

**This Receipt of Document Form will need to be signed  
in front of me. Please keep all the attached  
documents**



**RECEIPT OF DOCUMENTS**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY SIGNATURE, BELOW, CONFIRMS THAT I HAVE RECEIVED A WRITTEN COPY OF THE SOMERSET AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT'S *POLICY FOR MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL ADULT/STUDENT BOUNDARIES*, THE DOCUMENT ENTITLED *THE APPROPRIATE ADULT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP* AND THE DOCUMENT ENTITLED *TIPS TO AVOID GROOMING AND OTHER INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT*.**

**I UNDERSTAND THAT FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY OR THE ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS DESCRIBED IN THESE DOCUMENTS WILL RESULT IN CRIMINAL ACTION, EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION, REPORTS TO THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHIDLINER, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND TO ANY OTHER AGENCY OR ENTITY DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE SOMERSET AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT. THIS APPLIES TO MY CONDUCT DURING AND OUTSIDE OF SOMERSET AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT-RELATED DUTIES AND CONDUCT.**

**FURTHER, I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE REQUIREMENTS IN THESE DOCUMENTS.**

**EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESS SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_



## **THE APPROPRIATE EMPLOYEE/SCHOOL EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER – STUDENT RELATIONSHIP**

In Pennsylvania, school attendance is compulsory and thus parents are mandated to entrust their children to our education system. As a result of this mandate, “trust” has evolved into the operative foundation of the relationship of students with ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND VOLUNTEERS. It is from this foundation that the duty of employees to act as a fiduciary in their students' best interest and to create and maintain a safe environment for their students derives. As codified in the Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators, which states in Section 4, Article 10 that:

*"Professional educators shall exert reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions which interfere with learning or are harmful to the student's health and safety."*

This applies to ALL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES.

The overwhelming majority of school employees in Pennsylvania exercise their fiduciary responsibilities with care and conviction. The few who breach their duties, however, undermine the profession and leave a trail of devastation, particularly with student victims. Approximately 60-70% of the Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Practices Commission's (PSPC's) cases each year involve some type of sexual misconduct, including criminal convictions for sexual offenses, boundary violations with students, and misuse of school equipment such as computers to access sexually explicit materials.

For purposes of professional discipline, the PSPC interprets the term “sexual misconduct” very broadly. Thus, in addition to criminal offenses where the victim may or may not be a student, the PSPC considers sexual misconduct to include any act or conduct directed towards or with a child or a student of a romantic or sexual nature regardless of the age of the child or student, including any sexual, romantic or erotic contact with the child or student as well as any verbal, non-verbal, written or electronic communication or physical activity designed to establish a romantic or sexual relationship, including but not limited to:

- A. sexual or romantic invitations;
- B. dating or soliciting dates;

- C. engaging in sexualized dialogue;
- D. making suggestive comments;
- E. exposure;
- F. self-disclosure of a sexual or erotic nature; and
- G. exchange of gifts with no educational purpose.

The conduct described above is often referred to as “grooming.” It has been our experience that when a employee enters into an inappropriate relationship with a student, the employee violates the recognized student-employee boundary and thereby redefines the boundary inappropriately. While some employees intentionally groom a student for the purpose of engaging in sexual misconduct, others fall prey to the “slippery slope” of misconduct. For example, the employee-student relationship may initially be appropriate, but at some point the relationship shifts to serving the needs of the employee and not the needs of the student. There may be an increase in the frequency of interaction as well as an increased level of intimacy, which ultimately may lead to a sexual relationship.

In many cases, the employee takes on a new role with a student, which causes the traditional relationship to become blurred. When employees become confidants, friends or counselors of students, a dual relationship is created which creates an ambiguity in the student-employee relationship where roles are less defined. This ambiguity helps to foster inappropriate actions and educator misconduct.

For new employees, this ambiguity can sometimes be difficult to recognize. In some cases, a new employee may be just a few years older than the students and may mistakenly view them as peers. They may share common interests, the same musical tastes, and possibly even an overlapping circle of friends. Moreover, because of the demanding nature of the first years of teaching, a new employee may spend less time with his or her family and may begin seek students as a support system.

