

**Student Safety at Marengo**  
**Community High School**  
**District 154**

## *District Efforts to Promote Student Safety and Positive Student Behavior*

Marengo Community High School District 154 is committed to promoting student safety and positive student behavior. We are very aware of the importance that a safe, positive school environment has on our student's ability to learn and function. MCHS offers a wide variety of resources to students and parents both during the school day and outside of the school day. We offer late start presentations, assembly programs, on-line resources, counseling services, group counseling, outside counseling and other valuable resources to assist student in how to positively interact with one another.

Our students are growing up during challenging times, and the advancements in technology are making these challenges even greater. Marengo Community High School is continuously working to improve our school and to better serve the ever increasing and demanding needs of our students. Our Guidance Counselors work hard to offer a comprehensive program to meet the academic, career and social emotional needs of our students both proactively and reactively.

This handbook is designed to provide parents and students with information related to policies, procedures, services and interventions which are in place to promote student safety and positive student behavior thus providing a positive, learning environment for all.

### **The Power of Relationships**

Our school improvement efforts at Marengo Community High School have been built upon a focus on developing rigor, relevance and **relationships**. Among these three areas of emphasis, relationships are the first and foremost important. It is our belief that strong relationships must be built if our students are going to achieve to the best of their ability. Our staff continually strives to make connections with the students of MCHS. While we understand that not every teacher and every student will have that special bond, our goal is that each student will have at least one adult staff member with whom they feel comfortable discussing any issue. The staff then works to help the student access the resources available to them.

## ***POLICIES AND PROCEDURES***

### **Board Policies Addressing Student Safety**

Board Policy (7:20) is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it meets all state regulations. The board policies are reviewed through the legal counsel maintained by the school district. The Superintendent works with the Regional Office of Education to ensure that the district is in compliance with all stipulations.

### **Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedures**

Bullying is not tolerated at Marengo Community High School and is addressed by the Assistant Principal, Social Worker and School Resource Officer. They work closely to identify potential problems and address them at an appropriate level, involving other staff members as needed. Harassment

Agreements are used which lay out the expected behaviors for the students involved. All students participate in Internet Safety training each year including the appropriate use of the Internet. While the school addresses all issues from within the building, social networking and texting outside of the school day are handled on a case by case basis using the School Resource Officer to help handle these occurrences. Unfortunately, cyberbullying has become a new trend in bullying student's find it easier to send messages through the Internet that they would never say directly to another person.

### **School Procedures to Handle Harassment Issues**

Harassment is defined as **“any repeated and deliberate act that is used to embarrass or humiliate another student to make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.”** Harassment or bullying reports are handled as follows:

1. Once the harassment issue comes to the attention of the school the assistant principal and/or the social worker meet separately with those involved to address any issues.
2. If harassment is occurring outside of the school day and activities then the matter is referred to the Marengo Police Department.
3. In cases of cyber bullying, proof is critical and information should be saved by students or parents. This allows both the school and police officials to address the issue.
4. If harassment is alleged during school MCHS makes an attempt to find an adult witness.
5. Parents are notified of harassment concerns once the school officials have established what the issue is between the students.
6. Generally mediation between the students can solve many problems and be beneficial to those involved.
7. If the harassment issue is not resolved then students are required to meet again with the assistant principal and/or social worker to sign a harassment contract. This contract is not legally binding, but clearly states the policies of the school and possible consequences if the situation continues. Contracts are for a period of one year and are valid for harassment related issues with any other student in the building.

### **Enforcement of School Safety Procedures**

Marengo Community High School has procedures in place that advocate and promote a safe school environment for our students. All policies and procedures are available through the student handbook and may be accessed online at [www.mchs154.org](http://www.mchs154.org). Posting the documents online means that parents and students have easy access to this important information whenever it is needed to be reviewed.

