

STAFF ETHICS

I. Introduction

By accepting employment with the Jackson Public School District, employees have a responsibility to the school system, to their fellow employees, parents and community and to the scholars that they serve to adhere to certain standards of behavior, performance and conduct. No set of rules can address all forms of unacceptable behavior. However, generally speaking, the Jackson Public School District expects each of its employees to act in a professional and responsible manner at all times. In addition, examples of some of the more obvious unacceptable behaviors that may subject an employee to disciplinary action, including termination or revocation of certification, are set forth below.

II. Standards of Conduct or Behavior

The effective operation of the school district requires the services of employees with integrity. To maintain and promote these essential traits, all employees of the Jackson Public School District are expected to maintain exemplary standards in their school relationships. School district employees shall not use or attempt to use their official positions to secure any valuable thing or benefit for themselves that would not ordinarily accrue to them in the performance of their official duties, if such thing or benefit would represent a substantial and improper influence upon them with respect to their duties.

Employee standards include the following:

- 1) Maintenance of just and courteous professional relationships with scholars, parents, staff members, community members and others.
- 2) Maintenance and improvement of their own efficiency and knowledge of developments in their fields of work through research, if applicable, and continuing professional development.
- 3) Transaction of all official business with the properly designated authorities of the school system.
- 4) Placement of the welfare of scholars as the first and fundamental concern of the school system in all actions and decisions; thus appointments to positions and promotion must be based solely on merit. The use of pressure on school officials for appointment or promotion is unethical.
- 5) Restraint from using school contacts and privileges to promote partisan politics, sectarian religious views, or selfish propaganda of any kind. Employees should avoid using their positions for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, or other influence. All responsibilities should be fulfilled with honesty and integrity.
- 6) Demonstrated respect towards all staff members and the participation in development of a professional environment District-wide. Constructive criticism related to colleagues or the teaching environment should be made directly to the particular school administrator who has the administrative responsibility for improving the situation and then to the superintendent, if

- necessary. The complaint policy, GAE, is cross-referenced.
- 6) Proper use and protection of all school properties, equipment, and materials.
 - 7) Proper care and use of confidential information and scholar records.
 - 8) Support of the principle of due process.
 - 10) Honor all contracts until fulfillment or release.
 - 11) Obey local, state, and federal laws and regulations in the performance of their job duties.
 - 12) Implement policies of the board of trustees and the administrative rules and regulations of the school district.

III. Prohibited Conduct

Although not exhaustive, any of the following types of conduct by an employee is grounds for discipline, up to and including immediate termination:

- 1) Violation of any board policy or administrative rule, procedure or regulation, including, but not limited to, any board policy or administrative rule, procedure or regulation concerning sexual behavior, discrimination, harassment, alcohol, illegal drugs, unlawful behavior, security or safety.
- 2) Violation of any applicable State Department of Education policy, rule, procedure or regulation, including, but not limited to, any violation of the Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Mississippi Educators.
- 3) Violation of any applicable federal, state or local statute, regulation or ordinance governing public school employees including conflicts of interest.
- 4) Violation of any written rules or procedures published by schools or supervisors to employees, provided that such rules and procedures do not violate or conflict with any board policy or administrative rule, procedure or regulation.
- 5) Engaging in any unlawful behavior, with the exception of minor traffic violations outside of work hours, whether on school district property, on scholar or vendor property, during work time, while in the course of school district business, or otherwise, and whether or not the employee is convicted for such behavior.
- 6) Any federal or state court felony criminal conviction, guilty plea, plea of nolo contendere/no contest, deferred prosecution, or similar criminal convictions, pleas, or deferred prosecutions rendered in a foreign jurisdiction, which is another state or a foreign country. A conviction includes any finding or admission of guilt and/or any imposition of a fine, jail sentence, probation or other penalty.
- 7) Employees of the Jackson Public School District are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect positively on the school district and the community, thus promoting a positive environment for teaching, learning and scholar well-being.

The dignity of scholars and of the educational environment shall be maintained at all times. Unseemly dress, conduct or the use of abusive, foul or profane language in the presence of scholars is expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

- 8) No employee, in the course of his/her duties, who has access to or possesses confidential information relating to his/her employment, shall disclose, divulge or otherwise compromise such information, except as authorized by the superintendent and/or board of trustees. Confidential information includes all private information related to District employees, scholars, and their families that an employee has gained access to through their employment, including, but not limited to, scholar academic and disciplinary records; health, medical, and personnel information; family status/income, and assessment/testing results. Also, all documents and/or information related to proprietary and/or pecuniary information or strategic plans of the District are strictly confidential. This policy strictly prohibits the dissemination of attorney work product and attorney-client privileged communications involving the Office of the General Counsel, including, but not limited to, the district's strategy on matters in negotiation, work product and planning for complaint hearings and litigation relating to employer-employee relations, office memoranda, or other matters relating to employer-employee relations, the premature disclosure of which would jeopardize the district's negotiating position or planning for complaint hearings and litigation.

