GBEBB - Staff Conduct with Students

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The Maine School Administrative District No. 35 Board of Directors 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 an educational setting; and consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

Unacceptable 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 (ACAA);
2. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship;
3. 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;
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. Associating with students in any situation or activity that includes the presence of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco or that could be considered sexually suggestive; and
8. Inappropriately discussing colleagues or administrators with students; and
9. Addressing students with terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner

MSAD #35 expects staff to create an educational environment that focuses on civic and workplace skills and prepares students of MSAD #35 to occupy the role of citizen. This includes staff creating expectations where students address them in a formal manner and abstain from allowing students to address them in an overly familiar manner including the use of nicknames, terms of endearment or calling the staff member by their first name.

Before engaging in the following activities, staff members will 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 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 by the parent;
5. Communicating with a student outside of school by telephone, computer (such as email, Instant Messenger social networking sites), or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school related business);
6. Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts); and/or
7. 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 except as participants in 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 principal [or other appropriate administrator] if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the appropriate building administrator or superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this policy shall 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, as well as notification of the Department of Education (Maine law, P.L. Ch. 477 (20-A MRSA Section 13025).

Cross References: ACAA-Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students

GCSA– Employee Computer, Cell Phone, Electronic Devices and Internet Use

GCSA-R Employee Computer and Internet Use Rules
GCSB-Use of Social Media by School Employees

JLF-Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

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