

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICIES

Highpoint Academy has zero-tolerance for bullying and harassment of any kind. Students are instructed to immediately report to a member of our school's Faculty or Administration any incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse of any kind. Highpoint's Faculty and Staff Members are required by law to report allegations of physical or sexual abuse to governmental authorities and to abide by all school policies and laws regarding Ethics of Professional Conduct.

The term "**Harassment**" covers a wide range of behavior of an offensive nature. It is commonly understood as behavior that demeans, humiliates or embarrasses a person, and it is characteristically identified by its unlikelihood in terms of social and moral reasonableness. In the legal sense, these are behaviors that appear to be disturbing, upsetting or threatening. They evolve from discriminatory grounds, and have an effect of nullifying or impairing a person from benefiting their rights. When these behaviors become repetitive, they are defined as bullying. (*Wikipedia*)

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, racial or offensive slurs, jokes, and other verbal, graphic or other physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, age or disability. The term also includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, offensive touching, and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This violation can occur in person or via Social Media or other online platform. Violation of this Policy by either an Employee or a student will subject them to disciplinary action that may include immediate discharge, expulsion or criminal charges where applicable. Harassment will be considered also if the action results in any of the following:

- *Places a student or employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property;*
- *Has the effect of potentially interfering with another student's educational performance, emotional growth, psychological development, social development and/or opportunities or benefits ;*
- *Has the effect of substantially disrupting a teacher's performance or the orderly operations of a school.*

The term "**Bullying**" is the use of force, coercion, or threat, to abuse, aggressively dominate or intimidate. The behavior is often repeated and habitual. One essential prerequisite is the perception (by the bully or by others) of an imbalance of physical or social power. Bullying can inflict physical hurt or psychological distress and may involve, but not be limited to: teasing, racial slurs, ridicule, social exclusion, threat intimidation, stalking, physical violence, theft, sexual, religious or racial harassment, public humiliation or destruction of property. Cyber-bullying or bullying/harassment that takes place outside school premises where the bullying/harassment affects a student enrolled at the school, will be treated in the same manner.

Bullying and Harassment also include all forms of hazing, retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. For example, reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation. Bullying and Harassment also include perpetuation of conduct by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass or cause physical harm to a student or employee by incitement or coercion; accessing or knowingly causing or providing access to data through Social Media, any electronic device or computer network, or; acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment.

Once a complaint is received where someone is identified as a harasser or bully, the following will take place:

- The incident will be documented in detail and a member of the Administration will be immediately informed.
- The incident will be investigated thoroughly. The alleged accuser, the alleged victim, and any identified witnesses, will be interviewed separately by a member of the Administration.
- Two or more members of the Administration will interview the person being accused of bullying/harassment and document their side of the story in writing. A grievance procedure will commence. Results of the inquiry will determine the disciplinary action(s) that are deemed appropriate for both the students and the employee.
- In accusations against students, depending on the severity of the accusation, Parents may be contacted. Parents are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation. All claims will be thoroughly investigated and documented accordingly. The Administration will have full authority to determine consequences. These may include assignments, detention, suspension, or immediate expulsion.