

STAFF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

The Board expects all staff members, including but not limited to, teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, and others to maintain the highest professional, moral, and ethical standards in their conduct with students. For the purposes of this policy, staff members also include school volunteers.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure the interactions and relationships between staff members and students are based on mutual respect and trust; that staff members understand the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting; and that staff members conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

The Board recognizes, is appreciative of, and wishes to be supportive of the manner in which staff members attempt to care for students in a personalized and caring manner, and in no way wishes to place unnecessary barriers to the myriad of times, places and positive ways that staff work to serve our students.

The Board also realizes that in communities in which many staff members are parents themselves or relatives of our students, many sorts of informal and outside relationships with students are healthy and normal, and the Board does not wish to interfere with these.

By creating this policy, the Board wishes to make explicit its intolerance for behavior that violates or blurs the professional boundaries and does not respect the well being of our students.

For the purpose of this policy, educational setting includes approved curricular and co-curricular activities and the transportation of students participating in these activities.

Staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students. Staff members are encouraged to discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of this policy.

UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

Examples of unacceptable conduct by staff members include but are not limited to the following:

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- A. Any type of sexual or inappropriate physical contact with students or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
- B. Creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment for a student or interfering with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from services, activities or privileges provided by the school as might be considered bullying under the Board's policy on Bullying;
- C. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship within the educational setting that displays or appears to display a lack of fairness and equity for other students and is done for other than appropriate educational purposes;
- D. Sexually suggestive, flirtatious or unduly coarse language with students;
- E. Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendoes with students;
- F. Encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships without referral to guidance or counseling staff concerning issues that arise. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members are expected to be supportive but to refer the student to appropriate guidance or counseling staff. In either case, staff involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance;
- G. Sending students on personal errands;
- H. Asking a student to keep a secret;
- I. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
- J. Except in situations that would violate a student's right to privacy, being alone with individual students out of public view of others unless approved by a student's parent or guardian;
- K. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, text, email, chat rooms, social media, videoconferencing, or letters (beyond legitimate school business or unless the exchange occurs as part of a legitimate relationship with the student outside the school);

CONDUCT REQUIRING CAUTION BY STAFF

- A. Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home, or visiting a student's home unless on official school business, or done in another context, such as a parent or other relative or when such contact is tangential to the purpose of the visit.
- B. Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts) unless the exchange occurs as part of a legitimate relationship with the student outside the school or the gift is reported to the building principal;
- C. Socializing or spending time with students outside of RSU 26 sponsored or community organized events unless the socializing is explicitly pre-approved of, by a parent or guardian of the child, arises out of a legitimate relationship with the student outside of

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the school, or is incidental to socializing with other adults.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Students and/or their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal if they believe a teacher or other staff members may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members are required to notify promptly the principal or Superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

No student, parent, guardian or staff member will undertake any investigation into suspected violation(s) of this policy. They need only have reasonable grounds to suspect that a violation may be occurring, or may have occurred, prior to making a referral to the Superintendent.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Staff violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations involving sexual or other abuse will also result in referral to the Department of Health & Human Services and/or law enforcement in accordance with the Board's policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Building Principal with staff during a staff meeting within the first month of the new school year. This policy shall also be included in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks.

Cross Reference: ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students

GCSA - Staff Computer/Internet Use

JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

JICK - Bullying

Adopted: June 21, 2016

Revised: May 21, 2021