

Summary - Dobbs Ferry School District Code of Conduct 2023-2024

Introduction

The Board of Education of Dobbs Ferry is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and District personnel may deliver quality educational services without disruption or interference. Our intent is to provide an effective and fair Code of Conduct that includes a variety of strategies for supporting our students. We acknowledge that we must examine and consider a range of methods to solve behavior problems, prior to resorting to punitive consequences. Our ultimate goal is to help our students become responsible, caring citizens. Responsible behavior by students, teachers, other District personnel, parents and other visitors is essential to achieving this goal.

The District has a long-standing set of expectations for conduct on school property and at school functions. These expectations are based on the principles of civility, mutual respect, citizenship, character, tolerance, honesty and integrity.

The Board recognizes the need to clearly define these expectations for acceptable conduct on school property, to identify the possible consequences of unacceptable conduct, and to ensure that discipline, when necessary, is administered promptly and fairly. The Board is also committed to complying with all state regulations regarding the above.

Unless otherwise indicated, this code applies to all students, school personnel, parents and other visitors when on school property or attending a school function.

The following is a plain language summary of the District Code of Conduct. This summary is to be used as a guide for the basic parameters of the District Code of Conduct. The complete Code of Conduct may be accessed on the District's website <https://www.dfsd.org/Page/945> or by visiting the main office of any District school.

Student Rights and Responsibilities:

The District is committed to safeguarding the rights given to all students under state and federal law. In addition, to promote a safe, healthy, orderly and civil school environment, all District students have the right to:

- A. Take part in all District activities on an equal basis regardless of race, weight, color, creed, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, gender or sexual orientation or disability.
- B. Present their version of the relevant events to school personnel authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty in connection with the imposition of the penalty.

- C. Access school rules, policies, regulations and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from school personnel.

Student Responsibilities:

All District students have the responsibility to:

1. Contribute to maintaining a safe, supportive and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning and to show respect to other persons and to property.
2. Be familiar with and abide by all District policies, rules and regulations dealing with student conduct.
3. Attend school every day unless they are legally excused and be in class, on time, and prepared to learn.
4. Work to the best of their ability in all academic and extracurricular pursuits and strive toward their highest level of achievement possible.
5. React to direction given by teachers, administrators and other school personnel in a respectful, positive manner.
6. Work to develop mechanisms to manage their anger.
7. Ask questions when they do not understand.
8. Seek help in solving problems.
9. Dress appropriately for school and school functions.
10. Accept responsibility for their actions.
11. Conduct themselves as representatives of the District when participating in or attending school-sponsored extracurricular events and to hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct, demeanor, and sportsmanship.

Student Dress Code

The Board of Education of the Dobbs Ferry Schools District believes that the responsibility for student dress and general appearance rests with individual students and parents. However, the Board requires students to attend school in appropriate dress that meets health and safety standards and does not interfere with the learning process.

Appropriate school dress has a positive impact on student behavior and increases the esteem in which students and the community regard the school. Students have the responsibility to use discretion and common sense in their choice of clothing. Students are expected to wear clothing appropriate to the school.

Students Cannot Wear:

1. Violent language or images on clothing
2. Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity) or the use of same.
3. Clothing with hate speech, profanity or pornography.

4. Images and/or language that create a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class.
5. Helmets, hoodies or other headgear that obstructs the face.
6. Clothing or footwear that could pose a safety hazard.
7. Visible underwear or bathing suits of similar design

Please Note: Visible waistbands or straps on undergarments worn under other clothing are not a violation.

Administrative personnel have the authority to require a student to change their attire should it be deemed inappropriate according to the guidelines.

New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

All children have the right to attend school in a safe, welcoming, and caring environment. The New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) specifically ensures that no student shall be subject to harassment or bullying by employees or students on school property or at a school function, nor shall any student be subjected to discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion or religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

In addition to acts that might occur on school property and/or at a school function, DASA further prohibits an action or statement that occurs off school property which creates a risk of substantial disruption in the school environment (or could foreseeably create such a risk), and is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation, or abuse might negatively affect and/or impact a student in a school setting.

Responding to Incidents of Bullying, Harassment or Hazing – When school personnel or adults observe incidents of bullying, harassment, and/or hazing, the adults are mandated to respond in accordance with this code of conduct. Even if the recipient of the bullying/harassment/hazing behaviors requests that no action be taken or reports not being bothered by the incident, the school is obligated to follow the investigative protocol delineated in this code of conduct, which includes appropriate reporting of the incident, appropriate investigation as necessary, and taking appropriate disciplinary action.

The Dignity Act Coordinator(s)

The Dignity Act Director is as follows:

Shari Kaplan, kaplans@dfsd.org

The Dignity Act Coordinator(s) are as follows:

High School	Ms. Juliet Gevargis-Mizimakoski, gevargis-mizimakoski@dfsd.org
Middle School	Ms. Anne Pecuina, pecuinaa@dfsd.org
Springhurst Elementary	Ms. Leah Grabelsky, grabelskyl@dfsd.org

Prohibited Student Conduct

The Board of Education expects all students to conduct themselves in an appropriate and civil manner, with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students, District personnel and other members of the school community, and for the care of school facilities and equipment.

