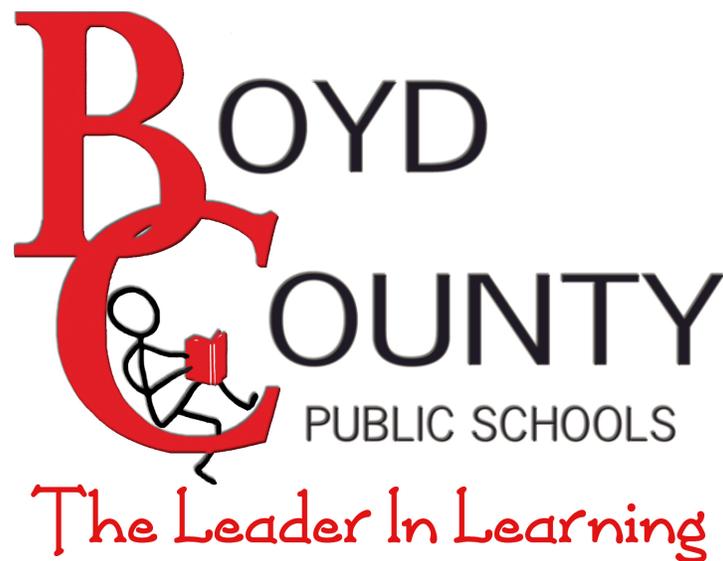


Required
STANDARDS OF
PROFESSIONALISM
for Employees



Boyd County Public Schools
July, 2005

Boyd County Board of Education
STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: The Boyd County Board of Education believes the primary purpose of a public School District is to provide professional instructional service to students;

AND WHEREAS: The Board believes the School District's ability to achieve its primary purpose depends to a large extent upon its image as a professional institution;

AND WHEREAS: The Board believes the School District's image as a professional institution depends to a large extent upon the level of professional behavior exhibited by school employees;

AND WHEREAS: The Board believes any instance of less than professional behavior on the part of any school employee has detrimental effect on the School District's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose;

AND WHEREAS: The Board believes any instance of professional behavior on the part of any school employee has a two-fold advantageous effect:

1. It contributes to the image of an institution seriously committed to a professional purpose, and thereby advances student achievement in general;
2. It is directed toward and focused upon individual students, and thereby contributes directly to the achievement of individual students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: The Boyd County Board of Education identifies the building and maintenance of an image of highest professionalism as a top priority in the school district;

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: The Board's Superintendent of Schools is directed to mobilize school employees in developing methods to enhance the School District's image as a professional institution;

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: The effort to enhance the School District's image should involve members of the community as well as certified and classified employees;

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: Outcomes of this effort should include a written "Standards of Professionalism" to assist employees in recognizing expected standards of professional behavior;

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: The Standards of Professionalism should be presented for School Board action.

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: The superintendent should also suggest means of orienting school employees to School District expectations as reflected in the Standards of Professionalism.

AND FURTHER RESOLVED: The superintendent should also suggest means of recognizing and rewarding instances of exceptional professionalism, a means of discouraging unprofessional behavior, and measures to modify behavior that is deemed inappropriate under the Standards of Professionalism.

PROFESSIONALISM DEFINED

Professionalism is a standard of work behavior that varies with the purpose of work being done. The behavior of a worker is defined as professional when it contributes to the purpose being addressed, and unprofessional when it impedes the purpose being addressed.

The mission and primary purpose of the Boyd County Public Schools is to ensure that all students acquire knowledge, skills and understanding to empower them to make appropriate life choices. Therefore, employee behavior in the School

PROFESSIONALISM DEFINED continued.

District that contributes to the education of students is deemed professional; behavior that impedes the education of students is deemed unprofessional; behavior irrelevant to the education of students is, at best, wasteful and, at worst, a distraction to the purpose of the School District.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document will enact the requirements of the School Board resolution excerpted above, which resolution directs that a Standards of Professionalism be developed and enforced in the Boyd County Public Schools.

