

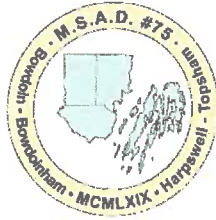
Maine School Administrative District No. 75

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March 15, 2019

Dear members of the M.S.A.D. No. 75 community:

There have been reports in the media in recent days regarding the use of the "Quiet Room" at Harpswell Community School, as well as discussion regarding seclusion spaces in schools around the State. We want you to hear the facts from us regarding these rooms, and the limited circumstances in which they are used in the schools of M.S.A.D. No. 75. As parents/guardians and members of the community you should be aware that physical restraint or seclusion are used very rarely, and only in emergency circumstances where a student's dangerous behavior presents an immediate risk of harm to the student, other students or our staff members.

Maine has developed strict regulations around the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. These regulations are commonly referred to as Chapter 33 rules and can be found on the Maine Department of Education website <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/safeschools/restraint>. M.S.A.D. No. 75's policies and procedures regarding the use of restraint and seclusion (Policies JKAA and JKK-R) are available on the District's website <http://www.link75.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=500680&pageId=683476>.

Our staff are trained in the Mandt System, a State-approved program of behavioral interventions that incorporate a focus on de-escalation and principles of positive behavior support along with training on safe techniques for restraint and seclusion, which are implemented only as a last resort. The District's paramount concern is at all times student safety.

Each of the schools in the District contains a designated space that can be used in the event a seclusion is necessary. The rooms themselves comply in every regard with state regulations regarding those spaces: they are approximately 8 feet by 8 feet in area (some are larger), with adequate light and ventilation, have a door that cannot be locked, with an unbreakable window through which a child can be observed at all times. There is nothing in the room that can be used by a student to cause bodily injury to himself/herself or others.

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*Because questions have arisen about the use of these rooms, I want to address them specifically. First, it is important to be clear regarding what the room is **NOT** used for:*

- *It is not used to address student non-compliance.*
- *It is not used to discipline a child.*
- *It is not used to address tantrum behavior.*
- *It is not used to address profanity or verbal aggression.*
- *It is not used to address property damage or destruction which does not put people at risk.*

*The room **IS** used in rare cases of emergency and as a last resort, if a student's behavior poses a danger to the student, other students or our staff members:*

- *What this generally means is that the child is attacking or attempting to physically attack adults or peers and cannot be de-escalated to the point of being safe, or is putting his/her own body in danger.*
- *When a child's behavior is unsafe, temporary seclusion, under the supervision of trained personnel can be a much safer alternative (for the child as well as the adult) than holding a child in restraint until he/she is de-escalated and safe.*
- *It is used only under constant supervision (through a window in the door) by at least two adults, with the lights and ventilation fan kept on at all times.*
- *If seclusion in a room becomes necessary, an adult calmly lets the child know that the door can be opened when the child demonstrates a safe body – instructions are given as to what that means. A second adult keeps notes regarding what is said by the child and adult, along with times. As soon as the child demonstrates the ability to be safe, the door is opened and the incident is processed with the child. Later, adults meet to discuss a plan to support the child in order to avoid similar future incidents.*
- *By policy, every time there is an incident of either restraint or seclusion, the parent is notified that same day, typically by phone, and is provided with a detailed, written incident report within seven (7) days.*

Techniques of physical restraint or seclusion are used only as a last resort, but they are sometimes necessary to protect students and staff. For reasons of student confidentiality, we are not able to discuss the circumstances of any particular incident, but I want to assure you that the District adheres to its policies and State law regarding these techniques, that our facilities comply with all laws and regulations in this area, and that our staff are trained in safety techniques through a State-approved training program. In every instance, the safety of students is our top priority.

Our greatest responsibility as educators is to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students and also for the dedicated staff who work in our schools. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Lucy

Robert J. Lucy
Interim Superintendent of Schools