

## **FITZGERALD PUBLIC SCHOOLS HARASSMENT, BULLYING, AND HAZING PROHIBITED**

### **POLICY**

It is the responsibility of the District to provide a safe, nurturing educational environment for each student. Since harassment of students is contrary to this belief, it will not be tolerated and is prohibited in this District. Harassment is defined as inappropriate conduct that is repeated enough, or serious enough, to negatively impact a student's educational, physical, or emotional well being. This would include harassment based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, religion, height, weight, marital status, or disability. This policy, however, is not limited to these legal categories and includes any harassment that would negatively impact students. This would include such activities as bullying, hazing, and other disruptive behaviors. The terms of the policy will apply to all activities on school property and to all school-sponsored activities whether on or off school property. This policy will also appear in the Student Handbook and shall be discussed with students each fall. (See Board Policy - Sexual Harassment)

### **Bullying:**

Bullying is a form of harassment. For the purposes of this policy, "bullying" is defined as: "the repeated intimidation of others by the real or threatened infliction of physical, verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or emotional abuse, or through attacks on the property of another. It may include, but not limited to, actions such as verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, including ethnically based or gender based verbal put-downs, extortion of money or possessions, and exclusion from peer groups within school." Such conduct is disruptive of the educational process and, therefore, bullying is not acceptable behavior in this District, and is prohibited.

Students who engage in any act of bullying while at school, at any school function, in connection to or with any District sponsored activity or event, or while enroute to or from school are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions or debate that is protected by state or federal law.

### **Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another person by sending or posting inappropriate and hurtful email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or Web site postings, including blogs. It is also recognized that the author (poster or sender) of the inappropriate material is often disguised (logged on) as someone else.

The administration shall fully investigate all reports of cyber bullying.

In situations in which the cyber bullying originated from a non-school computer, but brought to the attention of school officials, any disciplinary action shall be based upon whether the conduct is determined to be severely disruptive of the educational process

so that it severely interrupts the day-to-day operations of a school. In addition, such conduct must also violate a publicized school policy. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, threats, or making a threat off school grounds, to kill or hurt a teacher or student.

Disciplinary action may include, but are not limited to, the loss of computer privileges, detention, suspension, or expulsion for verified perpetrators of cyber bullying. In addition, when any kind of threat is communicated or when a hate crime is committed, this shall be reported to local law officials.

Students who engage in any act of bullying while at school, at any school function, in connection to or with any District sponsored activity or event, or while enroute to or from school are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions or debate that is protected by state or federal law.

**Hazing:**

Soliciting, encouraging, aiding, or engaging in “hazing” on or in any school property at any time, or in connection with any activity supported or sponsored by the District, whether on or off school property, is strictly prohibited

“Hazing” means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act meant to induce physical pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights or that creates physical or mental discomfort, and is directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliating with holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization, club, or athletic team sponsored or supported by the District and whose membership is totally or predominately other students from the District. Students who engage in any act of hazing are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Adopted: March 2, 2006; Amended: March 8, 2007