The Board recognizes that the education of students requires a proper learning environment, and that a proper learning environment is dependent upon two perceptions being present in the minds of students. First, students must perceive themselves to be secure against threats to their personal safety while in school. Secondly, students must perceive a serious academic purpose in their schooling.

For students to perceive a serious academic purpose in their schooling, the behavior of school employees must be such that it relates a single-minded commitment to the education of students. The learning environment is affected by the extent to which school employees are able to work together, the extent to which high expectations are communicated to both employees and students, and the extent to which a sense of common purpose exists among employees and students.

In order to provide a learning environment consistent with the purpose of educating students, all employees of the school system must assume the following responsibilities:

1. To maintain an attitude of respect toward all students and fellow employees, and to treat all students and fellow employees consistently and equally.
2. To follow and enforce rules and regulations of the school and school district.
3. To respect the right of all students and all parents to be treated as equal stakeholders in the educational process.
4. To deal with student records and other work-related information with proper confidentiality.
5. To keep students safe from physical harm, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment.
6. To make professional, work-related decisions based solely upon the purpose of educating all students to lead productive and fulfilled lives.
7. To expect and actively pursue respectful treatment toward themselves and their positions from parents, students, and employees.

Therefore, to address the purpose of educating students, the goal of all employees must be to customize their work behavior to fulfill the above responsibilities. The purpose of this document is to assist employees in attaining this goal and recognizing when their behavior falls short of the goal.

PROFESSIONAL ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Following are the roles and relationships within which the behavior of school employees is most likely to serve, fail to serve, or detract from the above responsibilities. Each relationship and role is dealt with separately in later sections of this document.

1. The employee's relationship with students.
2. The employee's relationship with fellow employees, including peers, subordinates, and supervisors.
3. The employee's role in determining, enforcing, and following the rules and regulations that govern school operations.
4. The employee's relationship with family members and relatives who are employed or otherwise have a personal interest in the school system.
5. The employee's role as custodian of information and other resources acquired through his/her position in the School District.

A STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS OF BOYD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE EMPLOYEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS

Employees are adults, whereas students are students. Employees are employed to accomplish the purposes of the School District, whereas students are the purpose of the School District.

With the foregoing as a statement of purpose and principle, the following guidelines are established relating to an employee's proper relationship with students.

1. The primary job of teachers is to instruct and supervise students. The primary job of other employees is to provide services that allow students to take full advantage of instructional opportunities. All employees, through proper attention to their job assignments, will inevitably become acquainted with students and knowledgeable of the personal lives of students. There will be occasions when employees suspect or know with certainty that personal problems are negatively affecting the capacity of certain students to make full use of services provided by the school district. These occasions must be dealt with, but only in a professional manner and only with the greatest caution. In no case should a teacher or other employee attempt to thrust him/herself into the personal life of a student. When employees are approached by students for assistance with personal problems, or when an employee simply suspects that such problems exist, the first instinct should always be to refer such students to an employee specifically employed to deal with such problems.
2. Employees should avoid relating to students in ways that serve the personal or professional needs of employees rather than the needs of students. Students should not be exposed to or involved in issues of disagreement between employees, whether the disagreement is between individuals or between levels of authority in the school district. Asking students to support one side or another in an issue of disagreement, whether this is done explicitly or simply through discussing or otherwise raising the issue in the presence of students, is disruptive to the learning environment, is evidence that other concerns have preempted employees' concern for the education of students, is indicative of a coercive rather than a reasonable approach to the settlement of disagreements, is a misuse of staff time being funded by the school district for specific purposes, and is therefore grossly unprofessional. Students should see employees devoting themselves, their time, and their creative energy only to serving the best interests of students.
3. Employees must maintain a proper professional demeanor in their relationships with students. When employees shed their professional demeanor and place themselves on a common plane with students, they are likely to be drawn into competitive or confrontational situations with students, resulting in outcomes that do not enhance education. Other possible results of a failure to maintain a professional demeanor include the danger of courtship behavior entering the relationship between employees and students, employees not recognizing the impropriety of enlisting students in pursuit of their own personal or professional needs, and employees discriminating against less favored students and having difficulty in disciplining more favored students.
4. Employees must refrain from discussing a student in the presence of other students, or even in the presence of other employees when the discussion does not concern a particular educational or instructional need. Employees must neither condone nor engage in critical or negative discussions of their fellow employees in the presence of students, nor should such discussions of a fellow employee, a student, or a former student be engaged in with the general public. Violating these standards encourages inappropriate behavior from students, since the result is often a loss of trust in and respect for employees on the part of students.
5. Employees must refrain from careless, needless, unthinking remarks directed toward a student or group of students. Examples include remarks that fail to recognize gender equity and remarks that disparage a student's non-traditional point of view on a particular subject. "Teasing" remarks for the purpose of establishing a relaxed relationship or atmosphere must also be avoided, for the destructive potential of such remarks far outweighs whatever benefits an employee might intend. In essence, students have enough problems with their peers without coming to school and being faced with embarrassing or humiliating comments from school employees.

