



San Diego Office
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Supt. Cindy Marten, SDUSD
4100 Normal St
San Diego, CA 92103-2682

[Via email to cmarten@sandi.net]

November 23, 2016

Re: Recommendations for Immediate Steps to be Taken

Dear Ms. Marten:

Our committee writes at your suggestion for recommended steps to counter concerns within SDUSD as how to best prevent and combat bullying, especially given the recent increased climate of fear in many of San Diego's communities. We have formulated the recommendations within this letter, with the following premises in mind:

- that school must be a safe learning environment for all students;
- that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated, and will be dealt with swiftly by school officials, by employing Restorative Justice, to help healing begin for all involved;
- that our schools are a safe place for students to express thoughts and feelings appropriately; and
- that respecting others students who are “different” than them should be an integral part of every student’s education.

The Recommendations are as follows:

1. Request that every principal meet with their staff (certificated and classified) immediately to discuss the bullying of Muslim students (and others). Reaffirm that bullying must be reported and cannot be tolerated from either students or staff. SDUSD could provide a plan to the principals on how to deal with bullying of Muslim students, or have them discuss with their staffs the best way to handle it, given the make-up of respective school. Recommend the principals work with staff on how best staff, students and parents may report bullying, and include classified staff with the idea that “everyone is responsible” to stop and/or report bullying.

Teachers should be encouraged to share ways in which they can teach students respect for other ethnicities, cultures, languages, etc. Principals may want to remind teachers that the internet provides resources, including free “Teaching Tolerance” resources from Southern Poverty Law Center, and others. [<https://www.splcenter.org>]

Perhaps one or more site committees can be set up to create ideas and share. These ideas could be shared district-wide. (We recommend engaging the support of Union leaders in this endeavor.)

2. Ask that principals include an “Anti-bullying” clause in their school Discipline Plan, if there is not one already. Request that their plan also consider elements of “Restorative Practices” and “Restorative Justice,” as contained in the website:
[\[https://www.sandiegounified.org/restorative-practices\]](https://www.sandiegounified.org/restorative-practices).

The first step in disciplining any bullying should include Restorative Justice, prior to punitive actions. However, students should know that bullying will not be tolerated.

3. Suggest that principals hold an assembly (appropriate for different grade levels) or go to each classroom to speak to the students about the importance of respect for one and other. Ask that they tell students that they have a right to be treated respectfully, and that they must report any bullying to their teacher, principal, or parent, if they see or hear bullying. If appropriate, they can be encouraged to step-in and speak up for any child they see being bullied (without danger to themselves, of course.) The principal can let students know that they also provide a service to those who are doing the bullying, by helping them to learn to thrive in a multicultural society. (Perhaps a site motto: “Friends don’t let Friends Bully...?”)
4. Send out a letter to all District staff, explaining the Board mandate to take steps to stop the bullying of Muslim students. Note the reports of increased bullying and students staying home out of fear.
5. Ask teachers to discuss with their students the value of every other student, no matter their ethnicity, religion, culture, language, lifestyle, etc. Ask teachers to allow students time to express their fears and expectations, in a manner appropriate to their grade level.

Remind teachers that resources are available on the Internet, including free “Teaching Tolerance” resources from SPLC (<https://www.splcenter.org>). List other resources available through the District, including “Listening Circles,” already promoted throughout the District as “Restorative Practice” (also known as “Classroom Community-Building Circles” or “Restorative Circles.”)

[\[https://www.sandiegounified.org/sites/default/files_link/district/files/dept/restorative_practices_restorative-scenarios.pdf\]](https://www.sandiegounified.org/sites/default/files_link/district/files/dept/restorative_practices_restorative-scenarios.pdf)

Another free Restorative (and Trauma-Informed) resource available to staff is “Compassionate Comprehension with the Common Core,” (CC/CC) by Linda K. Williams, retired SDUSD Reading Recovery Teacher (LKW_BetterWorld@yahoo.com). CC/CC is available to be used as a Tier I Intervention.

6. Send a letter home to parents, stating that there has been an increase in bullying of Muslim students, and others, that such behavior will not be tolerated at any SDUSD school, and that disciplinary actions will follow for any student involved in an act of confirmed bullying. Reassure parents of Muslim (and other minority students) that their children are safe, and a “Zero Tolerance for Bullying” climate exists at their child’s school. (If needed, site administrators may also send a letter home, emphasizing the same.)



The letter should also request that parents talk to their children about respecting others. Encourage parents to tell their children to report any bullying that occurs to them, or that they observe. Parents can also call the school to report any such occurrence that their child has experienced or observed.

7. Ask that site administrators or library clerks locate books that expose students to various cultures in America (including Muslims), and set aside those publications for teachers to check-out. Teachers should be encouraged to read books from the list to their students if it is age appropriate or assign the book as required reading.

Also make the list available for persons to review.

Suggest library clerks send out lists of books to the staff, and to other site libraries to assist them. (FYI: Lists of children's books about the Muslim culture are easily accessible on the Internet, and Mrs. Lallia Allali of the Council on American Islamic-Relation's --- Co-Chair of our Committee --- also has a list of highly recommended books.)

It would also be ideal for such "Pre-Select Sets" to be readily available for check-out by teachers from the Instructional Media Center, and that their availability be made known widely throughout the District.

Finally our committee is ready to provide training to staff and especially principals around empathy/anti-bullying practices that teachers can use in their classes. Please do not hesitate to contact us for this service.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Most Sincerely,

Members of the Committee:

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Deanne Rohde, Retired Principal
Lindbergh Schweitzer Elementary School,
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Walking in the Footsteps of The Master

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