



# MOUNT SINAI MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Dear Middle School Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this communication is to inform you of a concerning trend among middle school students, in all grades, regarding the use of racial stereotypes, in words and picture form, towards some of their classmates.

The world we live in today is not easy with many controversial social issues and a lack of understanding toward different cultures and ethnic groups. This is exacerbated by the social media which causes confusion among our students as to what is inappropriate, as they try to navigate through these gray areas, in and out of school. What may seem funny on Tik Tok, or a meme sent around on group chats, can be offensive, insensitive, and hurtful to some of our minority students.

Schools are governed by the Dignity for All Students Act, which outlines the thirteen categories that are protected from harassment and discrimination. These include race, ethnicity, religion, gender, height, and weight, just to name a few. Incidents that violate DASA standards are documented and part of annual reporting to the New York State Education Department at the end of each school year. Unfortunately, our number of reported incidents will show a marked increase from last year.

This year, a number of minority groups have been targeted in school projects or as downloads on the district's 1:1 devices. These pictures are not relevant to the topic being presented, nor should they have been used as a screensaver, but are inserted to "get a laugh," at someone else's expense. Go Guardian software has been used to track the history of image downloads as part of middle school disciplinary investigations. Invariably, these result in students saying, "It was a joke." This feigned excuse is not acceptable and disciplinary consequences are being meted out to any and all students involved in such behavior.

There are only a few weeks left in the school year. Please speak with your child about this important topic, it may prevent incidences from occurring for the short term. For the 2023-2024 school year, grade level assemblies will be informative to students and hopeful set the expectations high in regard to empathy and acceptable behavior.

Thank you for your assistance in this important matter.

Elizabeth E. Hine  
Principal