

Fair Lawn Public Schools

Bruce Watson
Superintendent

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Statement on Behalf of the Fair Lawn School District:

We are responding to the controversy which has arisen, and the resultant media inquiries, over online comments allegedly made by a Fair Lawn High School student concerning Israel. While pupil confidentiality laws prevent us from identifying or discussing individual pupils, we stress at the outset that at no time have District officials sought to censor or reprimand any pupils for their online speech. The Fair Lawn School District recognizes and respects individuals' First Amendment rights to free speech. District Administration in this situation received a complaint alleging potential harassment, intimidation, or bullying ("HIB") by one student against another. We are obligated by New Jersey's anti-bullying statute—one of the strictest in the nation—to investigate any such allegation to determine whether an act of HIB occurred under the statute. The investigation is focused solely on the factors we are required to apply by law and not upon any political opinions expressed by any pupils. We will complete our investigation in accordance with all legal requirements, and will continue to ensure that all parties involved are given a full and fair opportunity to share their side of the story. Upon completion of the investigation, the Superintendent of Schools will make a determination and report confidentially to the Board of Education in accordance with the process set forth in the statute.

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