

**Sticks and Stones**  
**Thomas J. Pillar, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent**

I grew up in a neighborhood on the lower east side of Detroit, which was almost surrounded by automobile factories. Most of the kids in my neighborhood went to the same school, attended the same church, and played together. It was a close-knit community. If I got into mischief, my parents would likely hear about it from other parents. I recall my parents not only correcting me for something I may have done, but also for something I may have said.

I learned that the popular proverb, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” was not entirely accurate. Words have consequences. They have the potential to hurt, inflame, be biased, be threatening, or simply be false. I learned not to hurt others with my words. If I did, then I was expected to apologize and promise not to say them again.

The idea that words have consequences seems magnified today maybe because of online social networks. Words can be expressed to many people using a phone or a computer. However, what I learned years ago in my neighborhood still holds true. Words can still hurt, still inflame, still be biased, still be threatening, or still be false, but on a much grander scale.

Much has been said and written about bullying in schools across the Nation. Bullying can be physical or verbal. In my experience, verbal bullying in schools seems to be getting worse. Some of the harshest words I have ever seen or heard have been expressed online toward others or toward the organization. In some cases, harsh words have had a serious impact on an individual or organization.

In recent weeks, our administrators have spent many hours following up on harsh statements made toward others or toward the District. Let’s work together to make this stop.

I ask parents/guardians to please regularly monitor what your child says or does on his/her phone or computer. Monitoring a child’s electronic devices is not an invasion of their privacy. If you see something inappropriate said toward another, please address it with your child. If you see something inappropriate expressed toward the school, please inform the principal. District staff will also monitor District-owned electronic devices. There should be no expectation of privacy when an individual uses a District-owned electronic device.

District administrators will follow-up on inappropriate or threatening statements, regardless of origin, and if necessary, impose consequences in accordance with Board of Education policy and Michigan law.

Let us conclude the 2017-18 academic year so that it is positive and successful for everyone. Together we can stop inappropriate or threatening words. Together we can help our precious young people better understand that words have consequences.