

## 5:120 Employee Ethics; Conduct; and Conflict of Interest

### Professional and Appropriate Conduct

All Joint Agreement employees are expected to maintain high standards in their school relationships, to demonstrate integrity and honesty, to be considerate and cooperative, and to maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students, parents, staff members, and others. In addition, the *Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators*, adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education, is incorporated by reference into this policy. Any employee who sexually harasses a student, willfully or negligently fails to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect as required by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/), engages in *grooming* as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-25, engages in grooming behaviors, violates boundaries for appropriate school employee-student conduct, or otherwise violates an employee conduct standard will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

The Special Education Director or designee shall identify appropriate employee conduct standards and provide them to all Joint Agreement employees. Standards related to school employee-student conduct shall, at a minimum:

1. Incorporate the prohibitions noted in paragraph 1 of this policy;
2. Define prohibited grooming behaviors to include, at a minimum, *sexual misconduct*. *Sexual misconduct* is (i) any act, including but not limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, (ii) by an employee with direct contact with a student, (iii) that is directed toward or with a student to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the student. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - a. A sexual or romantic invitation
  - b. Dating, or soliciting a date
  - c. Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialog
  - d. Making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a student
  - e. Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature
  - f. A sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the student
3. Identify expectations for employees to maintain professional relationships with students, including expectations for employee-student boundaries based upon students' ages, grade levels, and developmental levels. Such expectations shall establish guidelines for specific areas, including but not limited to:
  - a. Transporting a student
  - b. Taking or possessing a photo or video of a student
  - c. Meeting with a student or contacting a student outside the employee's professional role
4. Reference employee reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7926);
5. Outline how employees can report prohibited behaviors and/or boundary violations pursuant to Board policies 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*; 2:265, *Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure*; and 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*; and
6. Reference required employee training related to educator ethics, child abuse, grooming behaviors, and boundary violations as required by law and policies 2:265, *Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure*; 4:165, *Awareness and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Grooming Behaviors*; 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*; and 5:100, *Staff Development Program*.

## Statement of Economic Interests

The following employees must file a "Statement of Economic Interests" as required by the III. Governmental Ethics Act:

1. Special Education Director;
2. Assistant Director;
3. Head of any department;
4. Any employee who, as the Joint Agreement's agent, is responsible for negotiating one or more contracts, including collective bargaining agreement(s), in the amount of \$1,000 or greater;
5. Any employee having supervisory authority for 20 or more employees; and
6. Any employee in a position that requires an administrative or a chief school business official endorsement.

## Ethics and Gift Ban

Board policy 2:105, *Ethics and Gift Ban*, applies to all Joint Agreement employees. Students shall not be used in any manner for promoting a political candidate or issue.

## Prohibited Interests; Conflict of Interest; and Limitation of Authority

In accordance with Section 22-5 of the School Code, "no school officer or teacher shall be interested in the sale, proceeds, or profits of any book, apparatus, or furniture used or to be used in any school with which such officer or teacher may be connected," except when the employee is the author or developer of instructional materials listed with the Illinois State Board of Education and adopted for use by the Board. An employee having an interest in instructional materials must file an annual statement with the Board Secretary.

For the purpose of acquiring profit or personal gain, no employee shall act as an agent of the Joint Agreement nor shall an employee act as an agent of any business in any transaction with the Joint Agreement. This includes participation in the selection, award or administration of a contract supported by a federal award or State award governed by the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) (30 ILCS 708/) when the employee has a real or apparent conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when an employee or any of the following individuals has a financial or other interest in the entity selected for the contract:

1. Any person that has a close personal relationship with an employee that may compromise or impair the employee's fairness and impartiality, including a member of the employee's immediate family or household;
2. An employee's business partner; or
3. An entity that employs or is about to employ the employee or one of the individuals listed in one or two above.

Employees shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to agreements or contracts. Situations in which the interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value must comply with State law and Board policy 2:105, *Ethics and Gift Ban*.

## Guidance Counselor Gift Ban

Guidance counselors are prohibited from intentionally soliciting or accepting any gift from a *prohibited source* or any gift that would be in violation of any federal or State statute or rule. For guidance counselors, a *prohibited source* is any person who is (1) employed by an institution of higher education, or (2) an agent or spouse of or an immediate family member living with a person employed

by an institution of higher education. This prohibition does not apply to:

1. Opportunities, benefits, and services available on the same conditions as for the general public.
2. Anything for which the guidance counselor pays market value.
3. A gift from a relative.
4. Anything provided by an individual on the basis of a personal friendship, unless the guidance counselor believes that it was provided due to the official position or employment of the guidance counselor and not due to the personal friendship. In determining whether a gift is provided on the basis of personal friendship, the guidance counselor must consider the circumstances in which the gift was offered, including any of the following:
  - a. The history of the relationship between the individual giving the gift and the guidance counselor, including any previous exchange of gifts between those individuals.
  - b. Whether, to the actual knowledge of the guidance counselor, the individual who gave the gift personally paid for the gift or sought a tax deduction or business reimbursement for the gift.
  - c. Whether, to the actual knowledge of the guidance counselor, the individual who gave the gift also, at the same time, gave the same or a similar gift to other school district employees.
5. Bequests, inheritances, or other transfers at death.
6. Any item(s) during any calendar year having a cumulative total value of less than \$100.
7. Promotional materials, including, but not limited to, pens, pencils, banners, posters, and pennants.

A guidance counselor does not violate this prohibition if he or she promptly returns the gift to the prohibited source or donates the gift or an amount equal to its value to a tax exempt charity.

### Outside Employment

Employees shall not engage in any other employment or in any private business during regular working hours or at such other times as are necessary to fulfill appropriate assigned duties.

Incorporated

by Reference: 5:120-E (Exhibit - Code of Ethics for Ill. Educators)

CROSS REF.: 2:105 (Ethics and Gift Ban), 2:265 (Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure), 4:60 (Purchases and Contracts), 4:165 (Awareness and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Grooming Behaviors), 5:90 (Abused and Neglected Child Reporting), 5:100 (Staff Development Program), 5:125 (Personal Technology and Social Media; Usage and Conduct), 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited)

Adopted: March 16, 2022

**Midstate Special Education Coop**

## **5:122 Professional Standards**

All Mid-State Special Education employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner. These expected standards of behavior, while not an exhaustive list, serve to provide for the safety and welfare of students and staff and to promote the education of children.

All Mid-State Special Education Joint Agreement employees shall:

1. Demonstrate regular attendance, punctuality and compliance with established policy, routine or procedures related to an employee's time on duty.
2. Display honesty and integrity in the workplace.
3. Exhibit conduct that is respectful of the business conducted by the cooperative, and of the rights of others as related to interactions with students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members.
4. Maintain a safe and healthy environment in which students and staff are not subject to harassment, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, violence and/or substance abuse.
5. Uphold confidentiality as related to student, personnel, financial records and closed session board meeting discussions/minutes.
6. Exhibit truthfulness and responsibility in dealing with public records, funds, and property.
7. Demonstrate conduct that is reflective of recognized professional standards or a "reasonable personal standard."
8. Comply with legitimate directives given by supervisors.
9. Abide by all state and federal laws and rules/regulations and MSSE policies and procedures.

ADOPTED: November 15, 2011; (Reviewed May 19, 2021)

**Midstate Special Education Coop**