Staff Interaction with Students

Administrative Procedure 2.A.090

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference:
Legal Reference:

Date Adopted: October, 2012
Date Amended: October, 2023
Date Reviewed: Nov, 2017; April, 2019; March, 2022

Background

The purpose of this policy is to clarify and affirm Board expectations of all adults in interactions with students in the school district. For the purpose of this document, “adult” refers to any person working, volunteering or otherwise interacting with students.

The School District of Mystery Lake seeks to establish an environment where anyone in the school community feels safe to come forward with concerns of adult misconduct towards students.

It is expressly recognized that all employee groups are subject to collective agreements, terms and conditions of employment, professional and/or union codes as well as legislation. This procedure does not supersede or replace such documents and statutory requirements, but rather provides a set of common expectations for adult-student interactions applicable to all employee groups and other adults (i.e. parents and volunteers) who interact and engage with school district students.

This procedure will be reviewed annually with all staff. Awareness and understanding of this procedure will strengthen a working culture in the school district, which is already committed to student safety, security and well-being.

Expectations for Adults Interacting With Students

This procedure does not address every possible situation or provide an exhaustive review of acceptable and unacceptable conduct. It provides a framework within which the Board expects adults to exercise common sense and good judgment when interacting with students. It endeavors to find a balance between encouraging positive and appropriate interactions between adults and students, and discouraging inappropriate and harmful interactions.

The Adult's Position of Trust and Authority

i. An adult is not a peer of the students. Adults are in a position of trust and authority in relationship to students and therefore their interactions with students must focus on meeting the educational needs of the student.
ii. In working with students, adults must take great care that their actions and motivations will not be misinterpreted. The burden of responsibility and accountability rests with the adult.
iii. The onus is on the adult to remove him/herself from any physical or verbal contact with students that could lead to the initiation or perception of any form of abuse, harassment or exploitation.

Personal and Professional Boundaries

i. Adults must respect each student's right to personal boundaries in all interactions. Some students may be able to tell the adult if they are uncomfortable with the comments or conduct of the adult. Other students may be reluctant to communicate their discomfort due to the adult's position of authority over them. It is the responsibility of the adults to be sensitive to, and respectful of, the personal boundaries of all students whether or not the student communicates discomfort with the interaction.
ii. When interacting with a student, an adult is advised to consider the appropriateness of his/her conduct in relation to such factors as the student's age, developmental level, cultural and educational background.
iii. If a student's behaviour toward an adult is, or appears to be, of a sexual nature, the adult must let the student know the behaviour is inappropriate and not allow it to continue. If an adult has an interaction with a student which is cause for concern he/she should discuss the situation immediately with an administrator, his/her supervisor, director, or superintendent. Adults are expected to refer matters beyond their expertise or role to the appropriate district or community resource person.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour are:

Adults are expected to behave in a manner that maintains and enhances public trust in the school district and models appropriate behaviours to students. **The following examples are not exhaustive but illustrative.**

i. Examples of Acceptable Behaviour are:
   - Respectful language, tone and attitude towards students;
   - Respect for students' personal/physical boundaries;

- School-related communication with students through the use of District email with a copy to the student's parent/guardian, or by telephone through the student's family phone;
- Supporting diversity within the school population (e.g. ethnic groups, cultural ceremonies)

ii. Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour are:

- Humiliation of students (e.g. demeaning comments, intimidation);
- Physical or corporal discipline;
- Discrimination or harassment;
- Being under the influence of recreational drugs and alcohol while supervising or interacting with students;
- Disrespectful language towards students;
- Sharing or soliciting overly personal/private information;
- Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by telephone, email, texting or letters;
- Being "friends" on a social networking site;
- Engaging in any sexual behaviour with a student, with or without consent;
- Inappropriately disclosing confidential student-related information (beyond a "need-to-know" basis);
- Asking students to keep secrets;
- Visiting a student's home, unless on official school business;
- Inviting or allowing students to visit the staff member's home;
- Socializing or spending time with students outside of school-sponsored events except as participants in organized community activities;
- Transporting student to or from home on a regular basis.

Reporting Violations

Students and/or their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal or superintendent if they believe a staff member may have engaged or is engaging in conduct that may violate this policy.

Any employee, who has reason to believe that another employee is inappropriately involved with a student, as described above, is required to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

An employee who fails to inform the appropriate authorities (principal or superintendent) of a suspected inappropriate relationship between an employee and a student, may be subject to disciplinary action. Violations involving sexual, or other abuse, will also result in a referral to the R.C.M.P. or Child and Family Services.