In addition, employees also bring their own unique vulnerabilities to work. Employees who are experiencing difficulties in their personal lives or are socially or emotionally immature may be particularly susceptible to the “slippery slope”. The attention, admiration and sometimes adoration bestowed by students on a employee can be overwhelming, particularly when a employee is emotionally vulnerable. While there is no single profile of an offender, typical vulnerabilities

include viewing students as peers, suffering from adult relationship issues, immaturity, need for attention, a sense of invulnerability, absence of a developed personal moral compass and lack of personal crisis management skills. Learning to recognize one's own vulnerabilities is the first step in avoiding misconduct with students. Every decision made by an employee with respect to his or her students should be prefaced with the question: "**Whose needs are being met by my course of action?**" There can only be one acceptable answer to this question ---- the needs of the student! Betraying the trust of students, parents, the profession and the community is never acceptable.

It is incumbent on all employees to safeguard the well-being of their students from dangers inside and outside of school. Employees must not only zealously guard against putting their needs before their students, but must also work to ensure that their colleagues conform to the appropriate standard of ethical practice as well. The employment and certification repercussions for engaging in sexual misconduct or inappropriate relationships with students are grave. Employees who ignore their responsibilities can be assured that their conduct will trigger discipline which in all likelihood will include the loss of employment and the suspension and/or revocation of their certification.

### ***Suggested Readings***

Myers, K (2005). *Employees Behaving Badly*. New York: RoutledgeFarmer.

Fibkins, W. L. (2006) *Innocence Denied: A Guide to Preventing Sexual Misconduct by Employees and Coaches*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Taken from: <http://www.pspc.education.pa.gov/Promoting-Ethical-Practices-Resources/Ethics-Toolkit/Unit3/Pages/The-Employee---Student-Relationship.aspx>

## **Tips to Avoid Grooming and Inappropriate Conduct**

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all tips to avoid inappropriate conduct or the appearance of inappropriate conduct by a school employee with a student. Common sense and attention to detail are always key.

While it is good for faculty, staff, and administrators to build rapport and respect with students, caution must be exercised at all times. **We can and will make sure our students know we care about them without crossing a romantic line.**

1. Know, with absolute certainty, that the Somerset Area School District takes all accusations seriously and investigates every single claim, including engaging legal advisors and law enforcement, and making required ChildLine reports, when inappropriate, romantic, grooming, or sexual conduct is suspected. Appropriate discipline, up to and including termination, will occur, when warranted. We always hope that law enforcement and other agencies determine that accusations are unfounded, but we do leave it up to authorities to make that determination.
2. Do not objectify others in the workplace. If students hear employees or other school employees speaking about a person's appearance ("she's a 10," "he's hot"), an inappropriate message is sent. Even if you are not speaking to or about a student, you should not be commenting about your assessment of a person's attractiveness. In your interactions with adults, students, and when talking about others, be a model of respectful and non-sexual conduct for students at all times.
3. When you need to have an educationally-relevant conversation with a student, ensure that you are in a setting where you are **not** alone and **not** in a secluded area of a building. For instance, if a student wants to talk to you about his or her grade, choose hallways with passersby and/or cameras, keep the door to your classroom open, don't cover the window in your door, and position yourself behind your desk with the student on the other side, when

speaking to students without others present. The goal is for the encounter to *not be* or *appear to be*, private.

4. Studies have shown that professional attire helps draw the line between student and adult. Although we do not have a formal dress code, jeans and t-shirts or other very casual clothing (other than on designated dress-down-for-a-cause days, which are known to students) can convey a less formal message and create a less professional environment that develops a perception that you are “one of them.” Your clothing serve as a symbolic division between employee and student and can create a healthier environment for respect and classroom engagement.
5. Do not “friend” your students on personal social media accounts, such as FaceBook, Instagram, Snapchat, or others. Social media can serve as a convenient way to create good public relations and communicate important updates to parents. If you have a classroom page (not your personal page) where you update parents/guardians, keep it open to the public, or at a minimum, open to all your students’ parents/guardians and colleagues--along with students--and use it for general class announcements or displays of student work (without names).
6. If you have a classroom (or a club or team page if you are a coach or advisor) social media page (likely FaceBook), you can “friend” both the students and their parents/guardians, as well as co-advisors and assistant coaches, with that account to make announcements and communicate in a timely manner *with the group*. This keeps messages from being private. You’ll need to be careful that the messages are short, factual, and not able to be interpreted differently than your intended meaning, and not call out any particular student.
7. Keep your personal social media pages private and be careful who you “friend.” Students having access to events in your personal life gives them a feeling that they know you better than they do and perhaps that your relationship is closer than it is.