THE EMPLOYEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS continued.

6. Employees must put the students' success as the top priority. Recognizing that students learn through a variety of methods and possess various learning styles, teachers must present material to ensure successful mastery by all students. Teachers must continually strive to improve instructional effectiveness.
7. Supervision of students is necessarily a continuous responsibility of all employees. When supervising students, whether as a specifically assigned duty or simply the ongoing responsibility applicable to all employees, close attention should be paid at all times so as to quickly defuse disruptive behavior before it affects a larger number of students. KRS 161.180 states that "each teacher and administrator in the public schools shall in accordance with the rules, regulations, and bylaws of the board of education made and adopted pursuant to KRS 160.290 for the conduct of pupils, hold pupils to a strict account for their conduct on school premises, on the way to and from school, and on school sponsored trips."
8. Sexual conduct of any kind, including verbal or physical, is prohibited between employees and students. KRS 161.120, Subsection 1A, states that the certificate of a certified employee who has sexual contact with a student will be revoked; sexual contact is defined in KRS 510.010, Subsection 7. Staff members must not discuss sexual matters with students except in the course of personal guidance services provided by a trained counselor or through curricular content specifically intended to address such matters. Sexually suggestive or provocative comments must not occur between employees and students. Comments that have sexual implications regarding a student's personal appearance or dress must not occur. Comments from an employee regarding a sexual relationship between two students must not occur. Employees, except trained guidance counselors, should avoid being placed in one-on-one situations with students of the opposite sex where the student has broached an intimate or private personal matter. Any one of the above precautions, if ignored, could result in charges of sexual harassment against an employee.
9. While no attempt is made here to define a legal standard for conduct of an employee while not on the job, an employee's professional instinct should result in out-of-school relationships that approximate in-school relationships between employees and students. Common sense dictates that students should not be expected to apply differing standards to their relationships with employees from one day to the next or one hour to the next. Employees should refrain from forming personal friendships with students. Recognizing the inherent impressionability of students, employees should always behave in a manner that will earn respect of the students. Adults should not attempt to be on the same level as the students; rather, they should think to be a positive role model.

THE EMPLOYEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING PEERS, SUBORDINATES, AND SUPERVISORS

In terms of the professional demeanor expected of school employees, the relationship between employees with no supervisor-subordinate linkage should be the same in almost every respect as the relationship between an employee and his/her supervisor or his/her subordinate. Special allegiance and courtesy is owed in all cases from one employee to another and in both directions on the continuum of school district authority. Employees must realize that a criticism leveled toward any one of us is a criticism shared to some degree by all of us, for we all share in the professional image of our School District.

