

For students to succeed, all school employees must approach their responsibilities conscientiously, always remembering that the ultimate responsibility of the school system is to provide students with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education. The standards shall apply to all school employees and shall be the basis for review of the performance of school employees. These standards shall establish prohibitions and mandatory requirements for all employees. Violation of these standards shall subject an employee to investigation and disciplinary action by the Watauga County School System and/or the State Board of Education.

All employees, student teachers, and volunteers shall adhere to the standards of professional conduct contained in this policy. Any act or omission that violates these standards is prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

A. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

All school employees shall:

1. be familiar with, support, comply with and, when appropriate, enforce all applicable Watauga County Board of Education (the “board”) policies, administrative procedures, school rules and applicable laws;
2. attend to the safety and welfare of students, including the need to provide appropriate supervision of students;
3. demonstrate integrity, respect and commitment to the truth through attitudes, behavior and communications with others;
4. address or appropriately direct any complaints concerning school employees, the school program or school operations;
5. develop, promote, and maintain courteous and professional working relationships with other staff members, students, parents, and visitors;
6. avoid confrontations with co-workers, including but not limited to engaging in actions or conversations which the employee knows or should know will result in a disruption;
7. direct all complaints regarding the work environment to the appropriate supervisors and/or file grievances and avoid any actions that may undermine the work or the authority of co-workers and supervisors;
8. not create or post any inappropriate online content that has an impact on their (or any employee’s) ability to perform their job, especially if accessible to any student(s), and bear in mind that content created or posted online apart from the WCS network may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents, and other

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- members of the community;
9. use the Watauga County Schools network only in a professional manner as described in policy 7335, Employee Use of Social Media, and 3225/4312/7320, Technology Responsible Use;
 10. be respectful in all conduct and communications with students as set forth in policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations, and shall not abuse or exploit any student in person or in electronic communication in any manner, including but not limited to the actions listed below. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogging, websites, and social media.
 - a. any use of language that is considered profane, vulgar, or demeaning;
 - b. any sexual act;
 - c. any solicitation of a sexual act, whether written, verbal, or physical;
 - d. any act of child abuse, as defined by law;
 - e. any act of sexual harassment, as defined by law; and
 - f. any intentional solicitation, encouragement, or consummation of a romantic or physical relationship with a student, or any sexual contact with a student. The term “romantic relationship” shall include dating any student.
 11. comply with all administrative directives in a timely and professional manner, including written directives regarding specific issues or behaviors;
 12. attend, participate in, and complete all required professional development activities and meetings;
 13. complete and transmit all required reports and other documentation in a timely and professional manner;
 14. maintain the confidentiality of records as required by law and more fully set forth in policy 1325/7315, Confidential Information, and 4250/5075/7316, North Carolina Address Confidentiality Program;
 15. faithfully account for all funds collected from students, colleagues, or other parties and not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay;
 16. arrive at school each day at an appropriate time designated by the principal ready and prepared to complete all assigned duties;
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17. exercise proper care and maintenance of school property; and
18. support parents in effectively participating in their child's education and never encourage or coerce a child to withhold information from a parent.
19. refrain from creating any video recording of a student without the parent's prior written consent, unless a) the recording is created by an employee acting in their official capacity within the reasonable and prudent scope of their authority or b) when the recording will be used by the educator or administrator solely for a safety demonstration, an academic or extracurricular activity, classroom instruction, photo identification cards, or security or surveillance of buildings, grounds, or school transportation.

B. NOTICE OF CRIMINAL OFFENSE

Employees shall notify the human resources director if they are arrested for, charged with or convicted of a criminal offense (including entering a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*) other than a minor traffic violation (i.e., speeding, parking or a lesser violation). Notice must be in writing, must include all pertinent facts and must be delivered to the human resources director no later than the next scheduled business day following the arrest, charge or conviction, unless the employee is hospitalized or incarcerated, in which case the employee must report the alleged violation within 24 hours after his or her release. Upon judicial action in the matter, the employee must report the disposition and pertinent facts in writing to the human resources director no later than the next business day following adjudication.

In addition, all driver education instructors must immediately report to the board any conviction that results in three or more points, and any conviction that could cause suspension or revocation of the driver license in any state. The board will notify the Department of Public Instruction when an instructor loses his or her privilege to drive in North Carolina or any other state. The superintendent or designee shall conduct annual checks of the driving records of all driver education instructors.

Failure by an employee to provide timely notice as described in this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal.

Legal References: G.S. 114A-20; 115C-47, -307, -308; State Board of Education Policies DRIV-003, DRIV-004

Cross References: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities (policy 4022/7231), Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace (policy 7240), Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (policy 4021/7230), Staff-Student Relations (policy 4040/7310), Confidential Information (policy 1325/7315), North Carolina Address Confidentiality Program (policy 4250/5075/7316), Technology Responsible Use (policy 3225/4312/7320), Copyright Compliance (policy 3230/7330), Professional Standards of Conduct and Performance for Teachers (policy 7305), Duty to Report a Criminal Offense (policy 7307), Employee Use of Social Media (policy 7335), Employee Dress and Appearance (policy 7340), Public Records – Retention, Release, and

Disposition (policy 5070/7350), Electronically Stored Information Retention (policy 5071/7351), Extracurricular and Non-Instructional Duties (policy 7405), Employee Conflict of Interest (policy 7730)

Adopted: December 14, 2015

Revised: March 11, 2019; November 6, 2023