

## Changing the Protocol - A Call to Action

Life is a roller coaster, which includes various ups, downs, loops and twists. While overall, we have had a very successful year at Meridian CUSD #101, we have hit the bottom of one of those hills during the past couple of weeks. During the first 7 months of the school year we had a total of 5 suspensions. In the past three weeks we have doubled that total and mainly because of physical altercations. We believe there are many reasons for this and more importantly one big way we can solve this issue. I will first talk about the reasons and most importantly talk about the potential solution.

In our culture, family is the most important thing. It is a great value to hold your family members as the most important item in the world and stand up for them. Many people would suggest this is what the United States of America was founded on and believe me I appreciate this value. I have a large family which is deeply entrenched in protecting and helping each other. I would never question my parents coming to assist me in my time of need or the likewise. They have done it time and time again, much as I have repaid the same sentiment.

Pride is also a part of the problem. Our students are prideful and we want them to be. They want respect, and to feel needed. Any type of disrespect will set off repercussions for anyone else involved. Accordingly, at this time that means a physical altercation. While no one wants to be disrespected or treated poorly, our students have no tolerance for another person's lack of respect nor the other's ability to treat someone with respect. We must once again teach the idea of the "golden rule". Treat others as you wish to be treated.

The children of today also do not have the ability to communicate with each other. They have grown up in a world which has taught them to communicate electronically and also have the ability to hide behind this method, while treating others poorly. When faced person to person, the reaction to these types of communication tend to resort to physical altercations as they have not been prepared to use their minds and voices. Many times when reviewing each incident, we find out the students really don't even know anything about the person, but a he said, she said opinion. As they continue to mature, I am sure technology will also progress. What will future generations learn as the norms on communication and respect towards others?

At Meridian #101 we live in a small fishbowl. There is no escaping someone else. You will have class with them or see them in the hallway. This creates a constant stir for friction, while others continue to incite the parties involved. Students are not able to

avoid or dissuade the possible confrontation because of this. This only heightens the possibility of a bad outcome. The bad outcome does not come from school outcomes, but ingraining this method of resolution to what our students will resort to as adults. In a way this small fishbowl is the same as our community. You cannot avoid someone you will run into at the Dollar General, gas station or Stop and Shop.

This is why we need a call to action as a community. Even if you don't have children in the school, these are your children. The adults must set the example and lend the advice to persuade our children to use their minds and voices as a means to settle differences. Even if this means we decide to agree to disagree as my grandfather prophesied. However, adding fuel to fire at home will only enhance our students justification for their actions. I am not saying that eventually their comes a time and a place for a physical altercation. I had a couple of my own instances during my youth. However, in adulthood these would not have been a good plan of action on my part. This was learned from examples growing up both good and bad. The willingness to see, learn and understand helped pave the way to figure out how to resolve differences in my adulthood.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction." He also stated "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." We must teach our children to think before reacting. If not we are slowly or quickly spiraling into destruction. Please help us to end this destination.

At the end of the day, we are one small community, who must figure out how to get along in order for us to survive. Our current methods are not going to lead nor enhance our ability to do this. This is why I ask for all of us to put aside our differences and help change our youth and their ability to deal with disagreements. It will never totally stop, but with persistence and intent we can make a differences, by demonstrating and talking to them about how to deal with life.