The best discipline is self-imposed, and students must learn to assume and accept responsibility for their own behavior, as well as the consequences of their misbehavior. As a school district, we recognize that students also benefit by being part of a supportive and nurturing environment. Appropriate counseling is essential to helping students to understand their behavior and to assist them with developing positive approaches to decision making. The counseling team is committed to working with administrators and teachers, as a team, to ensure that students are provided with appropriate opportunities for counseling in school. District personnel who interact with students are expected to use disciplinary action only when necessary and to place emphasis on educating students so that they may grow in self-discipline.

The Board recognizes the need to make its expectations for student conduct while on school property or engaged in a school function specific and clear. The rules of conduct listed below are intended to do that and focus on safety and respect for the rights and property of others. Students who will not accept responsibility for their own behavior and who violate these school rules will be required to accept the consequences for their conduct.

Prohibited student conduct includes:

- Conduct that is disorderly
- Conduct that is insubordinate
- Conduct that is disruptive
- Conduct that is violent
- Conduct that endangers the safety, morals, physical or mental health or welfare of others
- Bullying conduct
- Harassment of others
- Conduct commonly referred to as “hazing”
- Any form of academic misconduct
- Misconduct while on a school bus
- Off-campus misconduct that interferes with, or can reasonably be expected to substantially disrupt the educational process in the school or at a school function.

Student Searches and Interrogations

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring an atmosphere on school property and at school functions that is safe and orderly. To achieve this kind of environment, any school official authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty on a student may question a student about an alleged violation of the law or the District Code of Conduct. Students are not entitled to any sort of

“Miranda” type warning before being questioned by school officials, nor are school officials required to contact a student’s parent before questioning the student. However, school officials will tell students why they are being questioned. In addition, the Board authorizes the superintendent, building principals, and administrators to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable individualized suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the District Code of Conduct.

Reporting Violations

All students are expected to promptly report violations of the Code of Conduct to a teacher, guidance counselor, the building principal or their designee. Any student or staff person observing a student possessing a weapon, alcohol or illegal substance on school property or at a school function shall report this information immediately to a teacher, the building principal, the principal’s designee or the superintendent. A failure to report observed misconduct may give rise to disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

All District staff who are authorized to impose disciplinary sanctions are expected to do so in a prompt, fair and lawful manner. District staff who are not authorized to impose disciplinary sanctions are expected to promptly report violations of the Code of Conduct to their supervisor, who shall in turn impose an appropriate disciplinary sanction, if so authorized, or refer the matter to a staff member who is authorized to impose an appropriate sanction.

Any weapon, alcohol or illegal substance found shall be confiscated immediately, if possible, followed by notification to the parent of the student involved and the appropriate disciplinary sanction if warranted, which may include permanent suspension and referral for prosecution.

A local law enforcement agency will be notified of code violations that constitute a crime and substantially affect the order or security of a school following consultation with the Superintendent as soon as practical, but in no event later than the close of business the day the principal or their designee learns of the violation. The notification may be made by telephone, followed by a letter mailed on the same day as a telephone call is made. The notification must identify the student and explain the conduct that violated the Code of Conduct and constituted a crime.

Disciplinary Procedures

Penalties and Referrals

Discipline is most effective when it deals directly with the problem at the time and place it occurs, and in a way that students view as fair and impartial. School personnel who interact with students are expected to use disciplinary action only when necessary and to place emphasis on the students’ ability to grow in self-discipline.

Disciplinary action, when necessary, will be firm, fair and consistent so as to be the most effective in changing student behavior. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel authorized to impose disciplinary penalties may consider the following:

1. The student's age (not a critical factor in the case of high school students).
2. The nature of the offense and the circumstances which led to the offense.
3. The student's prior disciplinary record.
4. The effectiveness of other forms of discipline.
5. Information from parents, teachers and/or others, as appropriate.
6. Other extenuating circumstances.

As a general rule, discipline will be progressive. Repeated incidents will result in stronger consequences.

If the conduct of a student is related to a disability or suspected disability, the student shall be referred to the Committee on Special Education and discipline, if warranted, shall be administered consistent with the separate requirements of this Code of Conduct for disciplining students with a disability or presumed to have a disability. A student identified as having a disability shall not be suspended for more than 10 school days for behavior related to his/her disability unless the conduct involves weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury.

Public Conduct on School Property

The District is committed to providing an orderly, respectful environment that is conducive to learning. To create and maintain this kind of an environment, it is necessary to regulate public conduct on school property and at school functions. For purposes of this section of the code, "public" shall mean all persons when on school property or attending a school function including students, teachers and District personnel.

The restrictions on public conduct on school property and at school functions contained in this code are not intended to limit freedom of speech or peaceful assembly. The District recognizes that free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the objectives of the District. The purpose of this code is to maintain public order and prevent abuse of the rights of others.

All persons on school property or attending a school function shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner and not engage in conduct prohibited by this Code of Conduct. In addition, all persons on school property or attending a school function are expected to be properly attired for the purpose they are on school property.

Dissemination of Code of Conduct

The Board will work to ensure that the community is aware of this Code of Conduct by:

1. Providing copies of an age-appropriate, written in plain language, summary of the code to all students at the beginning of each school year.

2. Providing a plain language summary to all parents at the beginning of the school year, and thereafter on request.
3. Posting the complete Code of Conduct on the District's website.
4. Providing all current teachers and other staff members with a copy of the Code of Conduct and a copy of any amendments to the code as soon as practicable after adoption.
5. Providing all new employees with a copy of the current Code of Conduct when they are first hired.
6. Making copies of the complete Code of Conduct available for review by students, parents and other community members.