Rule Number One: There must be agreement between all employees that no criticism will be leveled against a fellow employee unless the criticism is first expressed directly to the employee him/herself. For example, a principal will not voice a criticism against a teacher unless the criticism is first expressed *to* the teacher, and a teacher will show the same consideration for his/her principal. This two-way courtesy is equally important in either direction. All employees, whether in a supervisory, coequal, or subordinate role, deserve an opportunity to deny, explain, or offer apologies for their behavior before a criticism goes beyond the relationship.

THE EMPLOYEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING PEERS, SUBORDINATES, AND SUPERVISORS continued.

Rule Number Two: Any criticism that goes beyond the relationship between two employees must be made only to serve the School District's purpose. This rule has meaning both in judging whether a criticism is professionally valid and in determining to whom the criticism should be expressed.

Validity: Any criticism voiced outside the relationship between two employees shall be made only with the expectation that educational services to students will be improved or safe-guarded if the behavior being criticized is changed. Criticisms carried outside the relationship for any other reason are either destructive or irrelevant to the purpose of the school system.

To Whom: If criticisms voiced outside the relationship between two employees are made only for the purpose of improving or safeguarding services to students, it follows that such criticisms should be voiced to the person most likely to bring about a change, almost always the immediate supervisor of the employee being criticized. In rare cases, the criticism might legitimately be carried directly to the Superintendent of Schools. There is no professional reason to voice the criticism to any other person.

This section shall not apply to conversations between administrators or between administrators and their staffs when the purpose of the discussion is to improve the content of staff training/professional development, consider reasons for changes/additions/deletions to Board policy and/or district administrative procedures or when discussing personnel issues effecting the district.

Although the School District neither expects nor wishes to influence the relationships between employees outside of work hours, it must be understood that all contacts between employees in the work setting must be on a professional level. School is not the place for personal interactions to occur between employees, whether those interactions are friendly or unfriendly. Employees should meticulously avoid the appearance of impropriety in their work behavior and work relationships.

THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE IN DETERMINING, ENFORCING, AND FOLLOWING THE RULES AND REGULATIONS THAT GOVERN SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATIONS

As part of each employee's employment agreement with the School District (the employee's agreement to provide services and the School District's agreement to pay for such services) there exists a clear if unspoken consent to provide services in a manner prescribed by the School District. The manner prescribed by the School District is contained in the rules and regulations that govern School District operations. In other words, when an employee agrees to be employed by the School District, the employee is saying that he/she agrees to follow the rules and regulations of the School District.

All employees have opportunities to have a voice in determining rules and regulations. These opportunities occur frequently during the development stage of rules and regulations, since all schools are increasingly involved in participatory-management practices. In addition, all employees are encouraged to meet with their immediate supervisors at any time to voice opinions regarding the necessity, effectiveness, and enforcement or compliance difficulties of any rule or regulation.

Once adopted, rules and regulations governing school operations become part and parcel of an employee's work assignment. Indeed, rules and regulations are an important component of this Standards of Professionalism, for they define to a large extent the behavior expected of all employees. This is true not only of rules and regulations that apply to employees but rules and regulations that apply to students, for one behavior expected of all employees is to enforce the rules and regulations applying to students. Rules and regulations, taken totally, are an expression of the aspirations and expectations of the School District.

THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE IN DETERMINING, ENFORCING, AND FOLLOWING THE RULES AND REGULATIONS THAT GOVERN SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATIONS continued.

Therefore, as a part of each employee's professional obligation and responsibility, it is expected that all existing rules and regulations of the school and School District will be followed and enforced. To do otherwise is unprofessional behavior. It is permitted and encouraged that employees voice their opinions regarding existing rules and regulations, and that they pursue changes in rules and regulations with which they disagree, and that they feel a professional responsibility to assist in the development of rules and regulations, but deliberate attempts to circumvent or ignore existing rules and regulations constitute unprofessional behavior.

THE EMPLOYEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY MEMBERS AND RELATIVES WHO ARE EMPLOYED OR OTHERWISE HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The general rule applying to an employee's behavior toward his/her relatives in the School District is for deliberate neglect. In other words, not only must an employee be cautious of exerting undue influence where relatives are concerned, he/she should exert *no influence at all* where relatives are concerned. It is only thus, through deliberate neglect, that persons with no relatives employed in the School District will be assured fair and equal treatment in the School District.

