

STAFF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

The South Portland Board of Education expects all staff members, including teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators and others, to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their conduct with students. For the purposes of this policy, staff members also include school volunteers.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust; an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting; and consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

Prohibited Conduct

Examples of unacceptable conduct by staff members that are expressly prohibited include but are not limited to the following:

Any type of sexual or inappropriate physical contact with students or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;

Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the normal teacher-student relationship, including using email, IM, chat rooms, telephone or letters for this purpose.

For non-guidance/counseling staff, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members are expected to be supportive and to refer the student to guidance/counseling or other appropriate staff. In either case, staff involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance.

Sexual banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos with students; and

Disclosing personal, sexual, family, or employment concerns, and/or other private matters to one or more students.

Before engaging in the following activities, staff members will review the activity with their building principal or supervisor, as appropriate:

Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home;

Visiting a student's home, unless on official school business;

Giving or exchanging gifts of value.

Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for meals or movies, shopping, traveling, and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events except as participants in organized community activities.

Staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students. Staff members are encouraged to discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of this policy.

Reporting Violations

Students and/or their parents/guardians should notify the principal (or other appropriate administrator) if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates the intent of the policy.

Staff members should promptly notify the appropriate building administrator or Superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy and jeopardize the well being of a student.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this policy shall result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations involving sexual or other abuse will also result in referral to the Department of Human Services and/or law enforcement in accordance with the Board policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Policy to be Included in Handbooks

This policy shall be included in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks.

Cross Reference: ACAA-Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
 JLF-Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
 JL & GBI – Gifts

Adopted: November 13, 2002