

## STAFF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

The RSU 2 Board of Directors expects all staff members, including teachers, support staff, coaches, counselors, administrators and others, including volunteers, to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their conduct with students.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, predicated by an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting, and consistent with the educational mission of the school.

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

The Board of Directors 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 of Directors also realizes that in communities in which many teachers are themselves parents or relatives of our students, many sorts of informal and outside relationships with students are healthy and normal.

By attempting to legislate behavior in this realm, the Board of Directors is primarily attempting to make explicit its intolerance for behavior motivated or prompted by an unwillingness or inability to respect the physical and emotional health of our students. The Board of Directors recognizes that simply by adopting policy it cannot mandate safe and appropriate behavior to those bent on doing otherwise, but conversely, it wishes to explicitly state that its support for collegial relationships or its decision to not ban outright many sorts of student/teacher interactions should in no way be seen as a plausible defense to inappropriate contact with students.

### Prohibited Conduct

Examples of unacceptable conduct by staff members that are expressly prohibited include but are in no way limited to the following:

- Any type of sexual or inappropriate physical conduct with a student, or any conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board of Directors' policy on harassment and sexual harassment of students;
- Using sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos, sexually suggestive, flirtatious or unduly coarse language with students;

**NEPN/NSBA Code: GBEBB**

- Encouraging or allowing a student to confide to the staff members or sharing with a student the staff member's personal or family problems and/or relationships or other private matters with the intent or result that the staff member's relationship with the student blurs the professional boundaries between student and teacher, and as a consequence is or may become unhealthy or unsafe for the student. Staff members are expected to promptly refer acute or serious chronic problems expressed by students to administrative, counseling or health care staff.
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship or ridicule within the school environment that displays or appears to display a lack of fairness and equity for all students and is done for other than appropriate educational purposes.

**Conduct Requiring Administrative Approval**

Before engaging in activities such as the following, staff members shall review the activity with the principal or appropriate other supervisor. RSU 2 Central Office staff or building administrators shall review the activity with the Superintendent.

- 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 unrelated to the purpose of the visit.
- Maintaining personal contact with a student by telephone, e-mail, Instant Message, Internet chat rooms or other communications media beyond contact regarding homework or other legitimate school business, unless such contact is linked to a legitimate relationship with the student outside the school.
- Exchanging personal gifts beyond customary student / teacher gifts unless the exchange occurs as a part of a legitimate relationship with the student outside the school.
- Socializing with students outside of school-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 the school, or is incidental to socializing with other adults.

**Reporting Suspected Violations**

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

Staff members are required to notify promptly the appropriate building administrator or Superintendent if they reasonably believe a violation of this policy has occurred.

**NEPN/NSBA Code: GBEBB**

Neither students, parents, guardians nor other staff should undertake an investigation before notifying administrator. They need only have reasonable grounds to suspect that a violation may be occurring to make a referral.

**Disciplinary Action**

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

**Policy to be included in Handbooks**

This policy shall be included in all employee, faculty, student and volunteer handbooks.

Cross Reference:     ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students  
                          GCSA – Employee Computer and Internet Use  
                          JLF – Report of Child Abuse and Neglect

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