The rule for deliberate neglect shall apply even if circumstances are such that an employee would normally, in a professional manner, exert influence on behalf of a fellow employee, a parent, or non-parent constituent of the School District. In the case of relatives, no influence may be exerted *regardless* of circumstances. If the cause of an employee, parent, or non-parent constituent is just, it must be assumed that there will be no shortage of non-relative employees to support the cause. If such is not the case, if staff, parents, and other constituents of the School District must depend only upon family members to champion a just cause, then persons with no relatives in the School District will be hopelessly disadvantaged in receiving equal treatment.

This rule applies to all relatives' family members except students who are students of employees. However, employees must scrupulously avoid using their positions to gain preferential treatment for their student-students in the school system. It is not suggested that employees should fail to exert the right of all parents to be interested and involved in the education of their students, but that preferential treatment must neither be requested nor given as a result of a parent's employment in the School District. Indeed, *all* employees must be cautious in this regard. Opportunities to favor student-students of fellow employees, relatives, or close friends will inevitably arise, and the temptation to do so must be vigorously resisted. A employee should always refuse to intervene or negotiate on behalf of any student whose parents are relatives or close friends.

THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE AS CUSTODIAN OF INFORMATION AND OTHER SCHOOL RESOURCES ACQUIRED THROUGH THE EMPLOYEE'S POSITION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Employees of the Boyd County Public Schools have many occasions to acquire information concerning students and fellow employees. Almost all such information must be held in strict confidence. Whether the employee feels such information is true or false, use of such information with intent to gossip or for malicious purposes is highly unprofessional behavior. Kentucky statutes clearly state that student and employee records are protected by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. In the case of students, these records include: results of any academic tests or examinations, psychological examinations or measures of aptitude, or any other information which may be used to personally characterize an individual. In the case of employees, disclosure of any information regarding marital status, medical histories, health conditions, reputation, performance evaluations, and family problems constitutes an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Formal student and employee records have clearly defined codes dealing with who may view such records and when and where this may be legally done. A system of checks and balances regarding viewing and disclosure of student records must be in place at each building level, and each employee should be well versed in these procedures. The system must ensure confidentiality when transferring documents within the school or within the School District.

THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE AS CUSTODIAN OF INFORMATION AND OTHER SCHOOL RESOURCES ACQUIRED THROUGH THE EMPLOYEE'S POSITION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM continued.

As with formal school records, informal information concerning specific students or employees should not be shared except for clearly professional purposes. Employees must be careful not to divulge any information that could be harmful to an individual in any way. Gossip about the personal lives of students or other employees has no place in the school system, is destructive to the school system's purpose of educating students, and is therefore deemed unprofessional.

Information concerning illegal acts, suspected abuse or harassment, potential suicide or harm to others, must be reported to the proper authorities. If questions arise regarding whether such information should be reported, employees should speak with their immediate supervisor or with the Superintendent of Schools. In some cases the Superintendent of Schools may request legal assistance in determining the employee's obligation to report or not to report sensitive information.

Use of school material, equipment, or other school resources for any purpose not directly related to school programs is prohibited. Use of resources from one school to enhance programs at other schools should be done only with the specific approval of the principals at both schools.

METHODS OF DISTRIBUTING AND DISCUSSING THE CONCEPTS AND IDEAS CONTAINED IN THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM

As time passes, the Standards of Professionalism must remain a much-referenced document on the front burner of School District attention. It must be enforced. If this is done, ever-greater benefits will accrue to the school system's students.

The Standards of Professionalism is a noteworthy expression of commitment on the part of the Boyd County School District, but that the expression can be improved if commitment to professionalism is high and to bring about constant improvement in the Standards of Professionalism.

