

NEW SHOREHAM SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
BLOCK ISLAND SCHOOL

A. Philosophy

The New Shoreham School Department is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of students and employees, and creating and maintaining a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment and workplace. The School Department affirms the responsibility of employees, and School partners to abide by the standards of professional conduct, to act as role models, and to promote the dignity, health, and safety of students while maintaining professional relationships with students, at all times.

B. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and standards of conduct to ensure that the relationship between all school community members including “School Department partners”, “School Department employees”, and students is professional and respectful, and to promote appropriate workplace behavior. This policy covers conduct that takes place both on and off School Department property, and both during and outside of the school day. The policy also pertains to all forms of communication that may occur between employees and students, at any time. This policy applies to all individuals registered and enrolled as a student in the School Department, regardless of age (“Students”), as well as School Department employees and “School Department Partners,” which include School Department contractors, consultants, vendors, representatives from outside organizations, and volunteers, including coaches, who work with or have contact with students.

This policy shall be incorporated by reference into all school, employee, and athletic handbooks. The School Department shall use its best efforts to distribute these handbooks on an annual basis, and obtain a signed acknowledgment of these provisions by all students, employees, and coaches.

C. Standards of Conduct

The relationship between School Department employees/Partners and Students must be of a professional nature at all times, employees/partners are encouraged and expected to foster positive and supportive relationships with students. This includes recognizing students’ unique abilities, talents, and challenges, and treating all students with dignity and respect in all interactions.

Appropriate professional and personal boundaries must be maintained, and NSSD employees/Partners may not engage in any inappropriate behavior, or behavior that could reasonably lead to the appearance of inappropriate conduct, regardless of the student’s age, whether the student or the employee initiates the behavior, and regardless of whether the student reciprocates the attention.

These standards apply to actions that take place both on and off School Department property, during and outside of the school day as well as to all forms of communication that occur between Block Island School employees, Partners and Students, at any time, and on any social media platforms.

D. Acceptable Conduct

Examples of acceptable conduct between employees/ Partners and Students include, but are not limited to:

1. Providing the whole class or team an educational or school spirit related gift or celebration.
2. Anonymously providing individual students/families in need with gift cards to help them through a crisis.

E. Prohibited Conduct

Examples of prohibited conduct between Block Island School employees/ Partners and Students include, but are not limited to:

1. Dating students. Includes, but is not limited to, a social interaction, preplanned or not, in which the purpose is to initiate or continue a relationship outside the scope of the normal school-related encounter that is romantic and/or sexual in nature.
2. Engaging in a romantic relationship with students. Includes a relationship in which an employee dates, exchanges personal affection, engages in intimate or sexually suggestive communication, and/or engages in any form of sexual or physical intimacy with a student.
3. Making romantically or sexually suggestive comments to or about a student.
4. Fostering, encouraging, or participating in emotionally or socially inappropriate intimate relationships with a student(s).
5. Direct communication with students for any reason through methods that include, but are not limited to, telephone calls, text messages, email to a non-Block Island School email address, social media, and direct messages through social media platforms.
 - a. Block Island School employees may only communicate with students using student School Department-issued email addresses; School Department-sanctioned social media accounts formed for educational, school-related purposes; or via third-party School Department-sanctioned applications that are also accessible by School Department faculty, administrators, and parents. Due to the

availability and preference of communication technology, a parent or guardian will need to fill out an opt-out form if they choose not to allow the School Department employee/Partner to use personal communications (e.g., text, phone, and social media)

- b. Under exigent circumstances related to immediate health and safety of a student, a school employee or administrator may contact a student directly.
 - c. For certain specified field trips or non-school sponsored activities, a Block Island School employee may engage in direct communication (e.g., text, phone, and social media) with students with prior, express written consent from a parent or guardian. to opt-in and allow the School Department employee/Partner to use personal communications (e.g., text messaging)
6. Block Island School employees and chaperones shall not provide drugs or alcohol to students or themselves consume drugs or alcohol in the presence of Students on school property, during a school or sponsored event, or be under the influence of any alcohol or drugs in their capacity as a Block Island School employee.
 7. Discussing sexual matters outside of an appropriate educational context, including the use of sexual jokes, slang, or innuendo.
 8. Commenting on a student's physical appearance or body in any manner that can have the effect of objectifying the student and/or compromising the student's social and emotional well-being.
 9. Touching students punitively or touching Students in any way that could be construed as romantic or sexually suggestive, including but not limited to intimately touching, brushing up against another's body, pinching, fondling, or massaging.
 10. Displays of inappropriate or unwanted physical affection.
 11. Accepting or giving gifts that could be deemed inappropriate, excessive or outside a professional student/teacher relationship.
 12. Meeting alone with a student on school premises in an area that is secluded or that is not openly accessible/visible to others, such as a room without windows or without visibility through a door. Exceptions to this include the need for a student to have privacy with a 1:1 staff, school nurse, social worker, or guidance counselor.
 13. Athletic Coaches and the Athletic Director may not be alone with an athlete in an area that is secluded or that is not openly accessible/visible to others, such as a room without windows or without visibility through a door. If a coach wants to meet or speak 1:1 with

