

# **POLICY**

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## **FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**File Code: 4119.24/4219.24**

### STAFF/VOLUNTEER CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

All staff members, including teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, support staff and others, shall 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. It is the expectation of the board that:

- A. Interactions and relationships between staff members and students shall be based upon mutual respect and trust;
- B. Staff members understand the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting; and
- C. Staff members conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

The board recognizes that staff members may interact with and have friendships with students' families outside of school. Such interactions and friendships are not prohibited provided that professional boundaries are maintained at all times.

### Appropriate Staff Behavior

School employees shall:

- A. Make the well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making and actions;
- B. Maintain just, courteous, and proper relationships with students, parents, staff members, and others;
- C. Strive for the maintenance of efficiency and knowledge of developments in the employee's field of work;
- D. Fulfill job responsibilities with honesty and integrity;
- E. Direct criticism of other staff members or of the school system to the appropriate administrator and with the intent of improving district operations. Constructive criticism may be made directly to the school administrator who has the responsibility for improving the situation;
- F. Support the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals;
- G. Obey local, state, and national laws and shall not knowingly join or support organizations that advocate, directly or indirectly, the overthrow of the government;

- H. Implement the board policies and regulations;
- I. Refrain from using school contacts and privileges to promote partisan politics, sectarian religious views, or selfish propaganda of any kind;
- J. Pursue appropriate measures to correct any laws, policies, or regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals;
- K. Avoid using position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, or other influence;
- L. Maintain the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development;
- M. Stress the proper use and protection of all school properties, equipment, and materials;
- N. Honor all contracts until fulfillment or release.

In the performance of duties, employees shall keep in confidence such information as they may secure unless disclosure serves district purposes or is required by law.

#### Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is expressly prohibited and includes but is not limited to:

- A. Any type of sexual or inappropriate physical contact with students or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the board policy on 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying and board policies regarding nondiscrimination (see policies 2224, 4111.1/4211.1 and 6121);
- B. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship;
- C. 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;
- D. Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students;
- E. Asking a student to keep a secret;
- F. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
- G. Providing students with access to private or school issued teacher email mailboxes, passwords, personal computer accounts, and blogs;
- H. "Friending" students on social networking sites (outside of any school-approved activity) and communicating with students on non-school matters via computer, text message, phone calls, letters, notes or any other means as detailed in board policy 4119.26/4219.26 Electronic Communication;

- I. Addressing students with terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- J. Permitting students to address you by your first name, nickname or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- K. Before engaging in the following activities, staff members are required to review the activity with their building principal or supervisor, as appropriate:
  - 1. Being alone with individual students out of public view;
  - 2. 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 baby-sits or performs chores for a staff member);
  - 3. Visiting a student at home or in another location, unless on official school business known to the parent;
  - 4. Exchanging personal gifts (beyond the customary student-teacher gifts); and/or
  - 5. 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.

Staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students. Staff members are required 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 Principal 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 Child Protection and Permanence (DCP&P) and/or law enforcement.

#### Implementation

This policy shall be made available to all employees, students and volunteers. The chief school administrator shall be responsible for annually informing all staff and volunteers about the expectations of professional conduct with students as stated in this policy.

#### Key Words

Appropriate Conduct, Inappropriate Conduct, Professionalism, Staff Relations, Student Relation, Relationship

Cross References: 4119.21 - Sample Policy: Conflict of Interest  
4119.23 - Sample Policy: P1 Employee Substance Abuse  
4119.26 - Sample Policy: Electronic Communication by School Staff  
4138 - Sample Policy: Nonschool Employment  
5131.1 - Sample Policy: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying  
6144 - Sample Policy: Controversial Issues

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 2A 38A-1 et seq.: Computer related offenses  
N.J.S.A. 18A 6-10: Dismissal and reduction in compensation of persons under tenure in public school system  
N.J.S.A. 18A 11-1: General mandatory powers and duties  
N.J.S.A. 18A 27-4: Power of boards of education to make rules governing employment of teacher, etc.; employment thereunder  
N.J.S.A. 18A 37-13: Findings, declarations relative to adoption of harassment and bullying prevention policies  
N.J.S.A. 18A 54-20: Powers of board  
N.J.A.C. 6A 9-3.3 Professional Standards for Teachers  
N.J.A.C. 6A 9B-4.5 Revocation or suspension of certificates

Date adopted: 2/8/21