

NON-FRATERNIZATION

The Board of Education requires that all school district staff maintain a professional, ethical relationship with district students that is conducive to an effective, safe learning environment; and that staff members act as role models for students at all times, whether on or off school property and both during and outside of school hours.

Inappropriate behavior between employees of the School District and students attending the District's schools or availing themselves of services from the District are potentially confusing to the student, disruptive of his/her educational program and may threaten or violate a student's right to personal and physical integrity. In light of these considerations the Board hereby prohibits any District employee from engaging in inappropriate behavior with a student who attends the District's schools or who is a participant in any educational or other program (including, but not limited to, transportation or other services not directly educational in nature) which is operated, staffed, or administered by District employees, contractors, BOCES service providers or volunteers regardless of the student's age or consent. The term "inappropriate behavior" includes but is not limited to flirting, an inappropriate close social relationship, making suggestive comments, dating or attempts to set up a dating situation, requests for sexual activity, inappropriate physical displays of affection, giving inappropriate personal gifts, inappropriate personal communication (see section on Electronic Communications), providing alcohol or drugs, inappropriate touching or engaging in sexual contact or sexual relations.

Electronic Communications

For purposes of this policy, **electronic communication** shall mean a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, emails, instant messages and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and other networking websites.

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students.

Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational reasons only.

When available, district provided email or other district-provided communication devices shall be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of district-provided email or other district provided communication devices shall be in accordance with district policies and procedures. [6] Use of cell phones shall be limited to informative group communications.

All electronic communications from teachers, coaches, and advisors to classes, teams or club members shall be sent in a single communication to all class, team or club members, except for communications concerning an individual student's medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the communications will be copied to the building principal. In the case of sports teams under the direction of the Athletic Director, communications shall be copied to the Athletic Director.

Adults shall not follow or accept requests from current students and from their parents to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites and shall not create any networking site for communication with students other than those approved by the district for this purpose, without the prior written approval of the building principal.

Exceptions

An Emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out in this policy. The adult shall be prepared to articulate the reason for any deviation from the requirements of this policy and must demonstrate that s/he has maintained an appropriate relationship with the student.

There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a student's family, e.g. when their children become friends. This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.

It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through nondistrict-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include district students. Such community involvements is commendable, and this policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in those roles. However, adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity with regard to all youth with whom they interact in the course of their community involvement.

Any student who believes that he/she has been subjected to inappropriate staff behavior as defined in this policy, as well as students, staff members or third parties who have knowledge of or witness any possible occurrence of inappropriate staff-student relations, shall report the incident to either the student's principal or the District's Title IX Compliance Officer for further investigation. In all events such reports shall be forwarded to the designated Title IX Officer(s) for further investigation. Investigations of allegations of inappropriate staff-student relations shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment with the school district.

If a student initiates inappropriate behavior, as previously defined, toward a staff member, that staff member shall document the incident and promptly report it to his/her building principal or supervisor. Failure to report such student initiated behavior shall result in disciplinary proceedings.

The principal of each school and/or program supervisor shall be responsible for informing students and staff members of the requirements of this policy, including the duty to report any inappropriate staff-student relations. The District's policy, or a summary thereof, shall be disseminated to all new staff persons and at least annually to staff, students and parents. This topic shall be addressed in the District Code of Conduct and all staff member handbooks.

Any staff member who engages in inappropriate conduct with a student, prohibited by the terms of this policy, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary proceedings that may culminate in termination of employment in accordance with the law, district policy and regulations, and the applicable collective bargaining agreement. A violation of this policy may also subject the employee to criminal and/or civil sanctions as well as disciplinary proceedings by the State Education Department.

Prohibition of Retaliation

The Board of Education prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of inappropriate staff-student relations. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring shall be made to ensure that the alleged conduct has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation have not suffered retaliation. Any act of retaliation is subject to appropriate disciplinary action by the District.