



# RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

660 West Daley Street

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Spring Green, Wisconsin 53588

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Phone: 608-588-2551

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## **Staff/Student Relationships**

The District expects all staff members, including teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, board members, support staff and others, to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their conduct with students. For the purposes of this policy, staff members also include school volunteers.

All District staff members are expected to accept responsibility for their conduct, and to understand that their conduct may be regarded as representative of the District, and that even off-duty conduct may adversely affect the abilities of a staff member to effectively perform his/her job duties. Staff is expected to abide by a professional standard of conduct and model good citizenship for students, parents, and the community.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust; an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting; and consistent with the educational mission of the schools. Even if a student participates willingly in an activity, prohibited interactions between staff and students (regardless of the student's age) are a violation of this policy.

Specifically, the District expects that its staff maintain appropriate professional relationships with students in particular, and any youth in general, and be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students. Staff members are encouraged to discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of this policy.

Employees must understand that even an appearance of inappropriate relationships will adversely impact their effectiveness in the school environment. Therefore, employees must be diligent in maintaining the highest ethical standards when interacting with youth both inside and outside the school environment and are strictly prohibited from forming such personal relationships with students outside the classroom.

### **GIFTS**

There is no law prohibiting teachers or other staff (except for administrators who qualify as local public officials) from accepting gifts of any value whatsoever unless the gift is given to the teacher for the purpose of selling or soliciting the sale of goods or services to students (Policy 525).

*You may want to revisit the \$25 limitation or establish a different limitation for team or group gifts but you don't want students buying big ticket items for staff members.*

### **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

Staff members are prohibited from engaging in any of the following types of prohibited conduct, regardless of whether the conduct occurs on or off school property or whether the conduct occurs during or outside of school hours. The following list of prohibited conduct does not, and is not intended to, constitute the entire list of conduct for which discipline may be imposed:

- (a) Engaging in any romantic or sexual relationships with students, including dating, flirting, sexual contact, inappropriate physical displays of affection, or sexually suggestive comments

between staff and students, regardless of whether staff or student initiates the behavior, whether the relationship is consensual, or whether the student has parental permission;

- (b) Fostering, encouraging, or participating in inappropriate emotionally or socially intimate relationships with students in which the relationship is outside the bounds of the reasonable, professional staff-student relationship and in which the relationship could reasonably cause a student to view the staff person as more than a teacher, administrator, or advisor;
- (c) Initiating or continuing communications with students for reasons unrelated to any appropriate purpose, including oral or written communication; telephone calls; electronic communication such as texting, instant messaging, email, chat rooms, Facebook, or other social networking sites; webcams; or photographs. Electronic and online communications with students, including those through personal accounts, should be accessible to supervisors and professional in content and tone;
- (d) Socializing with students outside of class time for reasons unrelated to any appropriate purpose;
- (e) Providing alcohol (regardless of age) or drugs – either prescription or illegal (except for those provided in accordance with district policy on medication administration) – to students.

### **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

- (a) Duty to Report. Any person with knowledge or suspicion of an improper relationship between staff and a student must immediately report the conduct to school administration. Nothing in this paragraph is intended to relieve mandated reporters of their obligations under state and local statutes.
- (b) Protection from Retaliation. There shall be no retaliation against students or staff who file reports under this policy.

### **SANCTIONS**

- (a) Discipline. The District will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any staff found to have violated this non-fraternization policy.
- (b) Report Procedures. Reports of suspected fraternization violations by represented staff shall follow the procedures set forth in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary policies in their Employee Handbook. Report of suspected violations by staff that are not part of a bargaining unit shall follow the appropriate administrative policy.

LEGAL REF.:           Section 115.31 Wisconsin Statutes

CROSS REFERENCE:    411.2 Student Harassment/Sexual Harassment  
                              **525 Staff Sales and Solicitations**  
                              524.3 Harassment/Sexual Harassment

APPROVED:           September 8, 1994  
REVISED:            August 8, 2019  
APPROVED:           September 12, 2019