

**STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES**

**Purpose: To establish an employee code of conduct**

**I. Communication**

Employees shall communicate in an appropriate and professional manner, avoiding abusive language and profanity in written, verbal, and nonverbal communication. Employees shall avoid improper communications through social media with students, coworkers, and the school community, including those actions outlined in the "Electronic Communications with Students" section of this policy.

**II. School Division Resources**

- A. Employees shall use school division resources, including physical property and technology, only for legitimate school business, and are expected to devote all effort to legitimate school business while at work unless on a recognized break.
- B. Nothing in this provision, however, prohibits employees from reasonable and occasional use of school division resources and working time for personal purposes, including but not limited to the following:
  - 1. Personal use of the school division's internet connection (Wi-Fi) on a personal device;
  - 2. Access to personal email accounts; and/or
  - 3. Personal phone calls related to personal health or care of dependents or other family members, where such calls cannot be scheduled during recognized breaks and are brief enough to not require use of leave.

**III. Alcohol, Weapons, Drug-Free Work Environment**

Employees shall comply with the Stafford County Public Schools (SCPS) requirement that an alcohol-free, weapons-free, and drug-free environment be maintained.

**IV. Achievement of Division Goal**

- A. Employees shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and all school board policies, regulations, and notices.
- B. Employees shall be committed to the achievement of the Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

#### **V. Professional Behavior**

Consistent with the school board's expectation that all school employees will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner so as to promote the best interests of SCPS:

- A. All SCPS employees shall be role models for the students of the school division. All employees must recognize that as a condition of their employment in a *world-class* educational system, they are expected to model legal, ethical, moral, respectful, and civil behaviors, both in and outside of the workplace.
- B. All employees shall demonstrate professional and ethical standards, as well as personal integrity, in all interactions in both the workplace and community. They shall also demonstrate a high level of professional performance consistent with their assigned duties, responsibilities, and continuous improvement. Employees shall work in a collegial and collaborative manner with peers, school personnel, and the community to promote and support student learning.
- C. Regular attendance is an essential function of all positions. Whether employees are present on school property or working remotely from other locations, they are expected to work the hours required to complete their assignments satisfactorily, including any alternative schedules or work assignments approved by their supervisors.

#### **VI. Non-Discrimination**

All employees must exhibit respect for all manner of diversity among students, staff, and the community, and must adhere to all school board policies and regulations prohibiting discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, religion, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, mental or physical disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender

identity, or any other characteristic prohibited by state and/or federal law.

Conduct, words, and other communications or behaviors which create or contribute to a hostile work environment, or those directed toward coworkers, subordinates, or supervisors which are or could be perceived as being disrespectful of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, religion, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, mental or physical disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic prohibited by state and/or federal law will not be tolerated.

## **VII. Employee-Student Relations**

- A. At no time shall an employee's conduct or relationship with a student impede or negatively affect the student's education or participation in educational programs or services.
- B. Employees shall report to the administration any instance in which the employee suspects that a student has been subjected to discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment at school, through school-related electronic communications, during school-sponsored activities, or during transportation to or from school or school-sponsored activities.
- C. Employees shall not use their positions, their influence or their authority over students to make personal demands upon students unrelated to the purposes of their education.
- D. Employees must recognize and establish appropriate boundaries between themselves and students, and must not engage in any behavior or interaction with students, in person or through any electronic communication, which could be perceived as inappropriate, intimate, grooming, or harassing in nature. Accordingly, the following standards shall apply to all interactions between employees and students:
  - 1. No employee shall engage in communication with a student, either in person or through electronic, telephone, video, or other mode of communication, in a manner that is excessive, inappropriate,

- unduly familiar, intimate, or sexual in nature, at any time, regardless of location.
2. Employees shall not engage in intimate, unduly familiar, or sexual conduct with any student at any location in or outside of school.
  3. Employees shall not cause any student to miss instructional time or school-sponsored activities for non-educational purposes.
  4. Employees shall not allow any student to occupy or drive an employee's personal vehicle without the knowledge and consent of the student's parent or guardian.
  5. Employees shall not assist or encourage a student's use of controlled substances, including but not limited to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, and shall not attend any function where students are in possession of or using such substances.
  6. Employees shall not purposefully meet with a student outside school or school activities without the knowledge and consent of the student's parent or guardian.
  7. Employees shall not solicit, discuss, propose, or arrange any personal, intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship with a current SCPS student, even if the proposed relationship does not or would not occur until after the student reaches the age of majority and graduates or leaves SCPS.
  8. Employees who have reason to believe, or are advised by their supervisor, that their interactions with a student are inappropriate, unduly familiar, intimate, grooming, or sexual in nature, shall take all reasonable measures to immediately correct the same, including termination of any inappropriate electronic or other non-school related communications.
  9. Employees shall not help a student to falsify or conceal information related to the student's health, safety, or welfare.
  10. Any employee who becomes aware of a possible violation of these standards by any other SCPS employee shall report the same to his/her immediate supervisor or the director of Human Resources. Any employee who has reason to suspect that a violation of these standards has occurred which may constitute child abuse or neglect has a duty to report the suspected violation under the

