

Policy 4122: Discussions around 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 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 and outside of the educational setting; and consistency with the educational mission of the schools.

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.

Unacceptable Conduct

Examples of unacceptable conduct by staff members 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 By Employees;
2. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship;
3. Associating with students in any situation or activity that includes the presence of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco or that could be considered sexually suggestive;
4. 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;
5. Sending students on personal errands;
6. Sexual banter, allusions, jokes, or innuendos with students;
7. Asking a student to keep a secret;
8. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
9. Addressing students with terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner; and
10. Permitting students to address you by your first name, nickname or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
11. Being alone with individual students by closing a room door except when dealing with issues of health by appropriate personnel;
12. Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home;
13. Visiting a student's home, unless on official school business;

14. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, email, Instant Messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business);
15. Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student teacher gifts); and/or
16. 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 except as participants in organized community activities.

Students and/or their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal 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 principal or superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

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 and/or law enforcement in accordance with the Board's policy on Child Abuse Reporting.

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

Adopted 12/7/98

Reviewed 5.11.2009

Revised 9.14.2009