



To: All Employees

From: Randy Hodges

Date: January 13, 2015

The Lauderdale County School Board passed at the December 18, 2014 meeting a Staff/Student Non-fraternization policy. Attached is a copy. This policy was drafted by the Mississippi School Board Association and is being used across the state. I encourage each of you to read this policy carefully and note it is in line with the Mississippi Code of Ethics. As you know, school district employees across the state have lost their credentials and have been terminated due to inappropriate words and actions via the Internet. However, as you also know technology is a powerful educational tool and will continue to be used in Lauderdale County to its full potential for educational purposes. The key is responsible and appropriate use. I appreciate your commitment to this district and the ideals and values we stand for.

District Name: Lauderdale County School District

Section: G Personnel

Policy Code: GABB Staff/Student Non-fraternization

Policy:

Adults who have contact with children and adolescents through school activities have the responsibility not to betray or misuse their privileged position and shall never take advantage of students' vulnerability or of their confidence.

It is the policy of the Board of Education to prohibit any sexual relationship, contact or sexually nuanced behavior or communication between a staff member and a student, while the student is enrolled in the school system. The prohibition extends to students of the opposite sex or the same sex as the staff member, and applies regardless of whether the student or the staff member is the initiator of the behavior and whether or not the student welcomes or reciprocates the attention.

Staff Guidelines For Non-Fraternization

Staff members are expected to use good judgment in their relationships with students both inside and outside of the school context including, but not limited to, the following guidelines:

1. Staff members shall not make derogatory comments to students regarding the school and/or staff.
2. Staff-sponsored parties, at which students are in attendance, unless they are a part of the school's extracurricular program and are properly supervised, are prohibited.
3. Staff members shall not fraternize, written or verbally, with students except on matters that pertain to school-related issues.
4. Staff members shall not text students, except with one-way communication. Staff members may not participate in any student blogs.
5. Staff members shall not associate with students at any time in any situation or activity which could be considered sexually suggestive or involve the presence or use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
6. Staff members shall not date students. Sexual relations with students, regardless of age and/or consent, are prohibited and will result in dismissal and criminal prosecution.
7. Staff members shall not use insults or sarcasm against students as a method of forcing compliance with requirements or expectations.
8. Staff members shall maintain a reasonable standard of care for the supervision, control, and protection of students commensurate with their assigned duties and responsibilities.
9. Staff members shall not send students on personal errands.
10. Staff members shall, pursuant to law and Board policy, immediately report any suspected signs of child abuse or neglect.
11. Staff members shall not attempt to counsel, assess, diagnose or treat a student's personal problem relating to sexual behavior, substance abuse, mental or physical health and/or family relationships but instead, should refer the student to appropriate school personnel or agency for assistance, pursuant to law and Board policy.
12. Staff members shall not disclose information concerning a student, other than directory information, to any person not authorized to receive such information. This includes, but is not limited to, information concerning assessments, ability scores, grades, behavior, mental or physical health and/or family background.

Social Networking

All employees, faculty and staff of this school district who participate in any form of social networking websites such as, but not limited to, FaceBook, Instagram, or Twitter, shall not post any data, documents, photos or inappropriate information on any website that might result in a disruption of classroom activity. The determination of appropriateness will be made by the principal and/or Superintendent.

Employees, faculty and staff shall not give social networking website passwords to students. Fraternalization via the internet between employees, faculty or staff and students is prohibited and violation of any of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Access of social networking websites for individual use during school hours is prohibited.

Nothing in this policy prohibits employees, faculty, staff or students from the use of educational websites.

Annual Reminder To Staff

The Superintendent and the school principals will annually review the Mississippi Code of Ethics and remind of the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. Any distractions of this nature will be viewed as a violation of the Mississippi Code of Ethics and many result in disciplinary action. The orientation and reminders will give special emphasis to:

1. Improper fraternization with students using (but not limited to) text messaging, emails, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc, and similar internet sites or social media networks
2. Inappropriateness of posting items with sexual content
3. Inappropriateness of posting items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs and alcohol
4. Examples of inappropriate behavior from other districts, as behavior to avoid
5. Posting comments which may be deemed derogatory toward the school, district, or another employee.
6. Monitoring and penalties for improper use of district computers and technology
7. The possibility of penalties, including dismissal from employment, for failure to exercise good judgment in on-line conduct.

Periodical Searches

The Superintendent or designees will periodically conduct internet searches to see if teachers have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers and/or websites is discovered, the school principals and/or Superintendent will download the offensive material and promptly take proper administrative action.