, developing empathy, and problem solving.
3. Require a reflective essay to ensure the student understands the impact of his or her actions on others.
4. Have the student research and teach a lesson to the class about bullying, empathy, or a similar topic;
5. Arrange for restitution (i.e., compensation, reimbursement, amends, repayment), particularly when personal items were damaged or stolen;
6. Explore age-appropriate restorative (i.e., healing, curative, recuperative) practices.

Examples of support for students who are targets of HIB

The school takes all incidents of bullying very seriously and complies with our district policy and state statute to create a positive and safe school climate for all our students.

1. Meet with a trusted staff member to explore the student's feelings about the incident;
2. Develop a plan to ensure the student's emotional and physical safety at school;
3. Student will meet with the school counselor or school social worker to ensure he or she does not feel responsible for the bullying behavior;
4. Ask students to log behaviors in the future;
5. Help the student develop skills and strategies for revisiting bullying; and
6. Schedule a follow-up conference with the student.

Part II

Understanding Different Types of Bullying Behavior

Bullying can occur in many different ways. Bullying can be direct ("face to face") or indirect ("behind someone's back). The type of bullying can affect the way parents describe or approach their child or a school about a bullying incident. Generally, there are four types of bullying behaviors:

- **Verbal** – Includes name calling, taunting, constant teasing or making threats;

- **Physical** – Includes hitting, punching, shoving, spitting, or taking or damaging personal belongings;
- **Psychological** – Includes spreading rumors, purposefully keeping people from activities and breaking up friendships or other relationships; and
- **Electronic or cyber bullying** – Includes using the internet, mobile phone or other electronic equipment to intentionally harm others.

Conflicts vs. Bullying

During a conflict, name-calling, threats and other conduct that might look like bullying can occur. However, a conflict and bullying are very different. Unlike bullying, during a conflict people are equally involved in some type of disagreement. Conflict is considered mutual, meaning everyone is more or less evenly involved. Bullying, on the other hand, involves one or several people (the bullies) intentionally committing a mean or violent act against another person(s) or group of people (the victims).

When bullying occurs, there is no mutual participation in a disagreement; it is one-sided. Bullying victims have a hard time defending themselves. The victims want the bullying to stop, but the bully continues the behavior. Conflicts and bullying can interrupt the school day, damage property and cause injuries to the people involved. However, when the behavior involves a conflict, the school will take action based on its code of student conduct instead of the ABR.

Bullying occurs when,

- One or more students are victims of unwanted or uninvited aggression, as the behavior applies to the definition of harassment, intimidation and bullying in the ABR.
- The aggressor’s behavior would lead a person to reasonably believe that the aggressor is motivated by a desire to physically or emotionally hurt someone.
- The aggression is one-sided.
- The behavior is not an attempt to positively or negatively address or resolve a problem.

How to Help a Child Who is Being Bullied

If you believe your child is being bullied or if your child brings up the subject, it is important for you to take action. Below are some steps you can take:

- **Report the matter to school officials** – If you suspect bullying, report the behavior and make it clear that you want an investigation according to the procedures in the ABR.

- **Document ongoing bullying** – Team with your child to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If the behavior involves cyberbullying, keep a record of all messages or postings. Do not erase or change any electronic files.
- **Talk with your child** – Give your child undivided attention.
- **Empathize with your child** – Reinforce that bullying is wrong, that it is not your child’s fault, and that you are glad they had the courage to tell you about it.
- **Develop solutions together** – Work together to find solutions and provide positive ideas for ways to respond to bullying. Help your child gain confidence by rehearsing the responses.
- **Be persistent** – Bullying, especially ongoing bullying, may not be stopped in one attempt.
- **Stay alert to other problems** – Some of the warning signs for bullying might actually be indicators of other serious problems.
- **Cooperate with school staff** – Partner with school staff and stay informed of investigations to be sure the ABR is being followed.

