

First reading: 4/26/2022

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Adopted by the School Committee: 5/24/2022

8300: Professional Conduct with Students

Students

Philosophy

The East Greenwich School District (“District” or “EGSD”) is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of students and employees, and creating and maintaining a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment and workplace. The District affirms the responsibility of employees and District partners to abide by the standards of professional conduct, to act as role models, and to promote the dignity, health, and safety of students while maintaining professional relationships with students, at all times.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and standards of conduct to ensure that the relationship between “District employees” and students is professional and respectful, and to promote appropriate workplace behavior. This policy covers conduct that takes place both on and off District property, and both during and outside of the school day. The policy also pertains to all forms of communication that may occur between employees and students, at any time. This policy applies to all individuals registered and enrolled as a student in the District, regardless of age (“Students”), as well as District employees and “District Partners,” which include District contractors, consultants, vendors, representatives from outside organizations, and volunteers, including coaches, who work with or have contact with students.

This policy shall be incorporated by reference into all school, employee, and athletic handbooks. The District shall use its best efforts to distribute these handbooks on an annual basis, and obtain a signed acknowledgment of these provisions by all students, employees, and coaches.

Standards of Conduct

The relationship between District employees/Partners and Students must be of a professional nature at all times. District employees/partners are encouraged and expected to foster positive and supportive relationships with students. This includes recognizing students’ unique abilities, talents, and challenges, and treating all students with dignity and respect in all interactions.

Appropriate professional and personal boundaries must be maintained, and EGSD employees/Partners may not engage in any inappropriate behavior, or behavior that could reasonably lead to the appearance of inappropriate conduct, regardless of the student’s age,

whether the student or the employee initiates the behavior, and regardless of whether the student reciprocates the attention.

These standards apply to actions that take place both on and off District property, during and outside of the school day as well as to all forms of communication that occur between District employees/District Partners and Students, at any time, and on any social media platforms.

Prohibited Conduct

Examples of prohibited conduct between District employees/District Partners and Students include, but are not limited to:

- a. Dating Students. Includes, but is not limited to, a social interaction, preplanned or not, in which the purpose is to initiate or continue a relationship outside the scope of the normal school-related encounter that is romantic and/or sexual in nature.
- b. Engaging in a Romantic Relationship with Students. Includes a relationship in which a District employee or Partner dates, exchanges personal affection, engages in intimate or sexually suggestive communication, and/or engages in any form of sexual or physical intimacy with a student.
- c. Making romantically or sexually suggestive comments to or about a student.
- d. Fostering, encouraging, or participating in emotionally or socially inappropriate intimate relationships with a student(s).
- e. Direct communication with students for any reason through methods that include, but are not limited to, telephone calls, text messages, email to a non-District email address, social media, and direct messages through social media platforms.

District employees/Partners may only communicate with students using student District-issued email addresses; District-sanctioned social media accounts formed for educational, school-related purposes; or via third-party District-sanctioned applications that are also accessible by District faculty, administrators, and parents. See District [Policy #13010 Social Media](#).

Under exigent circumstances related to immediate health and safety of a student, a school or district administrator may contact a student directly.

For certain specified field trips or non-school sponsored activities, a District employee may engage in direct communication with students with prior, express written consent from a parent or guardian.

- f. Providing drugs or alcohol to students or consuming drugs or alcohol in the presence of Students on school property, during a school or District-sponsored event, or otherwise in their capacity as a District employee/Partner.
- g. Discussing sexual matters outside of an appropriate educational context, including the use of sexual jokes, slang, or innuendo.
- h. Commenting on a student's physical appearance or body in any manner that can have the effect of objectifying the student and/or compromising the student's social and emotional well-being.
- i. Touching students punitively or touching Students in any way that could be construed as romantic or sexually suggestive, including but not limited to intimately touching, brushing up against another's body, pinching, fondling, or massaging.
- j. Displays of inappropriate or unwanted physical affection.
- k. Accepting or giving gifts that could be deemed inappropriate, excessive or outside a professional student/teacher relationship.
- l. Meeting alone with a student on school premises in an area that is secluded or that is not openly accessible/visible to others, such as a room without windows or without visibility through a door.
- m. Athletic coaches may not be alone with an athlete in an area that is secluded or that is not openly accessible/visible to others, such as a room without windows or without visibility through a door. If a coach wants to meet or speak 1:1 with an athlete, that meeting must be observable and interruptible. This includes at away games or practice fields, off of school premises.

Reporting Prohibited Conduct with Students

Students or their families who wish to report a violation of this Policy may do so by completing this [online form](#), or by notifying a District faculty or staff member, including a teacher or principal. Students and families are encouraged to follow the protocol outlined in EGSD Policy #1235 Community/District Communication Protocol; however, students may communicate a complaint to any District employee with whom they feel comfortable. Students and families are encouraged to document all reports in writing. Faculty and staff in receipt of a report of Prohibited Conduct must document all communications and maintain all evidence relevant to the initial report and subsequent actions and communications.

While addressing complaints under this policy, the EGSD will attempt to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances. The EGSD will not tolerate any attempt at retaliation against any person who in good faith makes or assists in making a complaint under this policy, or provides truthful information or cooperates in an investigation of a complaint. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy. Concerns about attempted retaliation should be raised and will be handled in the same manner as any other concern under this policy.

Knowingly lodging a false complaint may result in disciplinary and/or legal action against the complainant.

Any District employee/Partner who has direct or indirect knowledge of Prohibited Conduct outlined in this Policy must immediately report the conduct to the Human Resources office and may do so by emailing hr@egsd.net. The Human Resources office will document all reports, and determine whether to pursue further action in accordance with [Policy #1215 Title IX](#). If the incident does not warrant a Title IX investigation, Human Resources will provide said documentation to the superintendent who shall designate an investigator and determine if there has been a violation of this Policy.

In addition, all District employees/Partners are required to follow the mandatory reporting requirements required under state law for reporting suspected child abuse/neglect in accordance with [Policy #4210 Child Abuse and Neglect](#). Consistent with Policy #4210, District administrators will report instances of Prohibited Conduct to the East Greenwich Police Department, and seek advice from legal counsel regarding further law enforcement involvement as appropriate.

Reports to the Superintendent and to the School Committee: The Superintendent of Schools shall provide the School Committee with data on an annual basis that includes the incidents of violations of this policy that have taken place. Such data will include a statement describing what remedial action has been taken to address such violations.

Supportive Measures

Members of school support staff shall be available to support and guide Students affected by Prohibited Conduct, including but not limited to providing Supportive Measures as outlined in District [Policy #1210 Non-Discrimination and Complaint Resolution](#). Supportive measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling;
- Extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments;
- Modifications of work or class schedules;
- Supervision at arrival, dismissal, lunch and/or recess;
- Mutual restrictions on contact between the parties; and/or

- Increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the school grounds.

Violations

Violation of any part of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or relationship as District Partner.

References:

EGSD [Policy #1210 Non-Discrimination and Complaint Resolution](#)

EGSD [Policy #1215 Title IX](#)

EGSD [Policy #1235 Community/District Communication Protocol](#)

EGSD [Policy #4210 Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[EGSD Policy #5225 Educator Code of Professional Responsibility](#)

[EGSD Policy #6120 School Visits/Volunteers](#)

[EGSD Policy #8245 Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment](#)

EGSD [Policy #10310 Social Media](#)