



Employee Code of Professional Conduct

Near North Montessori School

(In compliance with 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5)

Near North Montessori School ("NNM" or the "School") is committed to creating, promoting, and sustaining a safe learning environment that supports each student's academic success, well-being, and development as a responsible member of society. Positive, healthy relationships between students and school personnel are essential to this mission and must be grounded in professionalism, appropriate boundaries, and mutual respect.

The School recognizes that maintaining clear staff-student boundaries protects students from harm and protects employees from the appearance of impropriety. Even conduct that does not rise to the level of criminal behavior may pose risks to student safety, and repeated boundary violations may signal more serious concerns. Accordingly, the School has adopted this Employee Code of Professional Conduct ("Code") in alignment with the Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators and applicable law.

This Code applies to all employees and agents of the School who have direct contact with students.

Professional and Ethical Standards

All employees are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct. Employees shall:

Respect the dignity and worth of each student and create a learning environment characterized by respect, inclusion, and equal opportunity, regardless of any legally protected characteristic.

Maintain professional relationships with students at all times and avoid behaviors that blur or compromise appropriate boundaries.

Provide instruction and support that reflects high expectations for all students and responds to individual needs.

Foster the development of students' knowledge, skills, and character necessary for responsible participation in society.

Demonstrate accountability, integrity, and sound professional judgment; maintain accurate representation of credentials; and engage in continuous professional growth.



Collaborate with colleagues, families, and the broader School community to support student learning and well-being while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Comply with all applicable federal and state laws, including mandated reporting requirements, and all School policies.

Professional Boundaries and Staff-Student Relationships

Employees must maintain clear, appropriate, and professional boundaries with students at all times, taking into account the age and developmental level of the students. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their conduct, whether in person, electronic, or otherwise, does not create the appearance of impropriety.

Expectations for maintaining appropriate boundaries include, but are not limited to:

- **Transporting Students:** Employees may transport students only when authorized by the School and in accordance with School policy. Unauthorized or informal transportation of students is prohibited.
- **Photographs and Videos:** Employees may take or possess photos or videos of students only for legitimate educational or School-related purposes and in accordance with School policy. Personal or non-approved use is prohibited.
- **Communication and Contact Outside Professional Role:** Employees shall not engage in private, personal, or non-school-related communications with students. Any communication outside of school-sanctioned purposes must be transparent, appropriate, and, where required, include parental or administrative awareness.
- **Meetings Outside School Grounds:** Employees shall not meet with students outside of School-sponsored activities or without prior authorization and appropriate safeguards.

All employees must comply with the School's Relationships with Students Policy, which provides additional guidance on appropriate interactions.

Prohibition on Sexual Misconduct

The School strictly prohibits sexual misconduct involving students.

"Sexual misconduct" means any act, including but not limited to verbal, nonverbal, written, electronic communication, or physical activity, by an employee or agent with direct student contact that is directed toward or with a student to establish a romantic or sexual relationship. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual or romantic invitations
- Dating or soliciting a date



- Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialogue
- Making sexually suggestive comments directed toward or involving a student
- Self-disclosure or exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature
- Any sexual, indecent, romantic, or inappropriate physical contact with a student

Reporting Responsibilities

Employees are required to report any known or suspected violations of this Code, including boundary concerns or sexual misconduct.

All employees are mandated reporters under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act and must immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with the law and School policy.

Employees must also comply with reporting obligations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, including reporting sexual harassment or misconduct involving students.

Concerns about boundary violations or misconduct must be promptly reported to the Head of School or a designated administrator. Employees must not ignore, minimize, or fail to act on concerning behaviors, even if observed indirectly.

Training Requirements

The School provides required training to employees in accordance with State and federal law, including:

- Mandated reporter training on child abuse and neglect
- Training on the prevention and recognition of sexual abuse and grooming behaviors
- Training on educator ethics and this Employee Code of Professional Conduct
- Training on Title IX obligations and reporting requirements

Employees are expected to participate in all required training and apply this knowledge in their daily professional responsibilities.

Employment Practices and Prior Conduct

The School is committed to maintaining a safe environment by exercising due diligence in hiring and employment practices, including seeking information, as permitted by law, regarding prior violations of professional conduct or staff-student boundary expectations.



Policy Distribution and Accessibility

This Code will be:

- Posted on the School's website, if available
- Included in employee, student, and parent handbooks, as applicable
- Provided to all employees and agents of the School

Violations of Policy

Any violation of this Code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Failure to report a known or suspected violation of this Code may also result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Acknowledgment

All employees are required to review, understand, and comply with this Employee Code of Professional Conduct as a condition of their employment and continued service to the School.