8. Do not use the instant messaging features of personal or classroom/club/team social media applications to individually message a student or group of students.
9. Do not call or text students personally. Coaches and club advisors sometimes “group text” their clubs or teams with updates, such as “Practice is cancelled tonight,” or “Don’t forget to turn in your field trip permission form.” If you communicate in this fashion, be sure the message is short, factual, and not able to be interpreted differently than your intended meaning, **and addressed to the whole group**. Also, include a co-advisor or assistant coach in these messages. That way, another adult is involved in the communication.
  - a. Do not communicate coaching decisions or provide critique or constructive criticism via texting.
  - b. Make it clear right from the start that you will not respond to individual texts or calls and that questions should be asked to the group.
10. As a coach or advisor, if you need to meet with a player about playing time, performance, constructive criticism, or other matters that should not be discussed in front of the team or group, have an assistant coach present. Do not invite the student or player to the meeting via text or any private message.
11. NEVER respond to personal texts or social media instant messages from individual or small groups of students. If you are contacted privately in this fashion, keep the message and tell your building principal and/or the superintendent immediately.
12. Do not touch a student unless you are preventing him/her from injury or from injuring someone else, such as keeping him or her from falling, restraining a student from hitting someone, etc.
13. Do not ask a student to meet you privately inside or outside of school.



14. Be careful to not appear to “play favorites” or appear to do so, as an employee, coach or advisor.
15. Smiles, high fives, kind words or praise for specific accomplishments or efforts, and fist bumps are the best ways to outwardly react positively to students’ achievements. Avoid hugs, when possible, and do not initiate a hug. Comforting a child who just fell and cut his or her knee on the playground, in front of other students and the adults supervising play time, is not the same as initiating physical contact in everyday circumstances.
16. Maintain a positive and friendly relationship with students, but be careful to not be overly casual or too personal. This can be a tight line to walk, but all school employees need to be cognizant of it.
17. Do not transport students in your personal vehicle.
18. Do not ride in a student’s vehicle.
19. Do not invite students to your home.
20. If you feel, for any reason, that a student is having romantic feelings towards you, tell your building administrator or superintendent immediately. Document all out-of-the-ordinary behaviors or encounters with this student and keep your building principal apprised of all unusual or concerning behaviors.
21. It is inadvisable to engage in a romantic relationship with a person who was once your student or could have been your student, i.e., the person may not have been on your class roster, but you knew him or her as a direct result of your job in the District. As described above, doing so can create the appearance that grooming has occurred.
22. Do not “self-disclose” to a student or group of students. Students need not know details of your personal life, such as information about personal relationships, serious health issues, your personal worries, etc. This is

different than talking about March Madness basketball games with your students or sharing that you have allergies when you are sneezing and sniffing all spring. Don't make them feel like personal confidantes.

23.If a student confides in you or shares personal information, worries, stressors, etc., offer to meet with the student and the guidance counselor or social worker to make him or her more comfortable with guidance or social work services. If the student does not wish to do so, inform the appropriate guidance counselor or social worker immediately and let the student know that you care and you want them to seek the best advice possible from those who are trained to provide it.

24.Do not initiate a conversation about his or her worries, stressors, relationships, etc. with your students. If you have concerns, refer the student to the guidance counselor, social worker, or administrator.

25.Do not buy personal gifts for students. Providing a treat for the whole class is fine, but buying earrings or Pirates tickets for a student is not. Providing clothing, school supplies, or food items for a student in need is different than personal gifts, too. Be sure to make your building principal aware of the need and if you provide such items to a student. You may discover that there are many avenues to help the student that do not necessarily involve you spending your own money or appearing to favor a particular student.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your immediate supervisor or any Somerset Area School District administrator (including the Superintendent), **and, when applicable, your union** for assistance.

# SOMERSET AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: OPERATIONS

TITLE: MAINTAINING  
PROFESSIONAL  
ADULT/STUDENT  
BOUNDARIES

ADOPTED: May 8, 2017

REVISED:

1. Authority	<b>824. MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL ADULT/STUDENT BOUNDARIES</b>
SC 510	<p>This policy applies to district employees, volunteers, student teachers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as <b>adults</b>. The term <b>adults</b> as used in this policy, does not include district students who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.</p> <p>All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with district students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct.</p> <p>The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.</p> <p>This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the district or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include district students.</p>
2. Definition	<p>For purposes of this policy, <b>legitimate educational reasons</b> include matters or communications related to teaching, counseling, athletics, extracurricular activities, treatment of a student's physical injury or other medical needs, school administration, other purposes within the scope of the adult's job duties, or otherwise identified and/or defined by Administration.</p>
3. Delegation of Responsibility	<p>The Superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the district website, and by other appropriate methods.</p>

<p>4. Guidelines</p>	<p>The building principal or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.</p> <p>Independent contractors doing business with the district shall ensure that their employees who have interaction with students or are present on school grounds are informed of the provisions of this policy.</p> <p>Adults shall establish and maintain appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that is prohibited by this policy or that creates the appearance of prohibited behavior.</p> <p><u>Prohibited Conduct</u></p> <p><i>Romantic or Sexual Relationships –</i></p> <p>Adults shall be prohibited from dating, courting, or entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any student enrolled in the district, regardless of the student’s age. Students of any age are not legally capable of consenting to romantic or sexual interactions with adults.</p> <p>Prohibited romantic or sexual interaction involving students includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sexual physical contact.</li><li>2. Romantic flirtation, propositions, or sexual remarks.</li><li>3. Sexual slurs, leering, epithets, sexual or derogatory comments.</li><li>4. Personal comments about a student’s body.</li><li>5. Sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures.</li><li>6. Spreading sexual or romantic rumors.</li><li>7. Touching a student’s body or clothes in a sexual or intimate way.</li><li>8. Accepting massages, or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care administered by an athletic trainer, coach, or health care provider.</li><li>9. Restricting a student’s freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner.</li></ol>
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10. Displaying or transmitting sexual objects, pictures, or depictions.
11. Or any such other interaction identified and/or defined by the Administration.

*Social Interactions –*

In order to maintain professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with students are appropriate.

Examples of prohibited conduct that violates professional boundaries include, but are not limited to:

1. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students.
2. Exchanging notes, emails or other communications of a personal nature with a student.
3. Giving personal gifts, cards or letters to a student without written approval from the building principal.
4. Touching students without a legitimate educational reason. (Permissible exceptions include: need for assistance when injured, having a toileting accident and requiring assistance, appropriate coaching instruction, or appropriate music instruction).
5. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional adult-student relationship.
6. Taking a student out of class without a legitimate educational reason.
7. Being alone with a student behind closed doors without a legitimate educational reason.
8. Initiating or extending contact with a student beyond the school day or outside of class times without a legitimate educational reason.
9. Sending or accompanying a student on personal errands.
10. Inviting a student to the adult's home.
11. Going to a student's home without a legitimate educational reason.
12. Taking a student on outings without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.

Pol. 103, 103.1,  
248

13. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a nonemergency situation without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.
14. Addressing students or permitting students to address adults with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
15. Telling a student personal secrets or sharing personal secrets with a student.
16. For adults who are not guidance/counseling staff, psychologists, social workers or other adults with designated responsibilities to counsel students, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, the student should be referred to the appropriate school resource.
17. Furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to a student or being present where any student is consuming these substances.
18. Engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct prohibited by other district policies or by state or federal law and regulations.
19. Or any such other conduct identified and/or defined by the Administration.

*Electronic Communications –*

For purposes of this policy, **electronic communication** shall mean a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, emails, instant messages and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and other networking websites.

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students.

Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational reasons only.

When available, district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices shall be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices shall be in accordance with district policies and procedures.

<p>Pol. 248</p>	<p>All electronic communications from coaches and advisors to team or club members shall be sent in a single communication to all participating team or club members, except for communications concerning an individual student's medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the communications will be copied to the building principal. In the case of sports teams under the direction of the Athletic Director, such medical or academic communications shall also be copied to the Athletic Director.</p> <p>Adults shall not follow or accept requests for current students to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites and shall not create any networking site for communication with students other than those provided by the district for this purpose, without the prior written approval of the building principal.</p> <p><u>Exceptions</u></p> <p>An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out in this policy. The adult shall be prepared to articulate the reason for any deviation from the requirements of this policy and must demonstrate that s/he has maintained an appropriate relationship with the student.</p> <p>Under no circumstance will an educational or other reason justify deviation from the "Romantic and Sexual Relationships" section of this policy.</p> <p>There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a student's family, e.g., when their children become friends. This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.</p> <p>It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through nondistrict-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include district students. Such community involvement is commendable, and this policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in those roles; however, adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity with regard to all youth with whom they interact in the course of their community involvement.</p> <p><u>Reporting Inappropriate or Suspicious Conduct</u></p> <p>Any person, including a student, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and a student, shall immediately notify the Superintendent, principal or other administrator.</p>
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<p>23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6311 Pol. 806</p>	<p>All district employees, independent contractors and volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, shall immediately report the suspected abuse, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p>
<p>24 P.S. Sec. 2070.9a Pol. 317.1</p>	<p>An educator who knows of any action, inaction or conduct which constitutes sexual abuse or exploitation or sexual misconduct under the Educator Discipline Act shall report such misconduct to the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the required form, and shall report such misconduct to the Superintendent and his/her immediate supervisor, within fifteen (15) days of discovery of such misconduct.</p>
<p>SC 1302.1-A, 1303-A Title 22 Sec. 10.2, 10.21, 10.22 23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6311 24 P.S. Sec. 2070.9a Pol. 317.1, 805.1, 806</p>	<p>If the Superintendent or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act or the Safe Schools Act, the Superintendent or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p> <p>It is a violation of this policy to retaliate against any person for reporting any action pursuant to this policy or for participating as a witness in any related investigation or hearing.</p>
<p>Pol. 248, 348</p>	<p><u>Investigation</u></p> <p>Allegations of inappropriate conduct shall be promptly investigated in accordance with the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment.</p> <p>It is understood that some reports made pursuant to this policy will be based on rumors or misunderstandings; the mere fact that the reported adult is cleared of any wrongdoing shall not result in disciplinary action against the reporter or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the reporter, or a witness is found to have intentionally provided false information in making the report or during the investigation or hearings related to the report, or if any individual intentionally obstructs the investigation or hearings, this may be addressed as a violation of this policy and other applicable laws, regulations and district policies. Obstruction includes, but is not limited to, violation of "no contact" orders given to the reported adult, attempting to alter or influence witness testimony, and destruction of or hiding evidence.</p>



Pol. 317	<p><u>Disciplinary Action</u></p> <p>A district employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable district disciplinary policies and procedures.</p> <p>A volunteer, student teacher, or independent contractor or an employee of an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in district schools for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the Superintendent or designee.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <p>The district shall provide training with respect to the provisions of this policy to current and new district employees, volunteers and student teachers subject to this policy.</p> <p>The district, at its sole discretion, may require independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds to receive training on this policy and related procedures.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1302.1-A, 1303-A</p> <p>State Board of Education Regulations – 22 PA Code Sec. 10.2, 10.21, 10.22</p> <p>Educator Discipline Act – 24 P.S. Sec. 2070.1a et seq.</p> <p>Pennsylvania’s Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators – 22 PA Code Sec. 235.1 et seq.</p> <p>Child Protective Services Law – 23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6301 et seq.</p> <p>Board Policy – 103, 103.1, 248, 317, 317.1, 348, 805.1, 806</p> <p>PSBA New 10/15 <span style="float: right;">© 2015 PSBA</span></p>
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**Book**  
**Policy Manual**

**Section**  
**300 Employees**

**Title**  
**Conduct/Disciplinary Procedures**

**Number**  
**317**

**Status**  
**Active**

**Authority**

All administrative, professional and support employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with appropriate and orderly behavior. Effective operation of District schools requires the cooperation of all employees working together and complying with a system of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures, applied fairly and consistently.

The Board requires employees to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with students at all times.[1]

The Board directs that all District employees shall be informed of conduct that is required and is prohibited during work hours and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.[2][3]

**Delegation of Responsibility**

All District employees shall comply with state and federal laws and regulations, Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures. District employees shall endeavor to maintain order, perform assigned job functions and carry out directives issued by supervisors.[2]

When engaged in assigned duties, District employees shall not participate in activities that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Physical or verbal abuse, or threat of harm, to anyone.[4]

2. Nonprofessional relationships with students.
3. Causing intentional damage to District property, facilities or equipment.
4. Forceful or unauthorized entry to or occupation of District facilities, buildings or grounds.
5. Use, possession, distribution, or sale of alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances.[5]
6. Use of profane or abusive language.
7. Breach of confidential information.
8. Failure to comply with directives of District officials, security officers, or law enforcement officers.[6]
9. Carrying onto or possessing a weapon on school grounds without prior authorization from the appropriate school administrator.[7]
10. Violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules or procedures.[6]
11. Violation of federal, state, or applicable municipal laws or regulations.[6]
12. Conduct that may obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with teaching, research, service, operations, administrative or disciplinary functions of the District, or any activity sponsored or approved by the Board.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Progressive Discipline**

It is the policy of the District that discipline be administered in a manner that corrects improper conduct. Progressive steps will be followed except in instances that do not lend themselves to progressive discipline.