procedures set forth in Regulation 4205-R,  
Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect.

#### **VIII. Electronic Communications with Students**

- A. Employees may use electronic communications with students using school-approved devices and on school-approved platforms only for legitimate purposes connected to school programs or services, including participation in remote learning, athletics and extracurricular activities.
- B. Employees conducting remote teaching shall ensure that their communications with students are school-related in nature. Such virtual classroom communications may be made directly with students only through programs and platforms approved by SCPS.
- C. Electronic mail communications with students shall be sent only through official SCPS email accounts.
- D. Employees shall not communicate with students using cellular telephones or social media applications, unless such communications are for the purposes set forth in paragraph A. above and are necessary for effective communication with a student. Examples include communications with students regarding meeting times or location changes, sports practice announcements, meeting locations on field trips, etc. This paragraph does not apply to relatives of students whose communications are personal or to legitimate communications relating to community activities involving the student (e.g., civic clubs, church, non-school sports, etc.).
- E. Employees shall not provide students with access or invitations to their own personal social media sites, nor shall employees access the personal social media sites of students, other than for school-related purposes. This paragraph does not apply to relatives of students whose communications are personal or to legitimate communications relating to community activities involving the student (e.g., civic clubs, church, non-school sports, etc.).

#### **IX. Relations with Coworkers and Supervisors**

Employees are expected to maintain a civil, respectful, and polite demeanor in all interactions with coworkers and supervisors. Failure to do so reflects a lack of judgment,

professionalism, and control which is unacceptable in a school environment.

**X. Threats Against Other Employees, Students, or School Property**

No employee shall threaten the person, family, property, health, or mental wellbeing of any student or other employee or the safety of SCPS schools, students, staff, or property, either in person or through any electronic communication. Such threats will be referred to law enforcement authorities for criminal prosecution in accordance with Virginia Code §18.2-60 or other applicable statute.

**XI. Conduct Outside the Workplace**

The school board recognizes that employees have the right to conduct their personal lives separate from their positions as school board employees. However, employees must also recognize their duty to maintain that separation and their unique position as public school employees who serve the school community as role models, leaders, and instructors of students. In that regard, school employees are held to a higher standard of ethical and moral behavior, both in school and in the community.

Conduct or actions of school employees occurring outside school which undermine the employee's position as a role model or which reflect negatively on the reputation of the school division, jeopardize the trust of the school board and community in the employee's integrity, or have a negative impact on school operations and student education, can serve as a basis for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:

- A. Drug or alcohol abuse that becomes open or notorious;
- B. Conviction of a felony, a crime of moral turpitude, other criminal offenses, or a finding of child abuse or neglect;
- C. Inappropriate social networking activities on internet sites or other public media; and
- D. Other conduct or statements by employees which are incompatible with their status as role models or which reflect unfitness to carry out the duties of their position.

**XII. Professional Appearance**

Employees shall dress in a professional manner that is neat, clean, appropriate, and safe in the workplace, at school-sponsored activities, and when representing SCPS.

**XIII. Confidentiality**

Employees shall not disclose any confidential student records or information unless the release has been authorized by the student's parent or legal guardian, or by the adult student (age 18 or older or emancipated), or is allowed or required by law in compliance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), the *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA) or other state or federal laws.

**XIV. Conflict of Interest**

Employees shall not profit financially or personally from any situation that conflicts with compensation provided by Stafford County Public Schools, and shall comply with the *State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act* (Virginia Code §2.2-3100 et. seq.)

**XV. Failure to Adhere**

Failure to adhere to these standards of employee conduct shall constitute insubordination and/or misconduct and other good and just cause for disciplinary action, up to and including nonrenewal of or dismissal from employment.

The Executive Director of Human Resources (or designee) is responsible for implementing, monitoring and reviewing these Standards of Professional Conduct for All Employees.

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06/23/20 Adopted by School Board