

## **STAFF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS**

The Board expects all staff members, including teachers, coaches, substitutes, 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.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that the interactions and relationships between staff members and students are based upon 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.

It is understood that staff members and their children may interact with and have friendships with the families of students outside of school. This policy is not intended to prohibit such interactions and friendships, provided that professional boundaries are maintained at all times and that parents/guardians have knowledge of the interactions between a staff member and their child(ren).

### **1. Prohibited Conduct**

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

- 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.
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship.
- For non-guidance/counseling staff, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members are expected to be supportive and refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff for assistance.
- Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students.
- Asking a student to keep a secret.
- Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students.
- Addressing students with terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
- Permitting students to address you by your first name, nickname or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
- "Friending" students, "following" students or engaging in any other interactions on social networking sites or through any digital applications (outside of any school-approved

activity). In the case of friendships between families, any contact with students on social media/digital applications must be with the knowledge of the parents/guardians.

- Communicating with students on non-school matters via computer, text messages, phone calls, letters, notes or any other means.

Before engaging in the following activities, staff members are expected to review the activity with their building administrator or supervisor:

- Being alone with individual students out of public view.
- Driving students home or to other locations.
- Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home (unless the student's parents/guardians approve of the activity, such as when a student babysits or performs chores for a staff member).
- Visiting a student at home or in another location, unless on official school business known to the parent.
- Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts).
- Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for meals or movies, shopping, traveling, and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events or organized community activities.
- Taking photographs and/or videos of students for personal purposes or any purpose other than capturing images of a school event for school publication purposes.

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.

## **2. Reporting Violations**

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

Staff members are required to promptly notify the Superintendent or building administrator if they become aware of conduct by a staff member that may constitute a violation of this policy.

## **3. Disciplinary Action and Referrals to Outside Agencies**

Staff violations of this policy shall result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Violations involving sexual or other abuse will also result in referral to the Department of Health and Human Services, the District Attorney and/or law enforcement. In addition, the Department of Education will be notified if a credential holder is disciplined, suspended or terminated for violations that endanger the health, safety or welfare of a student, or if a credential holder leaves

their employment for any reason prior to the conclusion of an investigation of such a violation.

#### **4. Dissemination of Policy**

This policy shall be disseminated to staff and volunteers by means determined by the Superintendent. This policy shall also be included in student handbooks.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 13025  
22 MRSA § 4011-A  
17-A MRSA § § 253; 255(A); 260

Cross Reference: ACAA - Harassment & Sexual Harassment of Students  
GCSA/GCSA-R - Employee Use of School-Issued Computers, Devices  
Internet Use  
JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_