

Monmouth County Vocational School District

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Thank you for contacting the Monmouth County Vocational School District. In response to recent media coverage, District Superintendent Timothy McCorkell issued the following statement. The District cannot comment beyond this statement due to pending litigation.

Immediately upon learning of the April 21, 2018 incident on Sandy Hook involving MAST students, the District appropriately disciplined the students involved, in line with the District's progressive discipline approach. In addition to responding to the students directly involved in the incident, the District consulted with the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey to address the overall school climate and entire school community. In May 2018, MAST's entire 11th grade attended a Colloquium at Brookdale Community College sponsored by the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights and Genocide Educational Center ("Chhange") entitled "Stand Up Against Hate." This full-day program was specifically focused on cultural competency issues to train staff and to educate students, raising awareness related to all forms of discrimination including anti-Semitism. During the 2018-2019 school year, MAST participated in a year long, multidisciplinary program entitled "Building Bridges" presented by Chhange that included professional development for staff and was infused into their curriculum across multiple grade levels and subject areas. The program was so successful that it is now embedded into the MAST curriculum and remains a permanent part of its educational program.

The actions taken by the District in response to the reported incident are aligned with the recommendations laid out by New Jersey Attorney General Gubir S. Grewal in an op-ed published on December 29, 2019 in The Star Ledger titled "Five Ways We Can Fight Hate." On the topic of bias incidents in schools, the Attorney General wrote that a school's disciplinary response "needs[s] to be coupled with a mandatory education component." The Attorney General advised schools to analyze singular incidents and "recognize that the incident may be symptomatic of a larger problem and use it as a teachable moment for the entire school, rather than casually brush it aside." His op-ed further stated that "we must examine our entire school curricula when it comes to addressing bias and hate." We believe the actions taken by the District since the incident do just that. The District is confident in the legal process and that the facts will support our position once the case is presented to the Division of Civil Rights.

The District takes every reported allegation of bias, harassment, intimidation and bullying seriously and promptly investigates reported incidents.

More importantly, the Monmouth County Vocational School District is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students that is free from harassment, intimidation and bullying and all forms of bias and discrimination.