

FRATERNIZATION (Employee)

Except as expressly allowed by this Policy, "fraternization" among New Hanover County Schools employees is prohibited.

The term "fraternization" as used in this Policy is defined as a situation when two employees of the New Hanover County Schools are in a "supervisory/subordinate relationship" and also in a "personal relationship", with each other at the same time. For purposes of this Policy only, teacher interns and administrative interns shall be considered employees.

The term "personal relationship", as used in this Policy, is defined as two (2) employees getting engaged or married, becoming domestic partners or entering into a romantic or sexual relationship or affair with each other.

The phrase "supervisory/subordinate relationship", as used in this Policy, is defined as a situation when one (1) employee directly supervises or evaluates the other.

Prior to engaging in a "personal relationship", employees in a "supervisory/subordinate relationship", shall both report their intent in writing to the Superintendent or designee, or if appropriate, to the Board Chairperson.

Employees who so report their intent to enter into a "personal relationship" shall be allowed to begin and continue such relationship only as follows:

- If one (1) or the other employee accepts a voluntarily transfer to another position in the New Hanover County Schools that is available and eliminates the "supervisory/subordinate relationship" with the other employee and which is approved by the Superintendent or designee; or
- If one (1) or the other employee voluntarily resigns from employment with the New Hanover County Schools.

In the event that employees engage in "fraternization" in violation of this Policy, they shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Such disciplinary action may also include, but may not necessarily be limited to, the involuntary transfer or demotion of either employee.

In the event that an employee is promoted, assigned or transferred to a position in which he or she will have a "supervisory/subordinate relationship" with a person which whom he or she already has a "personal relationship", neither employee shall be in violation of this Policy as long as they report their "personal relationship" as provided in this Policy immediately upon learning of the promotion, assignment or transfer. In such case, the subordinate employee shall be transferred to a comparable position as soon as such position becomes available. Until such transfer of the subordinate employee takes place the subordinate employee shall not be supervised, evaluated or disciplined by the supervisory employee and the Superintendent or designee shall assign someone to supervise, evaluate and handle discipline matters involving the subordinate employee.

If an employee knows that he or she is being considered for a promotion, assignment or transfer to a position which will create a "supervisory/subordinate relationship" with a person with whom he or she already has a "personal relationship", such employee shall notify Superintendent or designee, of such "personal relationship". The Board and Superintendent reserve the right not to hire, promote, assign or transfer employees into positions which would create a situation of "fraternization" despite the fact that such employees may otherwise be the best qualified candidates for the position.

Nothing in this Policy shall require the Superintendent to transfer an employee to another position in an effort to avoid fraternization if doing so would not be in the best interest of the New Hanover County Schools or its efficient administration.

Nothing in this Policy shall require new positions to be created or for employees to be promoted to avoid fraternization.

Nothing in this Policy may be interpreted as condoning improper or adulterous relationships, or any form of immoral or disreputable conduct by employees.

Nothing in this Policy may be interpreted as preventing or inhibiting the non-renewal of employment contracts or disciplinary action against employees up to and including dismissal, under circumstances that, absent this Policy, would justify non-renewal, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

In compliance with federal laws, New Hanover County Schools administers all educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Adopted: 02/15/14