

Policy Code: 4040/7310 Staff-Student Relations

The board expects all employees to maintain the highest professional, moral, and ethical standards in their interactions with students. Employees are required to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning through consistently and fairly applied discipline and established and maintained professional boundaries. Employees are expected to motivate each student to perform to his or her capacity while modeling the behavior expected of students in staff-student relationships.

The interactions and relationships between staff and students must be based upon cooperation, mutual respect, and an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students inside and outside the educational setting. Employees are expected to demonstrate good judgment and to avoid the appearance of impropriety in their interactions with students. Employees must consult their supervisor when they suspect or are unsure whether conduct is inappropriate or otherwise constitutes a violation of this or other board policy.

For this policy, the terms “staff” and “employees” include independent contractors, school safety officers, and volunteers, but do not include student employees or student volunteers.

A. Romantic Relationships and Sexual Contact Prohibited

All employees are prohibited from dating, courting, entering into a romantic relationship, or having sexual contact with any student enrolled in the school system, regardless of the student’s age. Employees engaging in such inappropriate conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, and may be subject to criminal action as provided in [G.S. 14-202.4](#) and [14-27.32](#). Further, school system personnel shall provide no assistance to an employee in finding another job, beyond the routine transmittal of personnel or administrative files, if the employee engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor or a student in violation of the law.

B. Restrictions on Electronic Communications

1. In accordance with policy 7335, Employee Use of Social Media, employees are prohibited from communicating with current students through non-school-controlled social media without parental permission except to the extent that the employee and student have an appropriate relationship that originated outside of the school setting. Any communication through social media authorized under policy 7335 must meet the professional standards established in this policy and otherwise be consistent with the law and all other board policies.
2. Instant messages will be treated as a form of communication through social media subject to the terms of policy 7335 and subsection B.1 above, regardless of whether the messaging service is provided through a social media service or otherwise.
3. Employees are prohibited from engaging in other forms of one-to-one electronic communications (e.g., voice, voice mail, email, texting, and photo or video transmission) with students without written prior approval of the employee’s supervisor and the student’s parent. This rule shall not apply, however, if one or more of the following circumstances exist:
 - a. the communication (1) is for an educational purpose, (2) is conducted through a school system-provided platform that archives all such communications for at least three years; (this requirement does not apply to telephone or voice mail communications), or is conducted via an electronic video-conferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Webex, Google Meet) that the superintendent or designee has

approved for instructional use and (3) occurs after the employee has given prior notice to his or her supervisor or designee that such communications will occur; and when they will occur unless the communication occurs during pre-determined office hours or during asynchronous blocks of time when teachers are providing live instruction support;

b. the communication serves an educational purpose and is simultaneously copied or transmitted to the employee's supervisor or designee and, upon request, to the parent or guardian;

c. the communication is necessary in a bona fide emergency, provided the communication is disclosed to the supervisor and parent or guardian as soon as reasonably possible or

d. the communication derives from a relationship or association outside of the school setting and occurs with the parent or guardian's consent, provided such communication does not otherwise violate this or another board policy.

Any one-to-one electronic communication permitted by this subsection must meet the professional standards established in this policy and be consistent with the law and all other board policies.

4. It is the duty of every employee to notify his or her supervisor of any unsolicited one-to-one communication, in any form, electronic or otherwise, received from a student when the communication lacks a clear educational purpose. School counselors are excluded from this requirement because it conflicts with their professional duties.

5. Violations of this section will be considered unprofessional behavior subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal. Factors that may be relevant to the determination of an appropriate disciplinary response to unauthorized communications with students include, but are not limited to:

a. the content, frequency, subject, and timing of the communication(s);

b. whether the communication(s) was appropriate to the student's age and maturity level;

c. whether the communication(s) could reasonably be viewed as a solicitation of sexual contact or the courting of a romantic relationship, including sexual grooming;

d. whether there was an attempt to conceal the communication(s) from the employee's supervisor and/or the student's parent or guardian;

e. whether the communication(s) created a disruption of the educational environment; and

f. whether the communication(s) harmed the student in any manner.

C. Reporting Inappropriate Conduct

1. Reporting by Employees

Any employee who has reason to believe any of the following shall immediately report that information to the superintendent or designee:

- a. that another employee is involved in a romantic or other inappropriate relationship or has had sexual contact with a student;
- b. that another employee has engaged in other behavior prohibited by this policy; or
- c. that the employee has witnessed behavior by another employee that appears improper, whether or not the behavior may have a valid purpose.

An employee who fails to inform the superintendent or designee, as provided in this section, may be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

2. Reporting by Students

Any student who believes that he or she or another student has been subject to misconduct that violates this policy should immediately report the situation to the principal, school counselor, or the Title IX coordinator designated in policy 1720/4030/7235, Title IX Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex.

3. Report of Criminal Misconduct

Any principal with reason to believe that a student has been the victim of criminal conduct shall immediately report the incident per policy 4335, Criminal Behavior.

4. Report to the State Board of Education

Any administrator, including the superintendent, a deputy/associate/assistant superintendent, a personnel administrator, or a principal, who knows, has reason to believe, or has actual notice of a complaint that a licensed employee has engaged in misconduct resulting in dismissal, disciplinary action, or resignation shall report the misconduct to the State Board of Education within five days of dismissal, determination of disciplinary actions, or acceptance of resignation. If the employee resigned within 30 days of a complaint for misconduct or during an ongoing investigation of a complaint, the misconduct is presumed to have resulted in the resignation. For purposes of this subsection, “misconduct” is conduct that would justify the automatic revocation of the employee’s license pursuant to [G.S. 115C-270.35\(b\)](#) or the infliction of physical injury against a child other than by accident or in self-defense. Failure to report misconduct is a felony and may result in the suspension or revocation of an administrator’s license by the State Board of Education.

This reporting requirement applies in addition to any duty to report suspected child abuse in accordance with state law and policy 4240/7312, Child Abuse – Reports and Investigations, as applicable.

Legal References: Elementary and Secondary Education Act, [20 U.S.C. 7926](#); Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, [20 U.S.C. 1681](#) *et seq.*, [34 C.F.R. pt. 106](#); [G.S. 14-27.32](#), [-202.4](#); [115C-47\(18\)](#), [-270.35\(b\)](#), [-326.20](#); [16 N.C.A.C. 6C.0372](#), [.0373](#), [.0601](#), [.0602](#); State Board of Education Policy [EVAL-014](#)

Cross References: Governing Principle – Removal of Barriers (policy 1700), Title IX Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex (policy 1720/4030/7235), Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Process (policy 1725/4035/7236), Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Process (policy 1726/4036/7237), Student and Parent Grievance Procedure (policy 1740/4010), Child Abuse – Reports and Investigations (policy 4240/7312), Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited (policy 4329/7311), Criminal Behavior (policy 4335), School Volunteers (policy

5015), Staff Responsibilities (policy 7300), Employee Use of Social Media (policy 7335)

Adopted:

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Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools
