Policy

STAFF CONDUCT

Code **GBEB** *Issued* 11**/26**

The board expects all staff members to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in their conduct with students, parents/legal guardians, and coworkers. For the purpose of this policy, staff includes, but is not limited to, employees, contract service providers, school volunteers, student teachers, and interns.

All staff members are expected to act with integrity and honesty both on-duty and off-duty and be aware of the policy framework that governs staff behavior and day-to-day work performance. Staff must act in a manner that is consistent with the district's policies and sets a positive example for all.

To that end, in conduct (including conduct communicated or performed in person, in writing, and/or electronically), interpersonal relationships, and dress all staff members should recognize that they are being continuously observed by students, other staff members, parents/legal guardians, and members of the community and that their actions and demeanor may impair their effectiveness in their position. When interacting with students in all curricular and extracurricular activities, whether on or off campus, both online and off-line, staff members are expected to exercise good judgment and to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to an educational setting and consistent with the educational mission of the district.

The relationship between staff members and students in the district should be one of cooperation, understanding, mutual respect, and trust. All staff members will also treat each other with professional respect.

The personal life of staff member, including personal use of privately-owned electronic equipment outside of working hours, such as email, text messages, instant messages, or social media, will be the concern of and warrant the attention of the board only as it may directly prevent the staff member from effectively performing his/her assigned job duties or disrupts the educational environment or as it violates state or federal law, board policy, or contractual agreements.

Staff members are permitted to engage in private religious expression on the same terms as students, provided such conduct does not pressure, coerce, direct, or encourage students or other staff to participate in acts of religious expression. Staff will not communicate or act in a manner that suggests they are speaking or acting on behalf of the school or district regarding religious matters.

No staff member will engage in criminal conduct or commit or attempt to induce students or others to commit an act or acts of criminal conduct which may be harmful to others or bring discredit to the district. If it appears a staff member may have violated the law, the district will report the offending conduct to and cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

Staff, while on duty and in the presence of students, will not use profanity, will not use tobacco in any form, and will not consume or be under the influence of intoxicating substances. Staff members will not be involved in drug abuse or drug trafficking.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of actions that are considered misconduct while on duty, on or off district premises:

- possessing, using, selling, manufacturing, distributing, or dispensing any illegal drugs or alcohol while on duty, on or off district premises
- fighting or deliberately harming another individual
- being absent without approval
- refusing to follow a supervisor's instructions or directions
- neglect of duty (including, but not limited to, failure to follow a student's Individualized Education Program or 504 Plan, leaving students unsupervised, failure to discipline with consistency and/or failure to maintain proper building or classroom discipline, failure to take appropriate affirmative action when confronted with or after witnessing a situation in which a student is at risk of abuse or mental or physical injury, and/or inability or failure to effectively plan and present an organized lesson plan)
- failing to adhere to safety and health rules as established by state and federal law and board policy
- stealing, destroying, or vandalizing school property intentionally or through negligence; staff will be responsible for reimbursing the district for the cost of repairing or replacing damaged or stolen property
- possessing weapons on school property (unless otherwise authorized by law)
- behaving in an inappropriate manner to the extent of adversely affecting the staff member's ability to perform his/her work and/or disrupting the educational environment
- using obscene language or demeaning or derogatory language which is unsuitable in the school setting
- communicating obscene visual material to a student or another staff member
- any behavior, overt or covert, of a sexual nature that may constitute professional misconduct and/or is a violation of law or board policy
- disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment, or other private concerns to students
- disclosing information concerning a student, other than directory information, to any person not authorized to receive such information
- harassment, intimidation/bullying, or discrimination of, or retaliation against, a student or staff member
- inciting students or other staff members to engage in illegal activity
- asking students to keep secrets

The board understands that there are circumstances when staff members have personal relationships with the families of students outside of school. The intent of this policy is not to prohibit all social contact between staff and families outside of school. However, because of the trust placed in staff by the community, and the district's responsibility to protect the well-being of students, staff members are expected to avoid the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students at all times.

Staff members are encouraged to discuss concerns with their supervisor whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct or activities may constitute a violation of this policy.

Staff members are required to notify a supervisor immediately if they become aware of a situation or behavior that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Violations of this policy by staff may be grounds for immediate suspension and possible termination of employment consistent with state and federal law and board policy. In such cases, a staff member will be informed of his/her right to any hearing or due process procedure that may be applicable under state or federal law or board policy.

Violations of this policy by other individuals in the district community, including, but not limited to, contract workers, volunteers, student teachers, and interns, may be grounds for the immediate termination of the program, activity, or job for which the individual is a participant.

Arrest of Staff Member

The board delegates specific authority to the superintendent to take appropriate employment action with regard to a staff member who has been arrested. Staff members will report or cause to be reported all arrests to supervisors immediately.

Staff members arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate no danger or appearance of danger to students, fellow staff, or the district will generally not be subject to any employment action.

Staff members arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate a possible danger or appearance of danger to the school district, fellow staff, or to students will generally be suspended with pay, pending adjudication.

Staff members arrested for a misdemeanor offense which would indicate a possible danger or appearance of danger to students but not to the school district or fellow staff will generally be reassigned to different responsibilities away from students within the district, if such position is available, pending adjudication.

Staff members arrested for a felony offense will generally be suspended with pay, pending adjudication.

In certain circumstances, other employment action may be taken, up to and including termination.

Cf. GBEBB

Adopted ^11/26

Legal References:

A. S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:
    1. Section 16-3-755 - Sexual battery with a student.
    2. Section 16-23-420, *et seq*. - Concealed weapons; school property exception.
    3. Section 59-25-430 - Teacher dismissal; evident unfitness for teaching.

Section 59-25-450 - Teacher suspension.