The Standards of Professionalism shall be included in its entirety in personnel benefit packages published and distributed yearly in the School District.

School principals shall use at least one faculty meeting in the fall of each school year to distribute, discuss, and answer questions regarding the Standards of Professionalism. Particular sections of the Standards of Professionalism will be discussed at faculty meetings during the year as the need is perceived. Similar or joint meetings will be convened at each building for classified employees employed at that building. Similar meetings will be held each year at the district-wide level for transportation employees, maintenance employees, and central office employees.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM

It is assumed that virtually all employees of the School District feel committed to educating students and therefore are motivated to behave in a manner that best suits that purpose. It is also assumed, however, that employees might at times be ignorant of, or confused by, subtleties contained in the Standards of Professionalism. Based upon these assumptions, it is likely that most violations of the Standards of Professionalism will be of a minor and unintentional nature and dealt with through private, oral reminders and precautionary comments by supervisors of employees.

It is important that supervisors do not ignore their duty in regard to minor violations, since even minor breaches of professionalism represent opportunities to improve. It is expected that small corrections accumulated and sustained through years of implementation will substantially improve the learning environment in our school system.

Therefore, the School District personnel office will provide a system to document minor violations of the Standards of Professionalism. The system of documentation will include names of employees, a description of the relevant event, a note interpreting the relevant section of the Standards of Professionalism, and a summarization of the supervisor's advice to an employee. Primary usefulness of this documentation will be to determine whether or not violations are being consistently dealt with throughout the School District.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM continued.

Major violations of the Standards of Professionalism are those which have a direct and significant effect upon the learning environment, upon individual students, or upon the professional image of the School District. Examples of major violations would include, but not be limited to, sexual conduct of any kind between an employee and student, an angry exchange between employees in the presence of students, malicious gossip (whether true or false) carried by an employee in regard to a student or fellow employee, deliberate and/or persistent and/or extreme remarks of a demeaning nature from an employee toward a student or students, repeated minor violations by an employee in spite of repeated reminders from the employee's supervisor, and significant and/or deliberate and/or malicious breaches of confidentiality.

The immediate supervisor of an employee will investigate alleged major violations of the Standards of Professionalism. *All* allegations must be investigated and reported to the School district personnel office in writing. Only allegations that are thought by the immediate supervisor to be true will include the name of the involved employees, in which case the written report will be placed in the employee's personnel file and the Superintendent of Schools will determine whether enforcement proceedings are in order. If it is found that enforcement proceedings are in order, necessary hearings will be convened by the Superintendent of Schools.

When supervisors are the source of possible breaches of the Standards of Professionalism, reporting should be handled in the following manner: If the supervisor in question is a principal, the report will be made orally to the director of personnel and if the supervisor in question is a districtwide supervisor or a central office administrator, the report should be made orally to the superintendent of schools. In the case of a minor violation, either the director of personnel or the superintendent will discuss the report and issue advice if necessary to the supervisor without revealing the name of the employee making the report. In the case of a major violation of the Standards of Professionalism by a supervisor, the director of personnel or the superintendent will conduct an investigation and prepare a written report and the superintendent will determine whether enforcement proceedings are in order. If found that enforcement proceedings are in order, necessary hearings will be convened by the Superintendent of Schools.

Disciplinary measures available, singly or in combination as prescribed and/or permitted by statute, to enforce the Standards of Professionalism would include but not be limited to:

1. A requirement that the employee apologize, orally or in writing, privately or in the presence of the Superintendent of Schools, to a student, a parent, or a fellow employee.
2. A private reprimand from the Superintendent of Schools to the employee. Private reprimands from the Superintendent of Schools are in writing and placed in the employee's permanent School District employment file.
3. A public reprimand from the Superintendent of Schools to the employee. Public reprimands from the Superintendent of Schools are in writing and presented to the School Board in open session.
4. A suspension of the employee with pay.
5. A suspension of the employee without pay.
6. Non-renewal of the employee's contract
7. Termination of the employee's contract.