

Dear Heritage Community,

At Heritage we pride ourselves in our efforts to uphold and *improve* upon our mission to Be Responsible, Be Respectful and Be Kinder than Necessary. However, recently, the administrative team at Heritage has received reports of harmful, inappropriate and/or racist language, including the n-word, used by students. We are notifying families in order to reiterate our commitment of respect and kindness to all, and to encourage dialogue at home around the impact that words can have, as well as the power of speaking up.

Heritage School and Saline Area Schools strive to create a safe learning environment for all students. When hateful language is used in school, it has a direct negative impact on the social-emotional wellbeing of students, particularly on learners from historically marginalized communities.

Racist, homophobic, transphobic or other hate speech or actions will not be tolerated at Heritage and Saline Area Schools. Please take a moment to review our policy below:

1. Hate Speech (Acts)

Saline Area Schools will not tolerate or accept hate speech (acts) on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, ability/disability, nation, or origin or any other similar ground.

Hate Speech (acts) is defined as speech that demeans an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, ability/disability, nation or origin, or any other similar ground.

If hate speech (acts) is reported or witnessed, an investigation will occur. The investigation will involve the school/district administration. If it is determined that hate speech has occurred, the series of consequences listed below will be applied.

NOTE: If a formal Civil Rights investigation is requested, the District's Civil Rights Coordinators will serve to initiate and complete the investigation. If in compliance with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) procedures, trusted adults will be made available to accompany ALL involved students during an investigation.

Students who engage in hate speech (acts) will face a series of consequences that shall include the following:

- Discipline – Student (s) will receive disciplinary consequences that could include suspension from school (in/out) for a period of time up to ten days. It could also include schedule changes and other considerations to provide a safe teaching/learning environment for the victim (s).

- Education – Student (s) and families will participate in education regarding socio-cultural awareness and the impact of hate speech (act) on other students as well as the school environment and community.
- Restorative Practices – Student (s) will be provided an opportunity to participate in restorative practices to assist in the development of a plan to repair harm with the victims.

The District reserves the right to invoke more severe discipline including the involvement of law enforcement and/or an administrative recommendation for expulsion.

Heritage staff and administration, with the full support of our district partners, are committed to:

- Reviewing expectations with all students around respectful behavior through our Positive Behavior Intervention System
- Educating students on intent vs. impact
- Educating students on the history and impact of the n-word, at a developmentally appropriate level
- Teaching and encouraging the [Speak Up protocol](#) (Teaching for Justice)
 - All students will have been introduced to this protocol by February 15, 2024.

While we follow our handbook policies for discipline, work to restore with those that have been harmed, and continue to educate our students to change behavior, we realize that the home conversations are crucial to the students' behavioral and academic success. Here is how you can support from home...

- Monitor social media use. Derogatory, violent, racist and discriminatory content and hate speech fills social media platforms. Students repeat what they hear. Common Sense Education has great Digital Citizenship resources on (you must create a free account):
 - [4th Grade - Be A Super Digital Citizen](#)
 - [5th Grade - Is It Cyberbullying?](#)
 - [Racism on Social Media \(Bark\)](#)
 - [Promoting Healthy Technology for Children \(American Psychological Association\)](#)
- Have difficult conversations with your student. Acknowledge societal struggle with racism and review expectations for home and school. These resources may help:
 - This Book is Antiracist by Tiffany Jewell (good for a family read)
 - Two resources from NPR on how to talk to your kids about race and racism: [Resource 1](#), [Resource 2](#)
 - [Talking to Kids About Race](#) (National Museum of African American History)
 - [10 Tips on Talking to Kids about Race and Racism](#) (PBS)
 - [Anti-Racism for Kids \(Parenting Magazine\)](#)

Thank you for your support in providing a safe and inclusive environment for our students.

In Partnership,

Megan DeGrand, Heritage Principal

Cameron Cochran, Heritage Assistant Principal