

### **III. THE MIDDLESEX SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES IN RELATION TO STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES**

This Code of Conduct is intended to provide guidance to all members of the Middlesex School community regarding appropriate interactions between adults and students and recent graduates under the age of 21. Although it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of expectations and prohibited behaviors, it should serve as a guide and a reminder that the actions and communications of Faculty and Staff should at all times be above reproach, avoid even the appearance of impropriety, be governed by common sense, and be taken with the best interests of the students and the School in mind.

#### **General Principles**

As employees of this learning and teaching community, we recognize that we have special responsibilities and duties of care for our students. These duties begin with legal requirements, but go far beyond them: they require us at all times to act in the best interests of our students.

We understand and accept fully the trust placed in us by our students and their families. We recognize that learning occurs best in a residential school when trust and a sense of security are systemic within our community.

In situations that raise concerns about the well-being or safety of any member of our community, it is our obligation to adhere to all of our responsibilities, both legal and moral, and use the available resources of the School to address such situations immediately.

In light of the above, we agree as employees of the School:

- To promote a culture of dignity and mutual respect within our community;
- To pledge to nurture the well-being and protect the safety of our students at all times, always focused on these interests and ready to act on them;
- To acknowledge that the inherent imbalance of power in our relationships with students requires us to maintain professional and personal boundaries in our interactions with them, and we have a constant duty to protect and act in their best interests;
- To help each other as colleagues to uphold exemplary standards of behavior, and seek advice from colleagues, administrators, and the Head of School if concerns arise.

We adhere strictly to the standards set forth in this Employee Handbook regarding professional behavior, especially but not only the prohibition on all forms of sexual or romantic contact that have always been explicit about such interactions.

We observe appropriate boundaries in spoken and written, including electronic, communication. We acknowledge and uphold the specific clauses of the Acceptable Use Policy that refer to electronic communication. We promote a culture of civility, equity, inclusion and respect in our choice and use of language in all venues and forums of the School.

### **Standards of Behavior**

Employees should at all times act in accordance with the General Principles stated above. The following guidelines, while not exhaustive, should govern adult behavior in interactions with students.

1. Be alert to the imbalance of power that exists in relationships between adults and students, and never abuse it. This imbalance can continue after the student has graduated from Middlesex School.
2. Establish and maintain healthy boundaries with students and refrain from any conduct that places the needs of the adult ahead of the student's interests.
3. Conduct ourselves as role models for the students.
4. Behave in a manner that reflects well on the School and is consistent with our mission.
5. Set appropriate expectations and limits with students that encourage their learning, responsibility, independence, and growth.
6. Refer all students in need of counseling or other health services or attention to the appropriate School professional. Adults should not sit with a concern or try to resolve it alone. Err on the side of caution and consultation from the appropriate professional.

The following conduct by employees is expressly prohibited:

- A. Any sexual, romantic, or dating relationship with students or recent graduates under the age of 21; any activity with students or recent graduates under the age of 21 that could be considered sexual or romantic in nature; or any sexual, romantic or unduly familiar or intimate behavior or communications (including inappropriate personal stories and history or sexually provocative material) with students or recent graduates under the age of 21, whether in person or indirectly through the use of email, telephone, social networking or other electronic or print media.
- B. Condoning in any way the use of alcohol or illegal drugs by students. This prohibition includes failure to act in such situations as an adult reasonably would understand the situation to involve alcohol or illegal drug activity.
- C. Sharing or disclosing any information concerning a student, other than on a need-to-know basis, to any person not specifically authorized by a student or family to receive such information.

Such disclosure includes, but is not limited to, information concerning educational assessments, test scores, grades, behavior, mental or physical health, and family background or finances.

We expect all employees to act at all times in accordance with this Code of Conduct as well as those set forth in this Employee Handbook. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.