Marengo Community High School freshmen benefit from the mentoring program that pairs volunteer upper classmen to work with the incoming class. Countless activities are run by the mentors so that the new students may become acclimated to the building and its procedures. Through the hours spent together our students form a bond which gives the most likely group to be bullied or harassed another person or set of persons to whom they may turn. While the mentors do not deal with these issues themselves they can and do report them to adults in the building who take over and work with the situation.

## *Staff Involvement and Collaborative Committee Work*

### **MCHS Student Advisory Committee**

The Student Advisory Committee (SAC) is composed of students from each grade level who meet with the administration to discuss issues at MCHS. The group meets once a month to discuss a variety of topics including student behavior and bullying with a representative from the administrative staff. While there are no teachers at the committee meetings, information is shared and teachers help to resolve any issues or situations brought up there. The purpose of the committee is to promote communication between students and the administration and enhance the climate of not only Marengo Community High School but also the Marengo community.

### **The Student Support Team**

This team is designed to specifically monitor the progress of students by focusing on attendance and academic progress. Each member of the team is a support person who speaks with students and works with the other members to chart a course of action to help students with any issues that are preventing them from being successful. A member of this team is in contact with parents about these issues and will update the group on pertinent information. The discussions of this group help drive the school's attempts to tap into outside resources for the entire student body or groups of students displaying particular actions.

### **Parent Advisory Council**

The administration meets monthly with the Parent Advisory Council to discuss issues of parent concerns and to answer their questions. Part of the meeting times are devoted to student issues outside of the school day including drinking, potentially illegal activities and bullying. Many of the policies and procedures that we develop are fine tuned from ideas initially started through discussions with this group.

### **Communication with our local protection agencies**

Marengo Community High School is committed to working closely with the local and county agencies that provide services to our school community. We maintain a School Resource Officer in the building several days per week and coordinate with other emergency and first responders through him. We regularly contact the McHenry County Youth Board Services so that they may intervene where necessary. Those outside personnel are dedicated to our mission to end bullying and harassment by addressing it themselves or by informing the MCHS staff so that it can be handled accordingly.

### **Communication with Our Parents through Personal Dialogue**

It is the expectation of the District for faculty and staff members to report all situations of student safety that occur. As our administrators and school guidance and social work professionals become aware of

situations, we communicate the situation to the parents whose children are involved in a situation as soon as possible. This creates an open dialogue among parents and staff so that situations can be resolved and so that affected students can feel comfortable and safe in their learning environments.

## *PROGRAMS AND OFFERINGS*

### **Digital Bullying Resources for Parents**

The Guidance and Student Services office keep a compiled list of parent resources and supports for parents and students who are being harassed or are the aggressor in a situation. Our website is designed to help inform parents of resources that can be accessed by them for their child. This is designed to be especially helpful when students are outside of the regular school day.

### **Night Programs**

Marengo Community High School maintains a number of night programs where bullying and harassment are addressed with the attendees. Each fall there are numerous presentations including the freshmen orientation and the athletic parent meeting where bullying is addressed. During the rest of the year small groups are gathered for various reasons and harassment is often a part of the program. Marengo Community High School is currently looking for programs to address bullying that goes on outside of the school day and is usually internet based.

### **Rachel's Challenge**

Rachel's Challenge was a structured presentation attended by all students and staff last year that presented the story of Rachel Scott who was the first person killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. The intent of the program is to "motivate [students] to positive change in the way they treat others" ([www.rachelschallenge.org](http://www.rachelschallenge.org)). This program included local area middle school students as well as the high school students. The presentation consisted of a live speaker and multimedia presentation that promotes the concept of positive reaction for acts of kindness.

### **Student Surveys**

The students of MCHS are able to give the school feedback through a variety of surveys that are given by the school district or by outside providers at the request of the district. The Illinois Youth Survey is given every two years to the sophomore and senior students at MCHS. This survey asks questions about a variety of subjects including school climate, hours spent watching television, homework, drug use, alcohol and use of tobacco products. The information is anonymously collected and used by the staff to help plan the use of resources for the school.