

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES, INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND VOLUNTEERS

4219
Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Procedure is to state a clear prohibition against 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 may 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 from being selected for future contracts and school volunteering, respectively.

III. **DEFINITIONS:**

Employee, for purposes of this Administrative Procedure, shall include **permanent and temporary workers, substitute teachers, independent contractors and volunteers**.

Students includes students who currently attend PGCPS and those who attend any other school system.



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

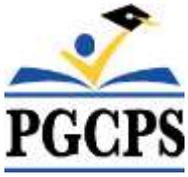
IV. **GENERAL PROCEDURES:**

- A. PGCPS employees shall not engage in any of the prohibited interactions outlined in section V. below 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. Employees should understand that the lists below are illustrative and not exhaustive of all examples of prohibited conduct.
- C. Limited exceptions are provided to the prohibited interactions below on p 5 of this procedure.

V. **PROHIBITED INTERACTIONS:**

- A. ***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, except for emergency situations, such as lockdown;
 - 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. Covering up the window in a door, unless for a lockdown;
 - iv. Meeting students in non-work settings (e.g., the library, the mall, a coffee shop) absent another employee being present and without parent/guardian permission;
 - v. 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 and/or providing students with private cell phone numbers or email addresses.

Instead, employees should use Class Dojo, Edmodo, Remind or another



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

PGCPS-approved group application to communicate with students and parents via phone or email;

- vi. Associating or participating with students in any setting or activity that involves the use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs;
- vii. Sponsoring parties for students outside of school unless as part of an extracurricular activity that is appropriately supervised by additional staff members;
- viii. Sending students on personal errands;
- ix. Allowing students to drive the employee's personal or PGCPS-issued vehicle;
- x. Allowing students to ride in the employee's personal or PGCPS-issued vehicle without prior supervisor and parent approval, with the exception of school transportation vehicles such as school buses;
- xi. Buying gifts for or providing money to students without a supervisor or manager's prior approval;
- xii. Allowing any student, without cause, under his/her charge to engage in behavior that would not be tolerated if done by other students;
- xiii. Knowingly granting students access 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;
- xiv. Developing a friendship with a student which is beyond the appropriate professional relationship;
- xv. Using or entering student restrooms during the school day, subject to the exceptions outlined in Administrative Procedure 4221;



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

-
- xvi. Bullying, harassing and intimidating students.
- B. ***Inappropriate physical interactions*** with students includes conduct such as:
- i. Hitting;
 - ii. Pulling and/or grabbing the student's clothing and/or backpack;
 - iii. Kicking the desk, throwing objects, or any other action that would physically or emotionally intimidate the students;
 - iv. Touching that results in bruise, scratching, etc.;
 - v. Tickling students;
 - vi. Kissing students;
 - vii. Any type of massage given by or to a student;
 - viii. Corporal punishment, or other inappropriate student disciplinary practices, such as shaking, slapping, shoving or pinching; ostracizing; withholding food, light, or medical care; forcing the student to eat food they don't want; withholding bathroom privileges; excessive time out; excessive exercising; or locking the student out of the classroom or school; or
 - ix. Physical restraint or seclusion of students, except when consistent with PGCPS sponsored CPI training and the employee is trained and certified to use CPI.
- C. ***Inappropriate verbal interactions*** with students includes conduct such as:
- i. Name-calling or using profanity;
 - ii. Excessive yelling;
 - iii. Discussing intimate details of one's personal life;



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

- iv. Encouraging students to keep secrets from other adults;
 - v. Sexual or offensive humor;
 - vi. Shaming, belittling, or derogatory/negative remarks about a student, including negative comments about the student's physique, body development, dress, family, or academic achievement; and
 - vii. Harsh language that may threaten, degrade, or humiliate students.
- D. Any other conduct specifically prohibited by law.

VI. **EXCEPTIONS:**

- A. Certain reasonable touches may be appropriate in particular circumstances, such as a gentle pat on the back or shoulder, handshakes, high fives, or holding the hand of younger children to guide or escort them.
- B. For students receiving special education, related services and targeted intervention support:
 - i. Orientation and Mobility (O&M) teachers working with visually impaired students may be required to drive in the car with a student as per Individualized Education Program (IEP).
 - ii. Psychologists, counselors, and other itinerant service providers may be required to work one-on-one with a student, as per the IEP or written intervention plan.
 - iii. Students with IEPs, 504 plans, behavior intervention plans (BIP) and academic intervention plans may require assistance that require one or more of the above interactions.
- C. Students with personal care needs may need to be addressed as indicated in the Administrative Procedure 5166 – Toileting and Self Care.
- D. If it becomes necessary to transport a student home, and the employee has discussed the situation with his or her principal or immediate supervisor and



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

has informed the student's parent, the employee shall ensure that a second employee is in the car when transporting the student home.

- E. Intervening in a fight or physical struggle among students that takes place in the presence of a school system employee may be allowed if the school system employee is taking reasonable action to prevent violence on school property or on a school-sponsored trip. The degree and force of the intervention needed to stop the fight or physical struggle may be as reasonably necessary to prevent violence, restore order and to protect the safety of the students fighting and the surrounding students.

VII. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

A. **Training:**

1. All PGCPS employees will complete the SafeSchools training module that addresses this Procedure at the beginning of each school year.
2. Principals and Supervisors shall review this Procedure with employees mid-year of each school year.
3. The Division of Human Resources will review this Procedure as part of the on-boarding process for those employees who start work with Prince George's County Public Schools.

B. **Enforcement:**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. All employees who have reason to suspect child abuse shall immediately report the suspected abuse in accordance with Administrative Procedure



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS AMONG
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES,
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS

4219

Procedure No.

August 27, 2018

Date

5145. Employees shall be disciplined for failing to make such reports.

VIII. **RELATED POLICY AND PROCEDURES:**

Board Policy 4400, Inappropriate Relationships between Students and Employees, Volunteers and Contractors.

Administrative Procedure 4218, Dating and Sexual Relationships Among Students and Employees, Independent Contractors and Volunteers;

Administrative Procedure 5145, Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect.

IX. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** These procedures originate with the Office of General Counsel and will be updated as needed.

X. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This procedure cancels and supersedes the version dated August 8, 2017.

XI. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 27, 2018