



## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

DATING AND INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS  
AMONG STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,  
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND  
VOLUNTEERS

4218

Procedure No.

August 17, 2016

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Procedure is to state a clear prohibition against dating and other inappropriate relationships and interactions between employees, independent contractors, volunteers and students. As provided below, this Procedure provides a framework of the types of conduct that is deemed inappropriate with students; an opportunity for employees, volunteers and contractors to recognize and correct problematic behavior; and consequences for failing to do so.

While some of the behavior targeted below may seem inadvertent or harmless when done by well-meaning adults, the same behavior has been used at times as a means of “grooming” students for sexual interactions and other illicit forms of abuse. Consequently, any disciplinary action imposed for violation of this procedure will take into account the totality of the circumstances specific to each case.

- II. **POLICY:** As reflected in Board Policy 4400, employees, independent contractors and volunteers in the Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) are expected to maintain courteous and professional relationships with students. They have a responsibility to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning through the maintenance of physical and emotional boundaries with students. These boundaries must be maintained regardless of the student’s age, the student’s enrollment in our school system, the perceived consensual nature of the relationship, the location of the activity or whether the employee directly supervises the student.

In addition to disciplinary action, violation of Board Policy 4400 and this Procedure will also result in notification to Child Protective Services; a report to the local police; and a request to the State Superintendent of Schools to suspend or revoke the employee’s professional certificate, as appropriate. In addition, contractors and volunteers may be barred for being selected for future contracts and school volunteering, respectively.

- III. **DEFINITIONS:**

- A. *Dating* includes, but is not limited to, a social appointment, engagement, or occasion - pre-planned or not - between an employee, contractor or volunteer and a student where the purpose is to initiate or continue an intimate relationship for personal pleasure or sexual relations.



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- B. *Employee*, for purposes of this Administrative Procedure, shall include temporary workers, substitute teachers, independent contractors and volunteers.
- C. *Inappropriate relationship* includes, but is not limited to, interactions(s) where professional physical and emotional boundaries are compromised by:
- i. Being alone with a student in a windowless room with a closed or locked door;
  - ii. Being alone with a student in a room with the lights off on PGCPS property or any time the employee is serving in his or her capacity as an employee;
  - iii. Meeting students in non-work settings absent another employee being present and without parent/guardian permission;
  - iv. Using personal, non-PGCPS accounts or devices - such as cell phones, tablets and computers - to text, email or otherwise communicate with students without a supervisor or manager's prior approval;
  - v. Associating with students in any setting that involves the use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs;
  - vi. Sponsoring parties for students outside of school unless as part of an extracurricular activity that is appropriately supervised by additional staff members;
  - vii. Sending students on personal errands;
  - viii. Allowing students to drive or ride in the employee's personal or PGCPS-issued vehicle, with the exception of school transportation vehicles such as school buses;
  - ix. Buying gifts for or providing money to students without a supervisor or manager's prior approval;
  - x. Providing students with private cell phone numbers or e-mail addresses, unless necessary while participating in a school-sponsored activity and



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with the knowledge of parents/guardians;

- x. Allowing any student, without cause, under his/her charge to engage in behavior that would not be tolerated if done by other students;
  - xi. Knowingly granting students access, without a supervisor or manager's prior approval, to any portion of the employee's personal social networking website or webpage that is not accessible to the general public (e.g., becoming a "friend" on Facebook, follower on Twitter, or similar access); or which includes discussion of the employee's private life that would be inappropriate to discuss with a student at school; and
  - xii. Any other conduct specifically prohibited by law.
- D. *Sexual relations* include, but are not limited to, sexual contact or conduct, in person or through communication, occurring between or involving two or more persons. Examples include:
- i. touching or fondling;
  - ii. kissing;
  - iii. phone calls, written communications (including but not limited to: letters, notes, e-mails, text messages), or visual media of an intimate or sexual nature;
  - iv. allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in obscene or pornographic discussion (oral or written), display, or photography;
  - v. accepting or giving gifts of a sexual or intimate nature;
  - vi. filming or depiction of a child as prohibited by law;
  - vii. communications that include intentional sexual innuendoes;
  - viii. any kind of sexual penetration, sexual molestation, sexual exploitation;
  - ix. sexual intercourse; and



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- x. Any other conduct that is specifically prohibited by law.

#### IV. **PROCEDURES:**

- A. PGCPS employees shall not date, have sexual relations or have an inappropriate relationship with any student, regardless of whether the student is enrolled in our school system or another. These boundaries must be maintained regardless of the student's age, the student's enrollment in our school system, the perceived consensual nature of the relationship, the location of the activity or whether the employee directly supervises the student.
  - B. The Division of Human Resources and/or Principals/Supervisors shall review this Procedure with employees as part of the training provided at the beginning of each school year, or as part of the on-boarding process for those employees who start work after the beginning of the school year.
  - C. A violation of this Procedure will result in disciplinary action, which may include written reprimand, suspension, or dismissal. Additionally, if applicable, a request may be made to the Maryland State Department of Education to suspend or revoke the employee's professional certificate. Child Protective Services and local police shall be notified as appropriate.
  - D. Any employee who possesses knowledge or evidence of possible violations of this Procedure must immediately inform his or her supervisor, school principal or appropriate school administrator. All employees who have reason to suspect child abuse shall immediately report the suspected abuse in accordance with Administrative Procedure 5145. Employees shall be disciplined for failing to make such reports.
- V. **RELATED POLICY AND PROCEDURES:** Board Policy 4400, Inappropriate Relationships between Students and Employees, Volunteers and Contractors. Administrative Procedure 5145, Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect.
- VI. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** These procedures originate with the Office of General Counsel and will be updated as needed.
- VII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** None. This is a new procedure.



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VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 17, 2016

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