

Staff Conduct with Students

The MSAD 52 School Board expects all staff members, including 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.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting, and consistent with the educational mission of the school. It is understood that staff members may interact with students' families outside of school, provided that professional boundaries are maintained at all times.

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 a 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, but to refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff. In either case staff involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance.
- Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendoes with students;
- Asking a student to keep a secret;
- Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to 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 on social networking sites (outside of any school-approved activity);
- Communicating with students on non-school matters via computer, text message, phone calls, letters, notes or any other means.

Before engaging in the following activities, staff members will review the activity with their building principal or supervisor, as appropriate:

- 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 parent/guardian approves of the activity, such as when a student babysits or performs chores for a staff member);
- Visiting a student's home or in another location, unless on official school business known to the parent/guardian;
- Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by telephone, e-mail, Instant Messenger or Internet chat rooms, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business);
- 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 except as participants in organized community 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.

Reporting Violations:

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

Staff members are required to notify promptly the appropriate building administrator or superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Disciplinary Action:

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

This policy shall be included in all handbooks.

Cross References: ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
 JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
 JK- Student Discipline

Legal References: Title 17A MRSA Section 106
 Title 20A MRSA Section 4009

Adopted: August 2002
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