



Together We Make a Difference



Memorandum

DATE: August 22, 2022

TO: Members of the Education Community and Other Interested Parties

FROM:

Minnesota State High School League, Erich Martens, Executive Director
Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Deb Henton, Executive Director
Minnesota School Boards Association, Kirk Schneidawind, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan School Districts, Scott Croonquist, Executive Director
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Bob Driver, Executive Director
Minnesota Interscholastic Activities Administrator Association, Dan Johnson, Executive Director
Minnesota High School Coaches Association, Rick Ringheisen, Executive Director
Minnesota Rural Education Association, Bob Indihar, Executive Director
Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association, Jon Millerhagen, Executive Director
Minnesota Administrators for Special Education, Erin Toninato, Executive Director
Schools for Equity in Education, Brad Lundell, Executive Director

Earlier this year, leaders of some of the most prominent organizations in education in Minnesota came together to issue a joint statement to address several incidents of racial harm that had occurred at high school athletic events last winter and early spring. We remain committed to the work of eliminating these behaviors in our schools and at our events and we ask all schools to join in efforts to keep all students and activities safe and respectful.

The statement, issued in February, was a clear and direct statement that mistreatment of anyone on any basis is not only intolerable, it is something we, as educational leaders, unequivocally condemn. Racial, religious, or sexual harassment is simply unacceptable in our schools or at school events. In addition, victims of any acts of harm need our support and that there is more to do.

Following the release of that statement, the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL), Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), and the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) convened a meeting and invited partner organizations to join in and together develop an initiative titled “**Together We Make a Difference**” focused on taking action to improve behavior at high school athletic events and activities. We welcomed the Minnesota Interscholastic Activities Administrators Association (MIAAA) and the Minnesota State High School Coaches Association (MHSACA) as full partners and they are providing great support within our activity administrators and coaches for this important work.

The goals and action steps of the “Together We Make a Difference” initiative are to:

- Identify and provide resources to assist schools and administrators in planning, preparing and implementing best practices to address and eliminate harmful behaviors and support students who have been impacted. *This is ongoing work supported by all partner organizations.*
- Organize and facilitate student groups in bringing student voice to this address this significant issue and develop a model code of behavior. Once developed, this code will be distributed to school boards, administrators, coaches, parents, and students statewide. The code will cover all aspects of participation in activities as well as behavior at school. It will include participants in activities and athletics, spectators, staff, students, and community members. *Student leaders across the state have been engaged in trainings to lead regional student meetings.*
- Convene regional student meetings across the state, ultimately leading to a statewide student conference involving student leaders in athletics, fine arts and other activities to raise awareness about student conduct, bullying, gender, race and other issues and assist in the development of tools for all schools. *Schools will be receiving information from MSHSL this week encouraging them to identify student leaders to participate in these meetings.*

Our partner organizations remain committed to addressing these concerns and challenges. With a new school year upon us, a steering committee of student athletes and activity leaders has been meeting to plan and lead the regional student meetings in September and early October. Regional convenings of athletic directors and coaches will take place simultaneously with the student gatherings.

This work will culminate in a statewide student conference in November with further details announced in the coming weeks.

As we begin the fall season of activities and athletics, school leaders are urged to promote and enforce existing conduct rules through district policies prohibiting racial harassment of any kind and through MSHSL Bylaw 209 that expressly prohibits racial, sexual, or religious harassment. Violations of the policy require the loss of student eligibility. It is the responsibility of schools to work directly with student leaders, both participants and spectators, to establish positive behaviors and expectations for everyone within our competitions.

Together, we commit to making every effort to ensure that all students have a safe environment in which to learn and participate in activities. Safe, supportive school environments are of paramount importance.

Together we will make a difference.