Confidential information will not include matters disclosed to the general public by the board of trustees, or designees, or matters of non-exempt public records as defined by state law.

The District recognizes the obligation of all employees of the school district to be conscious of their professional responsibility not to divulge confidential information presented by a scholar, parent, a colleague, except as otherwise allowed under the Employee Handbook or required by law. The sharing of information should only serve to assist, rectify, or resolve a situation.

- 9) Employees shall maintain a professional relationship with parents and/or guardians of scholars and shall establish appropriate communication necessary to the welfare of the scholar.
- 10) Employees shall not record, or cause to be recorded, with an audio or videotaping device, other employees without their knowledge, permission, or consent. However, audio or videotaping of classrooms for observation and evaluative purposes is permissible for use by school personnel only.
- 11) Employees are expected to participate, in a truthful manner, in any district investigation and share any information with the appropriate parties that may be relevant to the investigation unless the participation is against the employee's criminal interest.
- 12) Any federal or state court criminal conviction, guilty plea, plea of nolo contendere/no contest, deferred prosecution, remand or prayer for judgment

continued, or similar criminal convictions, pleas, deferred prosecutions rendered in foreign jurisdictions of any kind, whether felony or misdemeanor, involving minors under 18 years of age or involving public or private school funds, property, employees, visitors or scholars. A conviction includes any finding or admission of guilt and/or any imposition of a fine, jail sentence, probation or other penalty.

- 13) Being under the influence of or the manufacture, sale, distribution, possession, dispensation, transportation or use of alcohol during work time or on school property; or being under the influence of or the manufacture, sale, distribution, possession, dispensation, transportation or use of illegal drugs or the unlawful abuse of prescription drugs at any time.
- 14) Possession of any unauthorized visible or concealed firearms, weapons or explosives during work time or on school property or bringing such items onto school property, including but not limited to weapons for which the owner has obtained a concealed handgun or weapons permit.
- 15) Failure to maintain appropriate licensure or certification required: (a) for the particular job(s) or duties being performed by an employee; or (b) to operate school property or equipment necessary for the performance of an employee's work responsibilities.
- 16) Failure to report an on-the-job injury or accident to an immediate supervisor as soon as the employee has knowledge of such injury.
- 17) Failure to observe specified district safety or security practices while on school property, or vendor property, during work time, or while in the course of school business.
- 18) Awareness of a safety or security hazard with respect to school property, employees, visitors or scholars and not acting timely to report such hazard to appropriate administrative, supervisory officials or to correct such hazard where possible.
- 19) Awareness of damage or an accident on or involving school property, employees, visitors or scholars and not acting timely to report such accident or damage to appropriate administrative or supervisory officials.
- 20) Harassment of fellow employees, visitors, scholars, or a scholar's parent or guardian at any time, whether on school property or vendor property, during work time, or while in the course of school business.
- 21) Threatening, intimidating, provoking a fight, striking or in any way fighting with: (a) a fellow employee, visitor, scholar, or a scholar's parent or guardian at any time; or (b) with any other individual when representing the school district.
- 22) Gambling, betting or taking bets on school property or with scholars at any time.

- 23) Behaving indecently or engaging in immoral or abusive conduct: (a) during work time or while in the course of school business; or (b) on school property or with scholars at any time.
- 24) Behaving or engaging in any unethical or lascivious, lustful, lewd, or lecherous conduct at any time, if there is a reasonable and adverse relationship between the underlying conduct and the continuing ability of the employee to perform any of his/her professional functions in an effective manner.
- 25) Falsification, or inappropriate alteration of, or making false statements or misrepresentations regarding information used or contained in any employment records, including but not limited to applications for employment, timecards, leave forms, payroll data, expense records, personnel file materials, government reports, and any other like documents.
- 26) Falsification, or inappropriate alteration of, or making false statements or misrepresentations regarding information used or contained in any scholar records, including but not limited to report cards, grades, attendance records, testing data, testing scores, drop-out summaries, transfer sheets, government reports, and any other like documents.
- 27) Falsification, or inappropriate alteration of, or making false statements or misrepresentations regarding information used or contained in any school financial records, including but not limited to asset listings, ledgers, purchase orders, financial statements, deposit and withdrawal slips, grant data, government reports, and any other like documents.
- 28) Submitting false requests or claims to the board or the administration, including, but not limited to, claims or requests relating to jury duty, leave, medical claims, supplies and expense reimbursements.
- 29) Dishonesty or making false statements, or misrepresentations regarding any school or work-related matter.
- 30) Insubordination, including but not limited to continuing, intentional refusal to cooperate in any school district-related investigation or to follow and/or carry out the reasonable work-related instructions, either direct or implied of a supervisor or any employee with administrative authority.
- 31) Interference with another employee's job performance.
- 32) Unauthorized use of school property at any time, including, but not limited to, motor vehicles, software, information systems, communication systems, or other school-owned, leased or rented equipment.

