

LITCHFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY CODE: GBCC

APPROVAL: April 1, 2009

Page 1 of 2

STAFF ANTI-FRATERNIZATION POLICY

Preamble

The Litchfield School District is committed to fostering a positive learning and working environment for all students and staff in order to promote educational excellence. The Litchfield School District's Anti-fraternization policy shall serve as a statement on appropriate conduct and relationships between students and staff of the Litchfield School District. The spirit and intent of this policy is meant to help both staff and students understand and appreciate the delicate balance that exists between them and to better define the boundaries that their respective roles dictate.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, "staff" refers to all Litchfield School District employees, coaches, contracted service personnel, SAU employees, and any volunteers working on district property.

For purposes of this policy, "student" refers to all Litchfield School District individuals in grades from kindergarten through twelve.

Policy

All staff must be aware that students of all ages and intellect are susceptible to influence by both staff and fellow peers. While this influence most often yields positive educational results, it can also be used in a manner that is entirely inappropriate. Accordingly, staff must be cognizant of their appropriate roles and professional duties in the development of students. Similarly, staff must be cognizant of the imbalance of power that exists in relationships between staff and student. This imbalance of power can remain long after the student has graduated from the Litchfield School District. Due to this imbalance of power, students are vulnerable and cannot always make proper decisions with regard to interactions with staff. Thus, it is the School District's expectation that staff shall recognize and respect this vulnerability when interacting with students. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of staff not to take advantage of or otherwise exploit this imbalance of power to further any non-educational, personal, or inappropriate objective. In particular, staff members are prohibited from engaging in any romantic, sexual, or physical relationship with students.

Staff are responsible for appropriate and professional conduct in all settings and in all forms of communication, including, but not limited to, verbal communication/speech, written communications, *electronic* communications, physical gestures, motions or any other form of interaction. Personal relationships with students that are not related to legitimate educational purposes shall also violate this policy depending upon the circumstances. However, it is understood that many personal relationships between staff and students are entirely appropriate and develop through mutual interest, family or neighborhood interactions. So long as these relationships maintain the essential and appropriate professional boundaries they shall not be deemed violative of this policy. Regardless of the student's advances, gestures or comments, it is the staff's responsibility to terminate any relationship that would otherwise violate this policy. As such, it is the staff's responsibility to ensure that such relationships continue along and within the appropriate boundaries. Failure to adhere to the requirements of this policy may result in severe consequences, up to and including termination.

LITCHFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Page 2 of 2

This policy does not preclude legitimate, non-sexual, physical conduct such as the use of necessary restraints to avoid physical harm to persons or property, or conduct otherwise necessary to respond to, or otherwise address, legitimate educational situations or objectives. Staff shall not conduct activities, which are not directly related to school functions, in a group or one-on-one basis outside of school with students. Similarly, staff shall not single out students from the general student population for special treatment (e.g. gifts, dinners, and rides) without prior consent of the student's parent and/or advance notice to the School District. The District must approve all staff activities with students occurring outside of the classroom or without an educational purpose or objective.

Any question by staff as to the appropriateness of an activity, relationship, or interaction with a student should be directed to the principal or designee. All inquiries into the appropriateness of an activity or relationship will be confidential to the fullest extent appropriate. All staff that suspect an inappropriate relationship exists between a staff member and student are required to immediately notify, orally or in writing, the principal or designee. Submission of a good faith report of a suspected violation of this policy shall not adversely affect the reporting individual's employment.

The staff of the Litchfield School District must understand that this Anti-fraternization Policy is a condition of employment. As a condition of employment, the Litchfield School District reserves the right to at any time, without advance notice to staff, monitor, access, investigate and/or review the appropriateness of any activity or relationship between staff and students in order to protect the health, welfare and safety of the District, its staff and students, which shall include monitoring of electronic access and use of the district equipment and network.

*See Also: Policy GBEBB/JICDAA, Employee-Student Relations
Policy EGA, District Internet Policy*

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