FREIRE
CHARTER WILMINGTON

Board Policy 203: Nonviolence and Commitment to Peace

Vision

AN ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE AND A COMMITMENT TO PEACE ENABLE THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR DEEP AND MEANINGFUL LEARNING FOR US ALL.

Purpose

The Board recognizes the importance of the concepts of nonviolence and a commitment to peace in the educational program, and strives to offer all students an educational environment free from violence. Violence of any kind deprives students and staff of a safe environment for learning. This policy is designed to preserve the unique history of the formation of Freire's nonviolence requirements and to outline how nonviolence and a commitment to peace interacts with other Board policies.

If the Board determines that this policy or any related procedures have caused undue harm to the Freire community, the Board will take appropriate corrective action to ensure that the policy remains responsive to community needs, and adequately protects students from undue bias or prejudice of any kind. In addition, the Board's commitment is to provide sufficient opportunities for students to learn to de-escalate conflict and use conflict productively. We do so by teaching students and all members of the school community to communicate effectively and respectfully, in a way that honors self-expression, preserves respect for others, and, consequently, avoids violence.

History

Nonviolence has come to be a way of life inside Freire Charter School, driven in large part by the students themselves. When Freire first opened in 1999, students openly told stories of their experiences at previous schools. These stories were raw tales of the violence experienced at the hands of fellow students and even from teachers, and were filled with feelings of horror and fear. In the wake of these stories the students expressed the hope that Freire would be different, and would be a place where teachers could safely teach and students could securely learn.

During that first year, Freire students worked weekly with the school leadership to build the core elements of what Freire would one day later become. Students and staff committed to the values of non-violence and high academic achievement. At the end of the 1999-2000 school year, Freire students and school leadership created and approved the first version of Freire's Nonviolence Policy. Students, staff, and parents may look to this Policy as evidence that Freire is committed to safety and that all community members are bound together in trust and mutual respect.

As part of our Commitment to Antiracist Action, the Freire Schools network went back to revisit the Code of Conduct and ensure equity, student voice, and fairness for all. Over the past three years, Freire Schools conducted a study of our nonviolence policy during which a group of Freire students, culture leaders, administration, and professional researchers interviewed students, families, staff, Board members, and alumni about how safe Freire Schools campuses feel, how safety compares to previous years, and how our culture compares to other schools. We learned the following: (1) our community does not want us to compromise our commitment to school safety, (2) we need to increase our efforts to prevent violence, including increasing visibility of our available student supports, and (3) we need to better define violence and communicate this clearly and frequently. This document reflects changes that came out of this study, and is one of the ways we communicate our definition of physical violence and our expectation that physical violence will not be tolerated

under any circumstance. Our Freire community stands firm today in our value to preserve a safe, peaceful environment in which all of us can take risks, learn, and thrive.

Definitions

Code of Conduct means the policies, procedures, rules and regulations of Freire Charter School Wilmington governing the conduct of all students during the time they are under the jurisdiction of the school. Student disciplinary procedures are set forth in the Board Policy 201: Code of Conduct and Board Policy 202: Suspension and Expulsion.

School Setting means: (1) in school; (2) on school grounds; (3) in school vehicles; (4) at designated bus stops; (5) at activities sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by Freire (e.g. field trips, sporting events, events where students are representing Freire Charter School Wilmington); or (6) in any other circumstance or location (on or away from school property) where Freire has jurisdiction over a student's conduct.

