

Fact Sheet

Pepper Tree Racist Bullying Incident



How many offensive cards were distributed? How many students were involved?

Two cards were given. Two students each gave one card to one student. They did not give cards to any other students. The cards contained racist and hateful images and messages.

Was this part of an assignment or school project?

No. The cards were not part of any school-related project, activity, or assignment. No teacher or staff member directed students to make cards. The two students created these by choice.

Why didn't teachers or staff intervene?

No teachers or staff were aware that these were being created for or given to the targeted student.

When did this take place?

This incident took place on Thursday, February 2.

When did the school find out about the cards?

The parent of the student targeted by the cards notified their teacher on Sunday, February 5. The teacher notified Pepper Tree administrators that same day, Sunday, February 5.

When did the investigation begin?

On Monday, February 6, the first day back in school, the principal immediately launched an investigation. One parent of a student that drew the cards was notified that day. Contact was attempted with the parent of the student that received the card. The other parent of a student that drew the cards was notified on Wednesday, February 8, as the student was absent on Monday and Tuesday.

Was there any disciplinary action?

On Monday, February 6, the investigation confirmed the allegations about the cards. This confirmation resulted in disciplinary action.

Since that time, new information about persistent behaviors led the district to reopen the investigation and continue the implementation of the progressive discipline process, which can lead up to expulsion.

What actions have been taken to inform Pepper Tree staff, families, and the wider community?

Thursday, February 16

Pepper Tree's principal sent a letter to all Pepper Tree families. **Pepper Tree staff received a preview** of the letter shortly before it was shared with families.

Friday, February 17

Site and district administration began **visits to every classroom** to reinforce behavior expectations verbally and communicate the impact of racist bullying. Sixth-grade classes were visited first.

A **Pepper Tree staff meeting** was called for **all staff** and took place after school. Staff was given details about the incident and the opportunity to ask questions. The board president, the superintendent, and the director of child welfare and attendance were present.

The February 16 **letter from the principal** was **shared with all district staff**.

The district released a **Community Update video** to declare their expectations for empathy, kindness, and respect from all students and staff. There was also a strong warning that there would be serious consequences for racist or discriminatory behavior.

Monday, February 20 (No School)

An **additional message** was sent to **all staff** with clarifying information.

Tuesday, February 21

A **second staff meeting** was conducted with **certificated staff**. Two board members, union representatives, and the superintendent were in attendance.

An **official press release** was disseminated. **All staff received a preview** shortly before it was released.

Wednesday, February 22

A **planned staff meeting** took place for **classified staff**. A board member and site union representative attended, and the topic was changed to answer questions regarding the incident.

What is Zero-Tolerance? What is progressive discipline?

A zero-tolerance policy means that if a student is found to have committed an act of bullying or hate speech that violates California Education Code 220 and/or BP 5131.2 and BP 5145.9, the school will take corrective measures in accordance with the law and district policies. These measures will include progressive discipline, which is a structured approach to addressing student behavior that involves using increasingly severe interventions or consequences when a student fails to correct their behavior after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so. The goal of progressive discipline is to encourage the student to take responsibility for their actions and make positive changes in their behavior, while also maintaining a safe and supportive school environment for all students.