

Descriptor Term:

JDB

**ANTI-HAZING POLICY**

ISSUE DATE: **6-15-09**

The Board of Education of the Jackson County School District believes hazing, and initiation activities that involve hazing, are abusive and illegal behaviors that harm victims and negatively impact the school environment by creating an atmosphere of fear, distrust, and mean-spiritedness. Hazing is especially troubling at the middle and high school levels, because of issues of adolescence, in which many students are more vulnerable to peer pressure due to the tremendous need to belong, make friends and find approval from one's peer group.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff that is free from hazing, and that promotes respect, civility, and dignity. Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational goals of the district, and are prohibited at all times. Moreover, it is the policy of the district that no student or adult will participate in, or be members of, any secret fraternity, sorority, athletic team, club or organization that is to any degree related to the school or to a school district activity, which engages in any form of hazing.

**General Policy Statements:**

1. No student, teacher, coach, administrator, volunteer, contractor or other employee of the district shall permit, condone or tolerate hazing.
2. No student, teacher, coach, administrator, volunteer, contractor or other employee of the district shall plan, direct, encourage, aid or engage in hazing.
3. The district strictly prohibits students from engaging individually or collectively in any form of hazing or related initiation activity or school property, in connection with any school activity or involving any person associated with the school, regardless of where it occurs.
4. Any student who participates in hazing or related initiation activity will face immediate disciplinary action, up to and including suspension, expulsion, and the loss of privilege of participation in extracurricular activities.
5. Students who participate in hazing may also be referred to appropriate law enforcement authorities, and may face subsequent prosecution.
6. Consent is no defense to a charge of hazing. Apparent permission or consent by a person being hazed does not lessen the prohibitions or penalties contained herein.
7. This policy applies to behavior that occurs on or off school property, and during, before and after school hours.

**Definitions:**

1. "Hazing" means intentionally or recklessly committing an act against a student, or coercing a student into committing an act, that creates a substantial risk of harm to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into, or affiliated with, a student organization, whether school sponsored or not, or for any other purpose. The term hazing includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Any type of physical brutality such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, paddling, electronic shocking, or placing a harmful substance on the body.

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- b. Any type of physical activity such as sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme weather conditions, confinement in restricted area, excessive 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 to the student.
  - c. Any activity involving the consumption of any alcoholic beverage, drug, tobacco product, or any other food, liquid, or substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm, or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
  - d. Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects a student to extreme mental stress, embarrassment, shame or humiliation, that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student, or discourages the student from remaining in school, such as morally degrading or humiliating games, pranks, stunts, practical jokes, or any other activities that make a student the object of amusement, ridicule, embarrassment, humiliation or intimidation.
  - e. Requiring personal servitude.
  - f. Requiring students to wear uncomfortable, ridiculous, or embarrassing clothing or underclothing, and/or causing indecent exposure, or any other gross and lewd behavior involving nudity.
  - g. Requiring students to participate in acts of vandalism, theft, assault, sexual acts or other criminal activity.
  - h. Subjecting an individual to cruel or unusual psychological conditions for any reason.
  - i. Compelling an individual to participate in any activity that is perverse, publicly indecent, contrary to the individual's genuine moral or religious beliefs, or contrary to the rules, policies, and regulations of the district.
  - j. Any activity that causes or requires the student to perform a task that involves violation of state or federal law, or of school district policies or regulations.
2. "Student organization" means a group, club or organization having students as its primary members or participants. It includes grade levels, classes, teams, activities or particular school events. A student organization does not have to be an official school organization to come within the terms of this definition.
  3. The term "hazing" and "related initiation activity" do not include the ordinary physical activity of customary athletic events, tryouts, intramural activities, or other similar student contests or competitions.
  4. Consistent with the district's Code of Conduct, school officials will examine the totality of the circumstances in determining whether a particular activity constitutes hazing, and warrants discipline under this policy. As a general test, students and school officials should consider the following questions in determining whether an activity could be defined as hazing:
    - Does the activity provide an educational experience?
    - Does the activity promote or conform to the values of the school district?
    - Will the activity increase the respect for the school and individuals?

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- Do new and initiated members participate together equally in the activity?
- Would students be willing to allow parents or school officials to witness the activity?
- Does the activity have value in and of itself?
- Is there a risk of injury or a question of safety involved?

**Reporting Requirement:**

1. Any person who believes he or she has been the victim of hazing, or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct which may constitute hazing, shall report the alleged acts immediately to a teacher, building principal, assistant superintendent or the superintendent.
2. Teachers, coaches, administrators, paraprofessionals, volunteers and other employees of the district shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances or events, which might include hazing. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of, conduct that may constitute hazing, shall inform the building principal, assistant superintendent or the superintendent immediately.
3. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of hazing will not adversely affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, work assignments or activity participation.
4. School personnel who fail to report incidents of hazing to district administrators may face disciplinary action. Students who observe hazing activities and fail to intervene or report the hazing to school officials, may face disciplinary action for conspiring to engage in hazing.

**School District Action:**

1. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of hazing the district shall undertake or authorize an investigation by the building principal. The district may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant, reporter, or others, pending completion of any investigation of hazing.
2. Upon completion of the investigation, the district will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, reporting to local police authorities, referral to Alternative School, termination or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations, and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior.
3. The district will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, coach, paraprofessional, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the school district, who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of alleged hazing, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such hazing. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment.

**Policy Dissemination:**

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This policy shall be placed on the district website. Teachers and staff will review this policy annually as part of the orientation process. Documentation will be maintained.

In addition, each principal, athletic coach, cheerleading advisor, and other extracurricular supervisors shall inform his/her students about this policy, upon the effective date of this policy, at the beginning of each subsequent term, or beginning of a group's activities for the year.