

General Personnel

Employee Ethics; Code of Professional Conduct; and Conflict of Interest ¹

All District employees are expected to maintain high standards in their job performance, demonstrate integrity and honesty, be considerate and cooperative, and maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students, parents/guardians, staff members, and others.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide this policy to all District employees and students and/or parents/guardians in their respective handbooks, and ensure its posting on the District's website, if any.²

Professional and Appropriate Conduct

Professional and appropriate employee conduct are important Board goals that impact the quality of a safe learning environment and the school community, increasing students' ability to learn and the District's ability to educate. To protect students from sexual misconduct by employees, and employees from the appearance of impropriety, State law also recognizes the importance for District employees to constantly maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students by following established expectations and guidelines for employee-student boundaries. Many breaches of employee-student boundaries do not rise to the level of criminal behavior but do pose a potential risk to student safety and impact the quality of a safe learning environment. Repeated violations of employee-student boundaries may indicate the grooming of a student for sexual abuse. As bystanders, employees may know of concerning behaviors that no one else is aware of, so their training on: (1) preventing, recognizing, reporting, and responding to child sexual abuse and grooming behavior; (2) this policy; and (3) federal and state reporting requirements is essential to maintaining the Board's goal of professional and appropriate conduct.³

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ The State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (SOEEA) (5 ILCS 430/), *Erin's Law* (105 ILCS 5/10-23.13, amended by P.A. 102-610), and *Faith's Law* (105 ILCS 5/22-85.5, added by P.A. 102-676), require a policy on subjects covered in this sample policy; State and federal law controls its content.

This policy contains items on which collective bargaining may be required. Any policy that impacts upon wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment, is subject to collective bargaining upon request by the employee representative, even if the policy involves an inherent managerial right.

This policy largely cites 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5, a small portion of the *Faith's Law* package. *Faith's Law* is the entirety of Public Act 102-676, which closed significant legal loopholes related to combating grooming by: (1) broadening the definition of grooming prohibited by the Criminal Code of 2012 (720 ILCS 5/11-25); (2) authorizing the Ill. Dept. of Children and Family Services to investigate grooming allegations under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/3); and (3) requiring the Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE) to develop and maintain a resource guide for students, parents/guardians, and teachers about sexual abuse response and prevention resources available in their community (105 ILCS 5/2-3.188). ISBE's *Sexual Abuse Response and Prevention Resource Guide* (June 2023) is at: www.isbe.net/Documents/Faiths-Law-Resource-Guide.pdf. A *Faith's Law* trailer bill, P.A. 102-702, further combats grooming by amending School Code provisions related to district and third-party contractor hiring practices, suspension and revocation of employee licenses, and criminal history records checks for prospective and current employees.

² Required by 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(e), added by P.A. 102-676. See 2:250-E2, *Immediately Available District Public Records and Web-Posted Reports and Records*, and 7:190-E2, *Student Handbook Checklist*. The Ill. Principals Association (IPA) maintains a handbook service that coordinates with PRESS material, *Online Model Student Handbook (MSH)*, at: www.ilprincipals.org/msh.

³ See 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(b), added by P.A. 102-676.

The Superintendent or designee shall identify employee conduct standards⁴ that define appropriate employee-student boundaries, provide training about them, and monitor the District's employees for violations of employee-student boundaries. The employee conduct standards will require that, at a minimum:

1. Employees who are governed by the *Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators*, adopted by the Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE), will comply with its incorporation by reference into this policy.⁵
2. Employees are trained on educator ethics, child abuse, grooming behaviors, and employee-student 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*.⁶
3. Employees maintain professional relationships with students, including maintaining employee-student boundaries based upon students' ages, grade levels, and developmental levels and following District-established guidelines for specific situations, including but not limited to:⁷
 - a. Transporting a student;
 - b. Taking or possessing a photo or video of a student; and
 - c. Meeting with a student or contacting a student outside the employee's professional role.

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⁴ Sample conduct standards are contained in administrative procedure 5:120-AP2, *Employee Conduct Standards*. These items are subjects of mandatory collective bargaining. Consult the board attorney for advice before establishing them.

⁵ 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(1), added by P.A. 102-676; 23 Ill.Admin.Code Part 22. 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(1) requires boards to incorporate ISBE's *Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators* in their policies. Prior to this law requiring boards to incorporate the *Code* by reference, this policy incorporated it to demonstrate a board's commitment to the *Code*'s principles, potentially allowing a board to enforce the *Code* independently from any action taken by the State Superintendent.

⁶ 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(5), added by P.A. 102-676, requires districts to reference required employee training related to child abuse and educator ethics in its employee professional conduct policy.

105 ILCS 5/10-22.39(b-35), added by P.A. 103-542, eff. 1-1-24, requires that beginning 7-1-24, each board conduct in-service training on educator ethics and responding to child sexual abuse and grooming behavior including, but not limited to, teacher-student conduct, school employee-student conduct, and evidence-informed training on preventing, recognizing, reporting, and responding to child sexual abuse and grooming as outlined in 105 ILCS 5/10-23.13 (a/k/a *Erin's Law*) for all teachers, administrators, and school support personnel. These expectations will be most effective when the in-service curriculum reflects local conditions and circumstances. While the School Code only requires the in-service, the requirement presents an opportunity for each board and the superintendent to examine all current policies, collective bargaining agreements, and administrative procedures on this subject. Each board may then want to have a conversation with the superintendent and direct him or her to develop a curriculum for the in-service that instructs all district employees to maintain boundaries and act appropriately, professionally, and ethically with students. See discussion in f/n 4 in 5:100, *Staff Development Program*. After its discussion of these issues, the board may have further expectations and may choose to reflect those expectations here.