- 33) Engaging in personal business during work time, including, but not limited to, the use of school property or equipment for personal profit.
- 34) Unauthorized possession, removal or use of school equipment or property or use of board facilities for any purpose other than official school business.
- 35) Unauthorized possession, use or distribution of school keys, access codes or passwords.
- 36) Theft, embezzlement or misuse of school, fellow employee, scholar, parent, supplier, visitor, or school club or organization funds or property or the removal of such funds or property without authorization.
- 37) Deliberate sabotage, destruction or damage of board, fellow employee, scholar, parent, supplier, visitor, or school club or organization property or equipment, or the commission of acts intended to cause destruction or damage to such property.
- 38) Unauthorized disclosure or use of confidential school information or records, including but not limited to violation of the board of trustees' or the State Department of Education's confidentiality policies, administrative rules, procedures and regulations with respect to personnel, scholar and testing data.
- 39) Careless or reckless driving of any vehicle while transporting board employees or scholars, or careless or reckless driving of a school vehicle at any time whether owned, leased or rented.
- 40) Smoking or use of other tobacco products at any time while on school property including, but not limited to, school vehicles, whether owned, leased or rented.
- 41) Sleeping during work hours.
- 42) Failure to dress in a professional manner consistent with an employee's job duties and staff dress code.
- 43) Failure to notify an appropriate supervisor, if required, when leaving district property before an employee's regularly scheduled quitting time or when arriving after the regularly scheduled starting time.
- 44) Failure to follow applicable board policies, rules, procedures or regulations regarding the reporting or taking of absences from regularly scheduled duties, including but not limited to any rules or procedures established or published by schools or supervisors to district employees.
- 45) Use of profanity, obscene, or abusive language toward, or in the presence of any scholar, or of any fellow employee, visitor, or a scholar's parent or guardian.
- 46) Any form of unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact with a fellow employee, except for the purposes of self-defense.

- 47) Any form of unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact with a scholar, except for the purposes of appropriate instruction, self-defense or necessary and appropriate physical restraint.
- 48) Conducting or allowing a "strip" search of scholars by individuals other than federal or state public law enforcement personnel acting within the scope of their public duties (excluding reasonable requests for scholars to take off shoes, socks, hats or outer garments such as coats, scarves, gloves, etc.).
- 49) Any form of sexual, lascivious or romantic contact with or solicitation of a scholar, including, but not limited to, kissing or hugging regardless of whether such activity is welcome or unwelcome.
- 50) Dating or attempting to date scholars, or engaging or attempting to engage, in any activity designed to encourage or which does encourage an inappropriate relationship with scholars.
- 51) Awareness of actual or potential:
 - (a) unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact with a scholar by an employee except for the purposes of appropriate instruction, self-defense or necessary and appropriate physical restraint;
 - (b) sexual, lascivious or romantic contact with or solicitation of a scholar by an employee, regardless of whether such activity is welcome or unwelcome; or
 - (c) dating, attempting to date scholars, engaging, or attempting to engage, in any activity designed to create or which does create an improper relationship with scholars, and not acting to report such matters to appropriate administrative or supervisory officials and/or, where required by law, to outside officials in a timely manner.
- 52) Abandonment of one's job as a certified employee or leaving a certified position without having secured release from one's contract by the superintendent.
- 53) Refusing to participate or evading participation in any district investigation. "Participation" includes but is not limited to subjection to interviews upon request from any district representative, providing documents requested by any district representative, and undergoing any examination requested by any district representative (including polygraph and providing hair, blood, urine or other samples).

IV. Warnings

Except where in the discretion of supervisory or administrative personnel the conduct or performance of an employee warrants suspension without pay, nonrenewal or immediate termination, an employee should be warned about his/her unacceptable behavior. If the warning is prepared in writing, the warning should be provided to the employee, and a copy should be placed in the employee's personnel file.

The failure to give warnings, either orally or in writing, shall not prevent the discipline or termination of an employee under this policy or other Board Policies.

Employees may be suspended only with the approval of the Superintendent, the Executive Director for Human Resources, or their respective designees.

V. Conflicts of Interest

Employees shall refrain from engaging in conduct that is a conflict of interest.

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