

Policy GBEB - Staff Conduct with Students

The West Bath School Administrative Unit (WBSAU) 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 intent of this policy is to ensure that the interactions and relationships between staff members and students are based on mutual respect and trust; that staff members understand the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting; and that staff members conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the educational mission of the school. It is understood that staff members may interact with and have friendships with students' families outside of school. It is also understood that our children benefit from the support of staff and this policy is not meant to discourage staff from attending student functions, helping students before or after school or engaging in a dialogue that helps students in a meaningful way.

This policy is not intended to prohibit such interactions and friendships, provided that professional boundaries are maintained at all times.

A. Prohibited 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 WBSAU's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
2. 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 for assistance if it is a matter that appears to warrant intervention.
3. Sexual references, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
4. Asking a student to keep a secret from parents or authority figures at the exclusion of all others;
5. Disclosing employment concerns, sexual or other private matters to one or more students in any venue including face to face;
6. Use of text messages, phone calls, letters, notes or any other means or allowing social networking postings of an intimate or personal nature to be shared with a student;
7. Verbally threatening, swearing at, name-calling, mocking or engaging in a humiliating or demeaning dialogue with or about a student in front of others, or any deliberate or reckless action or speech that might be upsetting or emotionally disturbing to any student; and
8. Inviting students into staff homes unaccompanied.

Staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students.

B. Reporting Violations

Students and/or their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the building principal if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy. Though the board recognizes and respects the delicacy of staff reporting any signs of impropriety of another staff member, it is important that staff be aware that they are 'mandated reporters'* if they suspect sexual or inappropriate behavior.

C. 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.

D. Policy to be Included in Handbooks

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

Cross Reference:

ACAA – Student discrimination and Harassment

ACAB – Harassment

JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

* Maine law requires that certain persons report any case of suspected child abuse or child neglect to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The definition of mandated reporter includes all school administrators, school counselors, and school teachers. All cases involving students should be referred through the principal's office.

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