



# East Greenwich Public Schools

111 Peirce Street | East Greenwich, RI 02818 | 401-398-1200 | [egsd.net](http://egsd.net)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

**CONTACT:**

Alexis Meyer, Superintendent  
401-398-1201

## NEWS RELEASE

### **East Greenwich Public Schools announces additional action steps to ensure the safety of student-athletes**

EAST GREENWICH, RI – At a meeting tonight of the East Greenwich School Committee, district officials announced a series of action steps they are taking to ensure greater protections for student-athletes – and all students – during and after the school day.

The School Committee reviewed a draft of a new “Professional Conduct with Students” policy, which outlines more stringent rules for teachers, coaches, and other staff related to interaction with students in and out of school, including behavior both in-person and online. The draft policy supplements existing district policies related to harassment, bullying, and social media, among others. The School Committee is seeking feedback on the draft policy from students and staff and is scheduled to vote on it at its May 17 meeting.

Earlier this month, Superintendent Alexis Meyer and School Committee Chair Anne Musella sent a letter to families and staff stating that the head coach and assistant coach of the varsity volleyball program had been prohibited from interacting with students and banned from future employment with the East Greenwich Public Schools after an investigation into allegations of harassment of students, in violation of the district’s Title IX policy. The letter also stated that the district would take a series of actions in the months ahead to strengthen policies and procedures related to interactions between staff and students, particularly in interscholastic sports.

At the School Committee meeting, Chairperson Musella said, “This has been a painful chapter for our community, and we are deeply troubled that any of our student-athletes were subjected to such inappropriate behavior by adults. We are extremely grateful that immediately upon receiving the complaints, the Superintendent and her team acted decisively, investigated thoroughly, and kept an unwavering focus on the safety and interests of the students and families most affected.”

Superintendent Meyer added, “I am hopeful that we can begin to move forward as a community, particularly by providing students with the support they need to thrive in school and on the athletic fields. We also recognize that we have an obligation to learn from these incidents, particularly to ensure that our policies are explicit about appropriate interactions between employees and students and that all of our students, families, and staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.”

*[continued]*

At the meeting, Superintendent Meyer and Casie Rhodes, Athletic Director for the East Greenwich Public Schools, also provided an update on additional actions the district is taking, including:

- Mandatory training every season for all coaches led by the district, in addition to training mandated through the Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL), on key policies and procedures related to interaction with student-athletes, as well as training related to substance abuse;
- Mandatory meetings every season with all student-athletes, to inform participants about their rights and to outline procedures for reporting harassment or any other unwelcome behavior;
- Updating the Athletics Handbook and mandating signoff every season from all coaches, athletes, and parents of athletes, acknowledging all policies and procedures and committing to safe, appropriate interactions; and
- Adopting a new mobile app for use among all interscholastic coaches and athletes, to limit communication only to team matters, with less reliance on email, phone calls, texting, social media, or other means.

Superintendent Meyer said coaches participated in additional training at pre-season meetings, including expectations for communicating with students and a review of social media policy. She said the district is in the process of developing a more robust training program to put in place this summer, prior to the fall sports season. Superintendent Meyer also noted that the district is exploring options for a new incident reporting system, similar to those adopted in other school districts, to simplify the process for students to report any experiences of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or other inappropriate behavior.

District leaders reported the allegations, findings, and outcomes of the Title IX investigation to the East Greenwich Police Department (EGPD), Rhode Island Department of Education, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RIIL, and Volleyball USA. Since then, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office has stated they are looking into the matter, in collaboration with the State Police and EGPD.