

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

July 13, 2021

SUBJECT:

Revision of the Policy GBEB Staff Conduct, First Reading

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The prevalence of the use of social media by staff has led to a review of Policy GBEB Staff Conduct to include language that provides guidance to employees on the appropriate use of social media as employees of Aiken County Public School District. Administration also identified the need to provide greater clarification on staff relationships with students as well as address innovations in tobacco and nicotine products in this policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

Administration revised Policy GBEB Staff Conduct to include language that addresses appropriate social media usage by employees and relationships with students and includes examples of actions that are considered misconduct to provide guidance to employees.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Policy GBEB Staff Conduct.

ATTACHMENTS:

Policy GBEB Staff Conduct

PREPARED BY:

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Policy

STAFF CONDUCT

Code GBEB Issued 09/17/21

Purpose: To establish the board's vision for appropriate staff conduct.

The board reaffirms one of the oldest beliefs in education: one of the best methods of instruction is that of setting a good example.

The board expects the staff of the district to strive to set the kind of example for students that will serve them well in their own conduct and behavior and subsequently contribute to an appropriate school atmosphere. Staff must act in a manner that is consistent with the District's policies and sets a positive example for all.

To that end, in dress, conduct (including conduct communicated or performed in person, in writing and/or electronically), and interpersonal relationships, all staff should recognize that they are being continuously observed by students, other employees, parents/legal guardians, and community members, and that their actions and demeanor ~~will be reflected in the conduct of the students~~ may impair their effectiveness as an employee.

~~Employees are expected to refrain from engaging in non work-related phone communications while on duty, except in emergency or exigent circumstances. Specifically, teachers and other professional personnel and student support staff are expected to keep cell phones and/or similar communication devices stored, silenced, and inactive during work hours with students and to adhere to reasonable building-level rules and/or procedures related to such devices during the work day, unless there is prior permission from the staff member's supervisor.~~

The personal life of an employee, including the employee's personal use of district-issued and non-district issued electronic equipment, inside and outside of working hours (such as through social networking sites and personal portrayal on the internet), will be the concern of and warrant the attention of the board if it impairs the employee's ability to effectively perform his/her job responsibilities or if it violates local, state, or federal law or contractual agreements, only as it may directly prevent or impair the employee's ability to effectively perform assigned functions during duty hours or as it violates local, state, or federal law or contractual agreements. Employee social media use has the potential to result in disruption of the school/work environment or impair the efficiency of the school/workplace. As such, the board expects employees to ensure all their conduct and communications, including those associated with their social media, do not disrupt the school/work environment, or create a reasonable apprehension of disruption in the school/work environment, or impair the efficiency of the school/workplace. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their use of social media as they are for any other conduct. If an employee has a question regarding the appropriate use of social media, he/she should consult his/her direct supervisor or building principal for guidance.

PAGE 2 – GBEB – STAFF CONDUCT

Unprofessional conduct may subject the employee to disciplinary actions consistent with state law, federal law, and/or board policy.

No employee will engage in immoral or criminal conduct or commit or attempt to induce students or others to commit an act or acts of immoral conduct or criminal conduct. ~~which may be harmful to others or bring discredit to the district.~~ If it appears an employee may have violated the law, the district will cooperate with law enforcement agencies. ~~Immoral conduct on the part of any employee will constitute grounds for immediate suspension.~~

All employees are expected to maintain a professional relationship with students at all times, both inside and outside of school. All employees are expected to exercise good judgment and to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to an educational setting and consistent with the educational mission of the district. No employee may engage in inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature with a student at any time. This includes any action or conduct communicated or performed in person, in writing, or electronically through such means as a telephone, cell phone, computer, PDA, or other telecommunication device, and includes text messaging and social networking.

Employees of the district, while on duty ~~and in the presence of students,~~ will not use profanity, will not use tobacco in any form, ~~and will not consume or be under the influence of intoxicating beverages. Employees will not be involved in drug abuse or drug traffic and will not possess, consume, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs,~~ as provided for in Board Policy GBEC (Drug-Free Schools).

~~Violations of this policy by employees will be grounds for immediate suspension and possible termination of employment. In such cases, an employee will be informed of his/her right to any hearing or due process procedure which may be applicable under law or district policy.~~

Violations of this policy by employees will be grounds for placing an employee on administrative leave, with pay, pending an investigation, and possible termination of employment, consistent with district policy and state law.

Arrest of an Employee

The board delegates specific authority to the superintendent or his/her designee, to take appropriate employment action with regard to an employee who has been arrested, consistent with state law. Employees who are arrested must notify their supervisor immediately.

- ~~Any employee who is arrested or ticketed for any criminal violation, in-state or out-of-state, other than a minor traffic violation, is required to report the arrest or ticket to the employee's immediate supervisor and the Director of Human Resources and keep the administration apprised of the continued status of the criminal case against him/her. In addition, any employee whose name is added to any child abuse or sexual offenders registry of any type, in-state or out-of-state, is required to notify the employee's immediate supervisor and the Director of Human Resources of the registry entry. An~~

PAGE 3 – GBEB – STAFF CONDUCT

~~employee who fails to make the required notifications of any such arrests, tickets, or registry entries may be subject to disciplinary action.~~

- ~~• An employee arrested for a misdemeanor offense, which does not involve criminal intent or which would indicate no danger or appearance of danger to students, co-employees, or the district, or otherwise cause disruption to the district's programs or have the potential to undermine patron confidence, will normally not be subject to any employment action.~~
- ~~• An employee arrested for any other offense, which would indicate a possible danger or appearance of danger to students, co-employees, or the school district, or otherwise cause disruption to the district's programs or have the potential to undermine patron confidence, will be subject to employment action consistent with district policy or procedure and the circumstances of each case.~~
- ~~• Employees arrested for a felony offense will normally be suspended with or without pay. As determined by the superintendent or designee, pending adjudication.~~

~~In any case in which a certified employee is placed on paid leave by the administration as the result of an ongoing investigation by law enforcement, the board may vote to suspend the employee without pay, provided that the employee is allowed the opportunity to be heard by the board in accordance with state law.~~

~~In certain circumstances, other employment action may be taken.~~

Adopted 11/27/01; Revised 8/11/09, 4/13/10, 9/26/17, 07/27/2021

Legal references:

- A. S.C. Code, 1976 as amended:
 - 1. [Section 16-3-755](#) - Sexual battery with a student.
 - 2. [Section 16-23-420](#) and [430](#) - Concealed weapons; school property exception.
 - 3. [Section 59-25-430](#) - Teacher dismissal; evident unfitness for teaching.
 - 4. [Section 59-25-450](#) - Teacher suspension