

HAZING

The Board of Education recognizes that hazing is abusive and illegal behavior that harms victims and negatively impacts the school culture by creating an environment of fear, mistrust, intimidation and intolerance. The Board further recognizes that preventing and remedying hazing in schools is essential to ensure a healthy environment in which students can learn and employees can work productively.

The Board is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality and that is free from all forms of harassment, including hazing. To this end, the Board condemns and strictly prohibits all forms of hazing on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events including those that take place at locations outside the district.

I. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. No student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor or other employee of the school district shall plan, direct, encourage, aid or engage in hazing.
- B. No student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor or other employee of the school district shall permit, condone or tolerate hazing.
- C. Apparent permission or consent by a person being hazed does not abrogate the prohibitions contained in this policy.
- D. This policy applies to behavior that occurs on or off school property and before, during, and after school hours.
- E. A person who engages in an act that violates school policy or law shall be subject to discipline for that act.
- F. Any person under the jurisdiction of the school district who is aware of hazing or suspects such activity is occurring in violation of this policy must report it to a building principal or the Superintendent of Schools.

Hazing Definitions

"Hazing" means committing an act against a student, or coercing a student into committing an act, that creates a risk of emotional, physical or psychological harm to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student organization*, or for any other purpose. The term hazing includes, but is not limited to:

1. Any humiliating, degrading or dangerous activity expected of a student to join a group, regardless of the student's willingness to participate (conduct has the potential to endanger the mental or physical health or safety of a student).
2. Any hurtful, aggressive, destructive or disruptive behavior such as striking, whipping, sleep deprivation, confinement in a restricted area, calisthenics or other activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
3. Substance Abuse - any use or abuse of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the emotional or physical or psychological health or safety of the student.
4. Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects a student to emotional, physical or psychological stress, embarrassment, shame or humiliation, that adversely affects the health or dignity of the students or discourages the student from remaining in school.
5. Any activity that causes or requires the student to perform a task or act that involves violation of state or federal law or of school district policies or regulations.

* "Student organization" means a group, club, or organization having students as its primary members or participants. It includes grade levels, classes, teams, activities or participation school events. A student organization does not have to be an official school organization to come within the terms of this definition.

Reporting Complaints

In order for the Board to effectively enforce this policy and to take prompt corrective measures, it is essential that all victims hazing and persons with knowledge of hazing report it immediately. The district will promptly investigate all complaints of hazing, either formal or informal, verbal or written. To the extent possible, all complaints will be treated in a confidential manner. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation.

Investigation/Resolution

If, after appropriate investigation, the district finds that a student, an employee or a third party has violated this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, district policy and state and federal law.

All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint of hazing and/or sexual harassment have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

All complaints about hazing should be investigated by the principal who receives the complaint and such matters should be immediately reported to the Superintendent of Schools. Training programs shall be presented to students and employees to raise awareness of the issues surrounding hazing and to implement preventive measures to help reduce incidents of hazing.

This policy shall be posted in a prominent place in each district facility and shall also be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications.

References

Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title IX, Civil Rights Act of 1964

N.Y. Human Rights Law, Executive Law Section 290 *et seq.*