

Staff Conduct with Students

The 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 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 RSU 40.

It is understood that developing positive relationships between a teacher and student is a fundamental aspect of quality teaching and student learning and our children benefit from the support of staff. It is also understood that staff members and their families may interact with and have friendships with the families of students outside of school. This policy is not meant to discourage staff from attending student functions, helping students before or after school or engaging in a dialogue that helps students in a meaningful way.

Prohibited Conduct

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

1. 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;
2. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship;
3. 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 should refer the situation to appropriate guidance/counseling staff for assistance.
4. Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students;

5. Asking a student to keep a secret;
6. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
7. “Friending” students or engaging in any other interactions on social networking sites or through any digital applications (outside of any school-approved activity);
8. Communicating with students on non-school matters via computer, text messages, phone calls, letters, and/or notes.

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

1. Being alone with individual students out of public view;
2. Driving students home or to other locations;
3. 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);
4. Visiting a student at home or in another location, unless on official school business known to the parent/guardian;
5. Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts);
6. 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.

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 Superintendent or building administrator if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members must promptly notify the Superintendent or building administrator if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

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 and Human Services, the District Attorney and/or law enforcement.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy will be disseminated to staff and volunteers by means determined by the Superintendent.

Cross Reference: ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
 GCSA/GCSA-R - Employee Digital Device and Internet Use/Procedure
 JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Adopted: January 3, 2019