an athlete, that meeting must be observable and interruptible. The student athlete may request the presence of another person during the meeting. This includes at away games or practice fields, off school premises.

E. Professional Relationships between Adults

This policy applies to relationships between all adults in the Block Island School Department. This includes adult relationships with adults in addition to the aforementioned adult relationships with students. The relationship between adults must be of a professional nature at all times, employees/partners are encouraged and expected to foster positive and supportive relationships with each other. This includes recognizing adults' unique abilities, talents, and challenges, and treating all members of the School Community with dignity and respect in all interactions.

F. Reporting Prohibited Conduct

Employees, students or their families who wish to report a violation of this Policy may do so by completing the Title IX Grievance online form, at the end of the NSSD Policy GU Title IX or by notifying a School Department faculty or staff member, including a teacher or principal. Students and families are encouraged to follow the protocol outlined in NSSD Policy GU Title IX; however, students may communicate a complaint to any School Department employee with whom they feel comfortable. Students and families are encouraged to document all reports in writing. Faculty and staff in receipt of a report of Prohibited Conduct must document all communications and maintain all evidence relevant to the initial report and subsequent actions and communications.

If students or families require a private confidential process for reporting any behavior, oral, or written communication or observations that would be harmful to a student, teacher, or guardian or a student when the conduct involves an administrator, They can report their concerns to the School Committee Chair who will forward their information to the School Committee Attorney.

While addressing complaints under this policy, the NSSD will attempt to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances. The NSSD will not tolerate any attempt at retaliation against any person who in good faith makes or assists in making a complaint under this policy, or provides truthful information or cooperates in an investigation of a complaint. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy. Concerns about attempted retaliation should be raised and will be handled in the same manner as any other concern under this policy.

Knowingly lodging a false complaint may result in disciplinary and/or legal action against the complainant.

Any School Department employee/Partner who has direct, or indirect knowledge of Prohibited Conduct outlined in this Policy must immediately report the conduct to the Title IX Coordinator

and may do so by emailing kriley@bischool.net. The Title IX Coordinator will document all reports, and determine whether to pursue further action in accordance the NSSD Policy GU Title IX. If the incident does not warrant a Title IX investigation, Title IX Coordinator will provide said documentation to the superintendent who shall designate an investigator and determine if there has been a violation of this Policy, POLICY GK SAFE AND PEACEFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY, or the Block Island School Athletic Handbook.

In addition, all School Department employees/Partners are required to follow the mandatory reporting requirements required under state law for reporting suspected child abuse/neglect in accordance with Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families Department Operating Procedure. School Department administrators will report instances of Prohibited Conduct to the New Shoreham Police Department, and seek advice from legal counsel regarding further law enforcement involvement as appropriate.

Reports to the Superintendent and to the School Committee: The Superintendent of Schools shall provide the School Committee with data on an annual basis that includes the incidents of violations of this policy that have taken place. Such data will include a statement describing what remedial action has been taken to address such violations.

G. Supportive Measures

Members of school support staff shall be available to support and guide Students affected by Prohibited Conduct, including but not limited to providing Supportive Measures as outlined in School Department POLICY GK SAFE AND PEACEFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY. Supportive measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling;
- Extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments;
- Modifications of work or class schedules;
- Supervision at arrival, dismissal, lunch and/or recess;
- Mutual restrictions on contact between the parties; and/or
- Increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the school grounds.

H. Violations

Violation of any part of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

References:

NSSD Policy GU TITLE IX

NSSD POLICY GK SAFE AND PEACEFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

NSSD Block Island School Athletic Handbook

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families Department Operating Procedure

Policy Adopted: 10/17/22

New Shoreham School Department, Block Island School