Guidelines

1. Freire students shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner that reflects a commitment to nonviolence. Students are expected to:
    a. Act in a manner that affords all other students the opportunity to learn which is physically safe and free from distractions.
    b. Admit mistakes, and take increased responsibility for their own learning and social actions.
    c. Respect self and all others, and respect individual differences.
    d. Behave appropriately while in school, on field trips, and in any forum where the student is representing the Freire community.
    e. Avoid hurtful language.
    f. Use appropriate channels to express concerns, fears, or complaints.
2. Physical violence occurs when an individual student harms, attempts to harm, or threatens another individual via physical force. It is a deliberate act. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    a. Any type of striking or grabbing by one student or another person (punching, biting, kicking, hair pulling, etc.)
    b. Fighting another student or in group of students, including joining a fight
    c. Serious threat to cause harm to another via social media or other serious verbal intimidation.
    d. Throwing objects
    e. Structural violence such as the physical destruction of property that causes any function of the school to be temporarily suspended
    f. Weapons possession
    g. Sexual assault, as defined in Board Policy 116: Title IX Policy
3. Freire defines other types of violence as the harm or intent to cause harm in a non-physical way (e.g. mental or emotional). Examples include but are not limited to:
    a. Invading an individual's personal space
    b. Recklessly endangering other students, staff, or community members
    c. Verbal intimidation or threats, including threatening to bring another individual to fight someone, or arranging for a non-student or non-community member to engage in harassment of another student (including threats made by text, video, or using any type of social networking site/app)
    d. Abusive or derogatory language
    e. Bullying, as defined in Board Policy 204: Anti-Bullying
    f. Hazing, as defined Board Policy 214: Anti-Hazing
    g. Harassment, as defined in Board Policy 121: Nondiscrimination

4. When Freire students are in a School Setting, the Code of Conduct and the procedures and timelines set forth therein shall apply. When a student engages in conduct that is prohibited in this Policy, it shall constitute a violation of the Code of Conduct. Violations may result in disciplinary consequences up to and including a recommendation that a student be expelled from Freire.
    a. Unless leadership determines that there are extenuating circumstances requiring a different result, the disciplinary consequence for students who engage in physical violence (defined above) shall be referral for a formal expulsion hearing unless that student is protected under IDEA (34 CFR §300.530(d)(4)).
    b. Acts of violence where the intent is not to cause physical harm (defined above) may lead to a formal hearing. The school administration will evaluate the situation on a case by case basis and determine disciplinary consequences.
5. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to abridge student rights to due process, including procedural and substantive rights, that are granted by law or another Freire Charter School Wilmington policy.
6. Some acts of violence, including those listed above, may also constitute violations of the law of the State of Delaware. In the instance of a gun brought to school,the School will comply with the requirement in Section 4141(h) which requires a referral to the criminal justice or delinquency system for any student who brings a firearm to school, or who possesses a firearm at school.
7. Freire shall utilize restorative practices that respond to acts of violence, and shall also offer pro-active supports to students to prevent violence and respond to it. Supports may include orientation for new students, peer mediation programs, instruction in conflict resolution, connecting students and families with community resources such as family therapy and counseling, restorative circles, and other programs.

Delegation of Responsibility

1. The Board authorizes school administration to develop procedures to implement this Policy.
2. The Board directs school administration to develop and issue a “Nonviolence and Commitment to Peace” acknowledgement of this Policy and which shall be included in the Student & Family Handbook signed by all Freire students and parents/guardians.
3. The Board authorizes school administration to develop a comprehensive system of supports to prevent violence at Freire Charter School Wilmington and to encourage and maintain a positive, peaceful school climate.

Chart of Possible Consequences (Consequences are determined on a case-by-case basis as stated above, and subject to any applicable protective procedures under IDEA as set forth in law or school policy)

Act	Likely Consequence
Unprovoked physical harm	Informal hearing leading to a formal hearing leading to board vote on expulsion
Provoked physical harm	Informal hearing leading to a formal hearing leading to board vote on expulsion
Direct threat to cause physical harm on-line	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Volatile/aggressive behavior intended to intimidate or escalate a situation (examples include yelling, flipping a desk or chair, punching a wall, throwing objects)	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Retaliation in legitimate self-defense (e.g. fighting back)	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion

Verbal abuse/bullying with physical threat over social media/text/or otherwise	IInformal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Verbal abuse/bullying without physical threat over social media/text/or otherwise	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Bringing a weapon to school (gun, knife, etc.)	Expulsion
Bringing a pellet gun, cap gun, or water gun to school	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Bringing outside people (including relatives of any kind) to the school to fight	Informal hearing leading to a formal hearing leading to board vote on expulsion
Threats to bring outsiders (including relatives of any kind) to the school to fight	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion
Blatant disrespect to others	Informal hearing which may lead to formal hearing which may lead to board vote on expulsion

NOTE 1: Your job as a student/member of this community is to use every resource you have NOT TO GET INVOLVED in a fight or any of the above.

NOTE 2: The behaviors listed above are not permitted in any way nor anywhere nor to anyone. In other words, these acts are not only not permitted on school property, they are not permitted anywhere or against anyone.