

STAFF CONDUCT

Code **GBEB** Issued 1/10

Purpose: To establish the board's vision for appropriate staff conduct.

The board reaffirms one of the oldest beliefs in education, which is “One of the best methods of instruction is that of setting a good example.”

The board expects all staff members to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in their conduct with students, parent/legal guardians, and coworkers. For the purpose of this policy, staff includes, but is not limited to, employees, contract service providers, school volunteers, student teachers, and interns.

All staff members are expected to act with integrity and honesty both on-duty and off-duty and be aware of the policy framework that governs staff behavior and day-to-day work performance. Staff must act in a manner that is consistent with the district’s policies and sets a positive example for all.

To that end, in dress, conduct, including conduct communicated or performed in person, in writing and/or electronically, and interpersonal relationships, all staff should recognize that they are being continuously observed by students, other employees, parents/legal guardians and members of the community and that their actions and demeanor may impair their effectiveness as employees. When interacting with students in all curricular and extracurricular activities, whether on or off campus, both online and off-line, staff members are expected to exercise good judgement and to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to an educational setting and consistent with the educational mission of the district.

The relationship between staff members and students in the district should be one of cooperation, understanding, mutual respect, and trust. All staff members will also treat each other with respect.

The personal life of an employee, including personal use of privately-owned electronic equipment outside of working hours such as email, text messages, instant messages or social networking sites, will be the concern of and warrant the attention of the board only as it may directly prevent the employee from effectively performing his/her assigned job duties or disrupts the educational environment or as it violates state or federal law, board policy or contractual agreements.

No employee will commit or attempt to induce students or others to commit an act or acts of immoral or criminal conduct which may be harmful to others or bring discredit to the district. If it appears an employee may have violated the law, the district will cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

Employees of the district, while on duty and in the presence of students, will not use profanity, will not use tobacco in any form, and will not consume or be under the influence of intoxicating beverages. Employees will not be involved in drug abuse or drug traffic.

Violations of this policy by employees will be grounds for immediate suspension and possible termination of employment consistent with district policy and state law. In such cases, an employee will be informed of his/her right to any hearing or due process procedure that may be applicable under state or federal law or district policy.

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The following list includes some of the actions that are considered misconduct while on duty on or off district premises.

- possessing, using, selling, manufacturing, distributing or dispensing any illegal drugs or alcohol while on duty or off district property
- fighting or deliberately harming another
- being absent without approval
- refusing to follow a supervisor's instructions and directions
- neglect of duty (including, but not limited to, failure to follow a student's Individualized Education Program for 504 Plan, leaving students unsupervised, failure to discipline – with consistency and/or failure to maintain proper building or classroom discipline, failure to take affirmative action when confronted with or after witnessing a situation in which a student is at risk of abuse or mental or physical injury, and/or inability or failure to effectively plan and present an organized lesson plan)
- stealing, destroying, or vandalizing school property intentionally or through negligence; staff will be responsible for reimbursing the district for the cost of or replacing damaged or stolen property
- using school property without proper authorization
- communicating obscene visual material to a student or another staff member
- any behavior, overt or cover, of a sexual nature that may constitute professional misconduct and/or is violation of law or board policy
- disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment, or other private concerns to students
- non-counseling or social work staff encouraging students to confide their personal, family problems, and/or personal relationship problems; staff should refer students to the guidance office if there is a need for counseling
- asking students to keep secrets
- inciting students or other staff members to engage in illegal activity
- failure to adhere to safety and health rules as established by state law and the district
- destroying school property intentionally
- using obscene language which is unsuitable in the school setting
- having any interaction/activity of a sexual nature or intent with a student
- possessing weapons on school property (unless otherwise authorized by law)
- behaving in any inappropriate manner to the extent of adversely affecting the employee's ability to perform his/her work and/or disrupting the educational environment
- harassment, intimidation or bullying of a student

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The board understands that there are circumstances when staff members have personal relationships with the families of students outside of school. The intent of this policy is not to prohibit all social contact between staff and families outside of school. However, because of the trust placed in staff by the community, and the district's responsibility to protect the well-being of students, staff members are expected to avoid the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students at all times.

Staff members are encouraged to discuss concerns with their supervisor whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct or activities may constitute a violation of this policy. Staff members are required to notify a supervisor immediately if they become aware of a situation or behavior that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Violations of this policy by other individuals in the district community including, but not limited to, contract workers, volunteers, student teacher, and interns will be grounds for the immediate termination of the program, activity, or job for which the individual is a participant.

Arrest of an employee

The board delegates specific authority to the superintendent to take appropriate employment action with regard to an employee who has been arrested.

- Employees arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate no danger or appearance of danger to students, co-employees or the district will normally not be subject to any employment action.
- Employees arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate a possible danger or appearance of danger to the school district, co-employees or to pupils will normally be suspended with pay pending adjudication.
- Employees arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate a possible danger or appearance of danger to pupils but not to the school district or co-employees will normally be reassigned to different responsibilities away from pupils within the district pending adjudication.
- Employees arrested for a felony offense will normally be suspended with pay pending adjudication.

In certain circumstances, other employment action may be taken, up to and including termination.

Cf. GBEBB

Adopted 12/18/01; Revised 3/13/23

Legal references:

- A. South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976 as amended:
 1. Section 16-3-755- Sexual battery with a student
 2. Section 16-23-420, et seq. – Concealed weapons; school property exception.
 3. Section 59-25-430 – Teacher dismissal; evident unfitness for teaching.
 4. Section 59-25-450 – Teacher suspension.