ADAA - School System Commitment to Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior for Students

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The School Board believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior for students is an essential part of the school unit's educational mission. The Board recognizes that ethics, constructive attitudes, responsible behavior, and "character" are important if a student is to leave school as a "responsible and involved citizen," as described in the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results. The Board also recognizes that Maine law requires the adoption of a district-wide student code of conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior developed by the Commissioner of the Department of Education in compliance with 20-A MRSA § 254(11).

The Board seeks to create and maintain a school climate in which ethical and responsible behavior can flourish. The Board believes that instilling a sense of ethics and responsibility in students requires setting positive expectations for student behavior as well as establishing disciplinary consequences for behavior that violates Board policy or school rules. Further, the Board believes that in order to teach ethical and responsible behavior, adults who interact with students must strive to model and reinforce ethical and responsible behavior. To that end, the Board supports an active partnership between schools and parents.

Recognizing that collaboratively identified core values are the foundation for a school culture that encourages and reinforces ethical and responsible student behavior, the Board is committed to the establishment and implementation of a process for identifying shared values and setting and enforcing standards for behavior, including procedures for the management of student behavior. The process for identifying such shared values will invite and include the participation of Board members, school administrators, staff, parents, students, and the community. Core values will be reviewed periodically, with opportunity for public participation. The Board will direct the Superintendent/designee to develop a process to assess school system progress toward achievement of an ethical and responsible school culture.

Following the identification of core values, the Board, with input from administrators, staff, parents, students, and members of the community, will adopt a Student Code of Conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior that shall, as required by law:

1. Define unacceptable student behavior;
2. Establish standards of student responsibility for behavior;
3. Establish guidelines for addressing violations of the Student Code of Conduct, including first-time violations, when appropriate;
4. Describe appropriate procedures for referring students in need of special services to those services;
5. Establish criteria to determine when further assessment of a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) is necessary, based on the removal of the student from class;
6. Establish policies and procedures concerning the removal of disruptive or violent students from a classroom or a school bus, as well as student disciplinary and placement decisions, when appropriate; and
7. Establish guidelines and criteria concerning the appropriate circumstances when the Superintendent/designee may provide information to the local police or other appropriate law enforcement authorities regarding an offense that involves violence committed by any person on school grounds or other school property.
8. Establish policies and procedures to address bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment.

The Student Code of Conduct will be reviewed periodically by the School Board, with input from administrators, staff, parents, students, and members of the community. Students, parents, staff, and the community will be informed of the Student Code of Conduct through handbooks and/or other means selected by the Superintendent/designee.

When revising the Student Code of Conduct, the Board shall consider (evaluate and revise, as deemed necessary or desirable) relevant existing district-wide school disciplinary policies and/or consider adoption of new policies that:

1. Focus on positive interventions and expectations, and avoid focusing exclusively on unacceptable behavior;
2. Focus on positive and restorative interventions that are consistent with evidence-based practices rather than set punishments for specific behaviors, and avoid “zero tolerance” practices unless specifically required by federal or state laws, rules, or regulations;
3. Allow administrators to use their discretion to fashion appropriate discipline that examines the circumstances pertinent to the case at hand; and
4. Provide written notice to the parents of a student when a student is suspended from school, regardless of whether the suspension is an in-school or out-of-school suspension.

“Positive interventions” and “restorative interventions” shall have the same meaning as provided in 20-A MRSA § 1001(15).

Ethics and Curriculum

The Board encourages integration, examination, and discussion of ethical issues within content areas of the curriculum, as appropriate. The Board also encourages school administrators and staff to provide students with meaningful opportunities to apply values and ethical and responsible behavior through activities such as problem-solving, service learning, peer mediation and student government/leadership development.

Legal Reference:

20-A MRSA §§ 254, 1001(15), 1001(15-A)

Cross Reference:

JIC – District-Wide Student Code of Conduct

JICK - Bullying

JKD - Suspension of Students

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