ADAA - School System Commitment to Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior

The School Board believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior is an essential part of the school unit's educational mission. The Board recognizes that ethics, constructive attitudes, responsible behavior, and "character" are important if a student is to leave school as a "responsible and involved citizen," as described in the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results. The Board also recognizes that Maine law requires the adoption of a district-wide student code of conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior developed by the Commissioner of the Department of Education in compliance with 20-A MRSA § 254(11).

The Board seeks to create and maintain a school climate in which ethical and responsible behavior can flourish. The Board believes that instilling a sense of ethics and responsibility in students requires setting positive expectations for student behavior as well as establishing disciplinary consequences for behavior that violates Board policy or school rules. Further, the Board believes that in order to teach ethical and responsible behavior, adults who interact with students must strive to model and reinforce ethical and responsible behavior. To that end, the Board supports an active partnership between schools and parents.

Recognizing that collaboratively identified core values are the foundation for a school culture that encourages and reinforces ethical and responsible student behavior, the Board is committed to the establishment and implementation of a process for identifying shared values and setting and enforcing standards for behavior, including prescription of consequences for unacceptable behavior. The process for identifying such shared values will invite and include the participation of Board members, school administrators, staff, parents, students, and the community. Core values will be reviewed periodically, with opportunity for public participation. The Board will direct the Superintendent/designee to develop a process to assess school system progress toward achievement of an ethical and responsible school culture.

Following the identification of core values, the Board, with input from administrators, staff, parents, students, and members of the community, will adopt a Student Code of Conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior[1] that shall, as required by law:

I. Define unacceptable student behavior;

II. Establish standards of student responsibility for behavior;

III. Prescribe consequences for violation of the Student Code of Conduct, including first-time violations, when appropriate;

IV. Describe appropriate procedures for referring students in need of special services to those services;

V. Establish criteria to determine when further assessment of a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) is necessary, based on removal of the student from class;

VI. Establish policies and procedures concerning the removal of disruptive or violent students from a classroom or a school bus, as well as student disciplinary and placement decisions, when appropriate; and

VII. Establish guidelines and criteria concerning the appropriate circumstances when the Superintendent/designee may provide information to the local police or other appropriate law enforcement authorities regarding an offense that involved violence committed by any person on school grounds or other school property.

VIII. Establish policies and procedure to address bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment.

The Board will review the Student Code of Conduct periodically, inviting input from administrators, staff, parents, students and members of the community.

When revising the prescribed consequences for violation of the Student Code of Conduct, the Board shall consider (evaluate and revise, as deemed necessary or desirable) relevant existing district-wide school disciplinary policies and/or consider

adoption of new policies that:

I. Focus on positive interventions and expectations and avoid focusing exclusively on unacceptable student behavior;

II. Focus on positive and restorative interventions that are consistent with evidence-based practices rather than set punishments for specific behaviors, and avoid "zero tolerance" practices unless specifically required by federal or state laws, rules or regulations;

III. Allow administrators to use their discretion to fashion appropriate discipline that examines the circumstances pertinent to the case at hand; and

IV. Provide written notice to the parents of student when a student is suspended from school, regardless of whether the suspension is an in-school or out-of-school suspension.

"Positive interventions" and "restorative interventions" shall have the same meaning as provided in 20-A MRSA § 1001(15).

Students, parents, staff, and the community will be informed of the Student Code of Conduct and relevant district-wide school disciplinary policies through handbooks, the school unit's website, and/or other means selected by the Superintendent/designee.

Ethics and Curriculum

The Board encourages integration of ethics into content areas of the curriculum, as appropriate. The Board encourages examination and discussion of ethical issues within content areas of the curriculum, as appropriate. The Board also encourages schools and school administrators and staff to provide students with meaningful opportunities to apply values and ethical and responsible behavior through activities.

Legal Reference:

- 20-A MRSA §§ 254, 1001(15), 1001(15-A)

Cross Reference:

- JKD - Suspension of Students

Reading

- 1st Reading: 11/13/2018
- 2nd Reading: 12/11/2018

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[1] The statewide standards are the "core values" identified in the report of the Commission for Ethical and Responsible Student Behavior, Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities. The core values are: Respect, Honesty, Compassion, Fairness, Responsibility and Courage. The Code of Conduct must be "consistent with," not identical to, the statewide standards developed under 20 M.R.S.A. § 254(11). This provides an opportunity for communities to identify their own core values and articulate what they "look like" when applied to behavior. The core values serve as a basis for school system expectations for student conduct.

Revision #4
Created 12 October 2021 22:40:58 by Troy Patterson
Updated 21 April 2022 20:09:05