Appropriate disciplinary action will be based on factors such as the severity, frequency, and degree of deviation from District goals and objectives.

Depending on the circumstances of the matter, the District may, at its discretion, bypass any of the following steps in imposing discipline.

***Written Warning:***

Written warnings are issued for situations that are deemed less serious in nature or that have occurred on a one-time basis. Written warnings must be documented with the date and details of the incident and shared with the employee.

***Written Reprimand:***

A written reprimand will be issued when the behavior of the employee is more serious or follows the issuance of a written warning. Examples of problems which may result in a written reprimand include but are not limited to disruptions in the workplace, failure to follow proper work procedure or business practice, or a disciplinary violation following a written warning.

***Suspension:***

Suspension may be imposed when an employee has failed to perform to acceptable standards following a reprimand or for serious infractions. Suspension may also be imposed when there is a need to remove the employee from the workplace while an investigation is conducted or to protect the health, safety, or welfare of others. Suspensions may vary in length, according to the severity of the offense.

Suspension notices must include, at minimum, the reason(s) for the discipline and the inclusive dates of the suspension. Prior to imposition of any suspension, the employee must be contacted and given the right to respond.

***Dismissals:***

Employees may be discharged after other disciplinary actions have failed or when a first time incident occurs that is extremely serious. An employee may be discharged at any time without regard to any progressive steps if s/he commits an offense for which immediate discharge is warranted or if, in the District's judgment, the employee's continued employment would be adverse to the District or its employees.

When demotion or dismissal charges are filed against a certificated administrative or professional employee, a hearing shall be provided as required by applicable law. Non-certificated administrative and support employees may be entitled to a Local Agency Law hearing, at the employee's request. [8][6][9][10][11][12][13][14]

***Appeals:***

Disciplined employees may appeal the discipline imposed in accordance with applicable contract, collective bargaining agreement, Board policy, and/or law. [15]

***Disciplinary Records:***

Copies of all disciplinary actions and appeals must be given to the employee and the Human Resources Office for inclusion in the employee's personnel file.[16]

**Arrest or Conviction Reporting Requirements**

Employees shall use the designated form to report to the Superintendent or designee, within seventy-two (72) hours of the occurrence, an arrest or conviction required to be reported by law.[17][18]

Employees shall also report to the Superintendent or designee, in writing, within seventy-two (72) hours of notification, that the employee has been named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report pursuant to the Child Protective Services Law.[19]

An employee shall be required to submit new criminal history background checks if the Superintendent or designee has a reasonable belief that the employee was arrested or has been convicted of an offense required to be reported by law, and the employee has not notified the Superintendent or designee.

An employee shall be required to submit immediately a new child abuse history certification if the Superintendent or designee has a reasonable belief that the employee was named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report or has provided written notice of such occurrence. [17]

Failure to accurately report such occurrences may subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination and/or criminal prosecution. [15][17]

**Legal**

**1. 22 PA Code 235.10**

**2. 24 P.S. 510**

**3. 24 P.S. 514**

**4. Pol. 317.1**

**5. Pol. 351**

**6. 24 P.S. 1122**

**7. Pol. 317.2**

**8. 24 P.S. 1121**

**9. 24 P.S. 1126**

**10. 24 P.S. 1127**

**11. 24 P.S. 1128**

**12. 24 P.S. 1129**

**13. 24 P.S. 1130**

**14. 2 Pa. C.S.A. 551 et seq**

**15. Pol. 326**

**16. Pol. 324**

**17. 24 P.S. 111**

**18. 24 P.S. 2070.9a**

**19. 23 Pa. C.S.A. 6344.3**

**24 P.S. 1151**

**22 PA Code 235.1 et seq**

**24 P.S. 2070.1a et seq**

**23 Pa. C.S.A. 6301 et seq**

**Pol. 000**

