



## **EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER – STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

The Regional School Unit-24 (RSU) Board (RSUB) expects all staff members, including teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators and others (including volunteers) to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their conduct with students.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, predicated by an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting, and consistent with the educational mission of the RSU.

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

Staff members are encouraged to discuss issues with their Building Administrators (BA) or supervisors whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of this policy.

The RSUB recognizes, is appreciative of, and wishes to be supportive of the manner in which staff members attempt to care for students in a personalized and caring manner, and in no way wishes to place unnecessary barriers to the myriad of times, places and positive ways that staff work to serve our students.

The RSUB also realizes that in communities in which many teachers are themselves parents or relatives of our students, many sorts of informal and outside relationships with students are healthy and normal, and the RSUB does not wish to interfere with these.

By attempting to legislate staff behavior in this realm, the RSUB is primarily attempting to make explicit its intolerance for behavior motivated or prompted by an unwillingness or inability to respect the physical and emotional health of our students.

The RSUB recognizes that simply by adopting a Policy it can not mandate safe and appropriate behavior to those bent on doing otherwise, but conversely, it wishes to explicitly state that its support for collegial relationships or its decision to not ban outright many sorts of student / teacher interactions should in no way be seen as a plausible defense to deleterious contact with students.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

Conduct by staff that is expressly prohibited include, but are in no way limited, to the following:

- A. Any type of sexual or inappropriate physical “touching” or contact with a student;
- B. Any conduct considered harassment under the RSUB Policy on harassment and sexual harassment of students;
- C. Sexual: banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students;

- D. Sexually suggestive, flirtatious or unduly coarse language with students;
- E. Friending and/or communicating with students utilizing social networking sites for non-educational purposes.
- F. Encouraging or allowing a student to confide to the staff member or sharing with a student the staff member's personal or family problems and/or relationships or other private matters with the intent or result that the staff member's relationship with the student blurs the professional boundaries between student and teacher, and as a consequence is or may become unhealthy or unsafe for the student. Staff members are expected to promptly refer acute or serious chronic problems expressed by students to administrative, counseling or health care staff.
- G. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship within the RSU environment that displays or appears to display a lack of fairness and equity for other students and is done for other than appropriate educational purposes.
- H. Communicating with student(s) relating to any matters listed above by any means, including, but not limited to, computer, instant messaging, text messaging, phone calls, letters, notes or other means.

#### **Conduct Requiring Caution by Staff**

Before engaging in activities like/similar to the following, staff members shall review the activity with the BA or their appropriate supervisor.

- A. Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home, or visiting a student's home unless on official school business, or done in another context, such as a parent or other relative or when such contact is tangential to the purpose of the visit.
- B. Exchanging personal gifts beyond customary student / teacher gifts unless the exchange occurs as part of a legitimate relationship with the student outside the school.
- C. Socializing with students outside of RSU-sponsored or community organized events unless the socializing is explicitly pre-approved of, by a parent or guardian of the child, arises out of a legitimate relationship with the student outside of the school, or is incidental to socializing with other adults.

#### **Reporting Suspected Violations**

Students and/or parents/guardians are encouraged to notify the BA if they believe an RSU staff member may be engaging in conduct which violates this policy.

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

No student, parent, guardian or staff member will undertake any investigation into suspected violation(s) of this Policy. They need only have reasonable grounds to suspect that a violation may be occurring, or may have occurred, prior to making a referral to the appropriate BA or Supervisor.

**Disciplinary Action**

Staff violations of this policy shall result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations involving possible sexual or other abuse will also result in referral to the Department of Health and Human Services and law enforcement in accordance with state/federal law on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

**Policy to be Included in Handbooks**

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

Cross Reference: Title 22, Chap. 1071, Sub. 2, 4011-A  
ACAA – Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students  
JLF – Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

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