



**FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Carl Sandburg Middle School
8428 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria, Virginia 22308

Dear Parents,

September 25, 2009

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. While students may experience times of conflict and need to learn how to handle these situations, conflicts based on gender differences pose a different problem. While many people may think this is an adult problem, it is also a problem for students. It is important for students to understand what sexual harassment is and that it is a form of discriminations. Students need to learn how to respond to sexual harassment appropriately and effectively.

Sexual harassment is defined in Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the education program or to create a hostile or abusive educational environment.

FCPS addresses this issue through the Students Responsibilities and Rights (SR&R). Please refer to the current year's publication for definition. Sexual harassment can create a hostile or abusive environment for students. These behaviors might include telling sexual jokes, spreading rumors about a person's sexual behavior, inappropriate touching, rating or ranking a person based on physical characteristics, saying inappropriate names, or making comments or sounds of a sexual nature. Other behaviors or situations may not be as obvious (staring, repeated requests for dates, and leaving inappropriate telephone messages).

In addition to sexual harassment, FCPS addresses bullying and cyberbullying through a variety of methods (student lessons, school wide prevention programs, character education, individual reporting, parent seminars and education).

Counselors will be presenting lessons on sexual harassment and bullying to all students. Sixth grade lessons discuss bullying from various perspectives along with reporting resources and introduce students to sexual harassment definitions. Seventh grade lessons address the law, define and give examples of sexual harassment, present ways to respond, how the media influences sexual harassment, and discusses and defines cyberbullying. Eighth grade lessons include a videotape, Flirting or Hurting? and emphasize understanding the impact of sexual harassment effective responses, communication styles, along with the impact of cyberbullying on self and others.

I encourage you to discuss this important issue with your child. If you would like to review the lessons of do not wish your child to participate, contact your child's counselor. Please feel free to contact me or your child's counselor with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Wendy Eaton, Principal