



Policy GBH : STAFF/STUDENT RELATIONS

Status : ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 09/08/2003 | Last Revised Date: 02/23/2012

Definitions

*Educational Purpose* – A reason associated with the staff member's duties in the district including, but not limited to: instruction, counseling, the treatment of a student's physical injury, or coordination of an extracurricular activity, depending on the staff member's job description.

*Staff Member* – For the purposes of this policy, a staff member is any individual employed by the district, including part-time and substitute employees. For the purposes of this policy, a “staff member” will also include student teachers.

*Student* – Individuals currently enrolled in the Columbia School District No. 93.

General

Staff members are expected to maintain courteous and professional **relationships** with students. All staff members have a responsibility to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning through consistently and fairly applied discipline and the maintenance of physical and emotional boundaries with students. These boundaries must be maintained regardless of the student's age, the location of the activity, whether the student allegedly consents to the **relationship** or whether the staff member directly supervises the student. Maintaining these boundaries is an essential requirement for employment in the district. All students and staff will treat each other with respect.

No employee may use his or her status as an employee to adversely influence a student of the district. In general, employees may only meet with district students off campus if it is for an educational purpose and with the principal’s knowledge. Employees who know students through interactions outside the school environment, such as participation in community activities, church or neighborhood contacts, may meet with students off campus with parental knowledge. These rules apply to interactions with any district student, regardless of whether the employee works in the same school building the student attends.

Although this policy applies to the **relationships** between staff members and district students, staff members who inappropriately interact with any child may be disciplined or terminated when the district determines such action is necessary to protect students.

Absolute Prohibitions

There are some interactions between staff members and students that are never acceptable and are absolutely prohibited including, but not limited to:

1. Touching, caressing, fondling or kissing students in a sexual or sexually intimate manner.
2. Dating a student or discussing or planning a future romantic or sexual **relationship** with a student. The district may presume that this provision has been violated if a staff member begins a dating or sexual **relationship** with a student immediately after graduation or immediately after a student has left the district.
3. Making sexual advances toward a student or engaging in a sexual **relationship** with a student.
4. Engaging in any conduct that constitutes illegal harassment or discrimination as defined in policy AC or that could constitute a violation of that policy if pervasive.
5. Engaging in any conduct that violates Board policies, regulations or procedures or constitutes criminal behavior.

Electronic Communication

Staff members are encouraged to communicate with students and parents/guardians for educational purposes using a variety of effective methods, including electronic communication. As with other forms of communication, staff members must maintain professional boundaries with students while using electronic communication regardless of whether the communication methods are provided by the district or the staff member uses his or her own personal electronic communication devices, accounts, webpages or other forms of electronic communication.

The district's policies, regulations, procedures and expectations regarding in-person communications at school and during the school day also apply to electronic communications for educational purposes, regardless of when those communications occur. Staff communications must be professional, and student communications must be appropriate. Staff members should limit real time, two-way electronic communication with students to reasonable hours. Staff members may use electronic communication with students as frequently as necessary to accomplish the educational purpose.

1. When communicating electronically with students for educational purposes, it is best practice for staff members to use district-provided devices, accounts and forms of communication (such as computers, phones, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and district-sponsored webpages or social networking sites), when available. If district-provided devices, accounts and forms of communication are unavailable, staff members communicating electronically with students must do so in accordance with number two below. Staff members may communicate with students using district-provided forms of communication without first obtaining supervisor approval. These communications may be monitored. With district permission, staff members may establish websites or other accounts on behalf of the district that enable communications between staff members and students or parents/guardians. Any such website or account is considered district sponsored and must be professional and conform to all district policies, regulations and procedures.
2. A staff member's supervisor may authorize a staff member to communicate with students using the staff member's personal telephone numbers, addresses, webpages or accounts (including, but not limited to, accounts used for texting) to organize or facilitate a district-sponsored class or activity if the communication is determined necessary or beneficial, if a district-sponsored form of communication is not available, and if the communication is related to the class or activity. The district will provide notification to the parents/guardians of students participating in classes or activities for which personal electronic communications have been approved. Staff members may be required to send the communications simultaneously to the supervisor if directed to do so. Staff members are required to provide their supervisors with all education-related communications with district students upon request.

3.       Staff use of any electronic communication is subject to the district's policies, regulations and procedures including, but not limited to, policies, regulations, procedures and legal requirements governing the confidentiality and release of information about identifiable students. Staff members who obtain pictures or other information about identifiable students through their connections with the district are prohibited from posting such pictures or information on personal websites or personal social networking websites without permission from a supervisor.
4.       The district discourages staff members from communicating with students electronically for reasons other than educational purposes. When an electronic communication is not for educational purposes, the staff member must be prepared to demonstrate that the communications are appropriate. This policy does not limit staff members from communicating with their children, stepchildren, other relatives or other persons living within the staff member’s home who happen to be students of the district.

Reporting

Any person, including a student, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a **relationship** or activities between a staff member and a student should bring this concern immediately to the attention of the principal, counselor or staff member's supervisor. If illegal discrimination or harassment is suspected, the process in policy AC will be followed.

Any staff member who possesses knowledge or evidence of possible violations of this policy must immediately make a report to the staff member's immediate supervisor. All staff members who know or have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse shall immediately report the suspected abuse in accordance with Board policy. Staff members must also immediately report a violation or perceived violation of the district's discrimination and harassment policy (AC) to the district's nondiscrimination compliance officer. Staff members may be disciplined for failing to make such reports.

The district will not discipline, terminate or otherwise discriminate or retaliate against a staff member for reporting in good faith any action that may be a violation of this policy.

Training

The district will provide training to district staff that includes current and reliable information on identifying signs of sexual abuse in children and potentially abusive **relationships** between children and adults. The training will emphasize legal reporting requirements and cover how to establish an atmosphere where students feel comfortable discussing matters related to abuse.

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***Note:** The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.*

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**Policy Reference Disclaimer:**These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State Reference	Description
\$162.069, RSMo.	<a href="#">State Statute</a>
\$168.114, RSMo	<a href="#">State Statute</a>
\$210.115, RSMo.	<a href="#">State Statute</a>
MO COURT	<a href="#">Ross v. Robb, 662 S.W.2d 257 (Mo. 1983)</a>
Federal Reference	Description
20 U.S.C. § 1681	<a href="#">Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972</a>
FED COURT	<a href="#">Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ., 526 U.S. 629 (1999)</a>
FEDERAL COURT	<a href="#">Gebser v. Lago Vista Ind. Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274 (1998)</a>
Policy Reference	Description
AC	<a href="#">PROHIBITION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION</a>
EHB	<a href="#">TECHNOLOGY USAGE</a>
JG	<a href="#">STUDENT DISCIPLINE</a>
JHG	<a href="#">REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT</a>
KB	<a href="#">PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM</a>