What *Not* To Do if You Believe Your Child is Being Bullied

It can be challenging to know the most helpful things to do and say if your child is being bullied. Some things a parent should not do include the following:

- **Do not tell your child to ignore the bullying** – The message your child might “hear” is that you do not take his or her concerns seriously or do not care about his or her safety and well-being.
- **Do not blame your child for being bullied** – Do not assume that your child did something to cause the bullying.
- **Do not encourage your child to harm or “get back at” the person who is bullying them** – This could get your child hurt, suspended or expelled from school. Additionally, legal action may be taken.
- **Do not contact the parents of the students who bullied your child** – This might make matters worse by increasing the pressure on your child, increasing the bullying or bringing about bullying from the parent. School officials should contact the parents of the involved student(s).
- **Do not demand or expect a solution right away** – Indicate that you want to determine the best course of action, but need to be sure that your child is safe. Also, be aware that the ABR limits the ability of school staff from revealing information on the students who might be involved in the situation, including the disciplinary actions taken against other students. The law

preventing school officials from giving you details on other students does not mean appropriate action has not been taken.

How to Help a Child Who Bullies Others

If you find out that your child is bullying others, take the issue to heart and develop a plan with your child that will help stop the bullying. Additional steps a parent can take include:

- **Calmly and thoroughly discuss the problem** – Talk with your child about the bullying behavior, and ask for their account of any specific incidents of bullying. Listen carefully and stay neutral. Calmly explain the behavior that you are concerned about and ask for an explanation of the incident(s) and details regarding your child’s role.
- **Clearly state your disapproval, and develop clear and consistent rules** – Make it clear to your child that you take bullying seriously and that it is not acceptable behavior. Calmly inform the child that you will not tolerate bullying behavior. Develop clear rules for your child's behavior. Always praise the child when he or she follows the rules, and always put into action fair consequences if your child breaks the rules.
- **Spend time with your child, and know their activities** – Spend quality time with your child. Carefully check on their activities, including when they are online or texting. Be aware of your child's friends and the ways your child and his or her friends spend their free time. Help them watch their own behavior.
- **Encourage your child’s talents and positive attributes** – Build on your child's talents and positive attributes. Encourage him or her to get involved in social activities and community service.
- **Work closely with the school** – Ask the school to keep you informed about your child’s behavior. Develop strategies together to address the bullying. Team up to send clear messages to your child that the bullying must stop. You need to work together with school staff to ensure the bullying does not happen again.
- **Get counseling or other assistance for your child** – Talk with a school counselor or other health care professional about available counseling or other services for your child. These services can help your child learn new behaviors.
- **Help your child connect with other youth who show positive behavior** – Other children can serve as positive role models for your children, and can have a positive influence on their behavior, helping them work through the reasons of their behavior.

Work Together with Your Child’s School to Stop Bullying

There are many different actions parents can take to make sure their children’s schools are correctly dealing with bullying. These actions include:

- Knowing the district's anti-bullying and other policies
- Helping with the development of the district's HIB policy
- Being active in your children's education. Some ways parents can be involved with their children's schools include: Volunteering to be the parent representative on the school safety team;
- Asking questions about the findings and activities of the school safety team;
- Attending board of education meetings and learning about bullying incidents and activities;
- Attending the public hearings held twice each school year when the CSA reports on the incidents of HIB to the board of education;
- Contacting the school to identify other meetings and opportunities to comment on the school district's policies and practices;
- Attending parent-teacher conferences and contact your child's teacher regularly to stay updated on how your child is doing at school.
- Attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.
- Making an appointment with the principal if you have concerns with school policies, how school staff follow the policies, or other issues.
- Making an appointment with the CSA if you have concerns with the operation of the school district.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR) – New Jersey’s anti-bullying law that includes the requirements school districts and schools must follow in preventing and responding to harassment, intimidation and bullying. The ABR is the basis for this guide. It is available on the New Jersey Legislature’s website at http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/122_.PDF.

Board of Education (Board or BOE) – A group of elected individuals within each school district that serves as the district’s governing and policy making authority. Each board of education is required to issue a final determination on the findings of each investigation of reported harassment, intimidation or bullying, among other duties in the ABR.

Bully – A student or an adult who harasses, intimidates or bullies another person(s), where the behavior is one-sided. Harassment, intimidation or bullying also will be written as “HIB” to mean bullying in this guide.

