

GBEB Staff conduct with students

The Regional School Unit 1 (RSU) Board expects all staff members, including teachers, substitute 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 while engaged in school-related functions.

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 RSU schools.

It is understood that staff members and their children may interact with and have friendships with the families of students outside of school. This policy is not intended to prohibit such interactions and friendships, provided that professional boundaries are maintained at all times.

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 Board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
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 for assistance;
4. Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students;
5. Asking a student to keep a secret from parents or authority figures at the exclusion of all others;
6. Disclosing personal, family, sexual, employment concerns, or other private matters to students. This does not preclude staff from sharing personal experiences that are relevant to education;

7. Addressing students with terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
8. Interacting with students on social networking sites or through any digital applications outside of any school sponsored activity; and
9. Communicating with students on non-school matters via computer, text message, phone calls, letters notes or any other means.

Before engaging in the following activities, staff members are expected to review the activity with their building principal or supervisor, as appropriate:

- Being alone with individual students out of public view;
- Driving students home or to other locations;
- Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home (unless the student's parents approves of the activity, such as when a student babysits or performs chores for a staff member);
- Visiting a student at home or in another location, unless on official school business known to the parent;
- Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts);
- 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 organized community activities; and/or
- Permitting students to address you by your first name, nickname or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.

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 Superintendent or building 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 Superintendent or building administrator 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.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be disseminated to staff and volunteers by means determined by the Superintendent. This policy shall also be included in student handbooks.

Cross Reference: ACAA -- Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students GCSA -- Employee and Volunteer Use of Computers, Electronic Devices, School Network and the Internet GCSA-R -- Employee and Volunteer Computer/Device and Internet Use Rules

JLF - Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

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* 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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