Bullying – Refers to harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) as it is defined in the ABR. Bullying usually involves conduct where one or more students are victims of another person’s aggression that has not been caused by the victims and emotionally or physically harms the victims and disrupts the educational process.

Bystander – Students and other people who witness bullying, and who do or say nothing to stop it or help the victims.

Chief School Administrator (CSA) – The highest level executive within a school district or charter school who is commonly referred to as the superintendent of a school district or a lead person of a charter school. The CSA has oversight of all staff, schools, students and educational programs and services within his or her school district or charter school. Under the ABR, the CSA is responsible for reviewing investigations of reported incidents of bullying, reporting the findings of investigations to the board of education and in taking other actions to correct bullying, as needed.

Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) – New Jersey’s chief executive education officer who oversees the New Jersey Department of Education and all public schools within the state. As the state’s chief education officer, the Commissioner is responsible for overseeing implementation of the ABR. One of these responsibilities is to provide a grade every year to each school and school district on their efforts to meet the requirements of the ABR.

Conflict – A disagreement, argument, fight or other action between people when they want different things and everyone is equally involved. Conflict may look similar to bullying, but is different.

Cyberbullying – A form of bullying that involves the use of electronic equipment, such as computers and cell phones. An example could include sending hurtful or unwanted text messages to another person’s cell phone.

District Anti-Bullying Coordinator (ABC) – This is the school district staff member who is responsible for coordinating and strengthening the school district’s anti-bullying policies. The ABC

must work closely with each school anti-bullying specialist, the chief school administrator and the board of education. The ABC is responsible for reporting information on the amount and type of bullying incidents that occur within the district to the board of education and to the NJDOE, among other duties.

Hazing – Activities that “newcomers” must do before they can belong to a group. Hazing is used to maintain a hierarchy or pecking order within a group. Hazing usually is based on a tradition, where a lower group member or person who wants to join the group agrees or goes along with the hazing activities, which may be physically, psychologically or socially harmful.

Parent – As defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3, the term “parent” means the natural parent(s), adoptive parent(s), legal guardian(s), foster parent(s) or parent surrogate(s) of a student. If parents are separated or divorced, "parent" means the person or agency with legal custody of the student, and any natural or adoptive parent(s) of the student, as long as their parental rights have not been ended by the court.

Principal – The highest level administrator within a school building who is responsible for all educational programs and services in the school, including overseeing all staff and students in the school. The principal is responsible for starting investigations of all reported incidents of bullying, notifying the parents of children involved in the incidents and reporting the findings to the chief school administrator, among other duties in the ABR.

School Anti-Bullying Specialist (ABS) – The main school staff member responsible for preventing, identifying and addressing bullying incidents within his or her school. The ABS is responsible for leading a school’s safety team and for investigating reported incidents of bullying, among other duties in the ABR.

School Grounds – As defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3, school grounds includes any land, portions of land, structures, buildings and vehicles used by a school district to provide academic or extracurricular programs that are sponsored by the school district. School grounds also include playgrounds, recreational places and other places that are owned by other groups or people, when the school district is the only one using this land. The complete definition is available at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap16.pdf>.

School Safety Team (SST) – A group of people in each public school chosen by the school’s principal, who are responsible for maintaining a positive and safe school environment. The principal selects the members of the SST, which must include the principal or a staff person chosen by the principal, a teacher, the school anti-bullying specialist, a parent and any other members the principal believes are important to be on the SST.

“Upstander” – Students and other people who take an active role in stopping the bullying of others. This is done either by not encouraging the bullies, by reaching out to the victim, by telling someone who can stop the bully or by taking other actions that can help the victim or stop the bullying.

Victim – A student who is harassed, intimidated or bullied by another student or an adult.

Acknowledgements

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Information for this document was derived from:

1. Parent Tutorial on the Anti Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR)

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/tutorials/ParentTut1.pdf>

2. Highland Park Board of Education policy on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

<http://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=5512&search=Harassment%2c+Intimidation+and+bullying&id=036100f752da4943b2ed0e3b0326564b>