105 ILCS 5/10-23.13(c), amended by P.A. 102-610, requires districts to provide evidenced-informed training for school personnel on preventing, recognizing, reporting, and responding to child sexual abuse and grooming behavior by no later than January 31 of each year. See sample policy 4:165, *Awareness and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Grooming Behaviors*, for further detail about the training requirements.

325 ILCS 5/4(j), amended by P.A. 102-604, requires district employees to complete mandated reporter training within three months of initial employment and at least every three years thereafter.

775 ILCS 5/2-109 requires districts to provide annual workplace sexual harassment prevention training to all employees. See f/n 4 in sample policy 5:20, *Workplace Harassment Prohibited*, for further detail about the training requirements.

⁷ Required by 105 ILCS 5/10-23.13(b), amended by P.A. 102-610; 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(3), added by P.A. 102-676. Sample expectations and guidelines are contained in administrative procedure 5:120-AP2, E, *Expectations and Guidelines for Employee-Student Boundaries*.

4. Employees 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*.⁸
5. Discipline up to and including dismissal will occur for any employee who violates an employee conduct standard or engages in any of the following:⁹
 - a. Violates expectations and guidelines for employee-student boundaries.¹⁰
 - b. Sexually harasses a student.¹¹
 - c. Willfully or negligently fails to follow reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/),¹² Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*), or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7926).¹³
 - d. Engages in grooming as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-25.¹⁴
 - e. Engages in grooming behaviors. Prohibited grooming behaviors¹⁵ include, at a minimum, *sexual misconduct*. *Sexual misconduct*¹⁶ is any act, including but not limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, by an employee with direct contact with a student, 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:
 - i. A sexual or romantic invitation.

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⁸ Required by 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(4), added by P.A. 102-676. See also 105 ILCS 5/10-23.13(b), amended by P.A. 102-610.

⁹ Required by 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(f), added by P.A. 102-676.

¹⁰ Sample expectations and guidelines are contained in administrative procedure 5:120-AP2, E, *Expectations and Guidelines for Employee-Student Boundaries*. These items are subjects of mandatory collective bargaining. Consult the board attorney for advice before establishing them.

¹¹ The Ill. Human Rights Act makes it a civil rights violation to fail to take remedial action, or to fail to take appropriate disciplinary action, against any employee when the district knows that the employee committed or engaged in sexual harassment of a student. 775 ILCS 5/5A-102, amended by P.A. 103-472, eff. 8-1-24. Sexual harassment of a student is also prohibited by 2:265, *Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure*, and 7:20, *Harassment of Students Prohibited*. Sexual harassment of an employee is also prohibited by policy 2:265, *Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure*, and 5:20, *Workplace Harassment Prohibited*.

¹² 325 ILCS 5/4(a)(4); 105 ILCS 5/10-23.12(c) (all district employees); 105 ILCS 5/21B-75(b) (teachers), amended by P.A.s 102-552 and 102-702.

¹³ Required by 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(4), added by P.A. 102-676.

¹⁴ 720 ILCS 5/11-25(a), amended by P.A. 102-676, defines *grooming* as follows: “A person commits grooming when he or she knowingly uses a computer on-line service, Internet service, local bulletin board service, or any other device capable of electronic data storage or transmission, performs an act in person or by conduct through a third party, or uses written communication to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, or attempt to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, a child, a child's guardian, or another person believed by the person to be a child or a child's guardian, to commit any sex offense as defined in Section 2 of the Sex Offender Registration Act, to distribute photographs depicting the sex organs of the child, or to otherwise engage in any unlawful sexual conduct with a child or with another person believed by the person to be a child. As used in this Section, ‘child’ means a person under 17 years of age.”

¹⁵ Required by 105 ILCS 5/10-23.13(b), amended by P.A. 102-610.

¹⁶ Required by 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d)(2), added by P.A. 102-676. This definition of *sexual misconduct* is adapted from 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(c), added by P.A. 102-676. It results from collaboration to implement some recommendations of the *Make Sexual and Severe Physical Abuse Fully Extinct (Make S.A.F.E.) Taskforce* and was endorsed by Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct & Exploitation (S.E.S.A.M.E.), a national organization working to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment of students by teachers and other school staff. See www.sesamenet.org/ for further information.

- ii. Dating or soliciting a date.
- iii. Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialog.
- iv. Making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a student.
- v. Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature.
- vi. A sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the student.

Statement of Economic Interests

The following employees must file a *Statement of Economic Interests* as required by the Ill. Governmental Ethics Act: ¹⁷

- 1. Superintendent;
- 2. Building Principal;
- 3. Head of any department;
- 4. Any employee who, as the District's agent, is responsible for negotiating one or more contracts, including collective bargaining agreement(s), in the amount of \$1,000 or greater;
- 5. Hearing officer;
- 6. Any employee having supervisory authority for 20 or more employees; and
- 7. 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 District employees.¹⁸ 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 105 ILCS 5/22-5, "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 ISBE and adopted for use by the Board.¹⁹ An employee having an interest in instructional materials must file an annual statement with the Board Secretary.²⁰

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¹⁷ 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5. See 5 ILCS 420/4A-102, amended by P.A.s 102-664 and 102-813, for economic interests of an employee's spouse or any other party that is considered the employee's interests if the employee constructively controls them. Any county clerk may use a mandatory system of Internet-based filing of economic interest statements; if done, the clerk must post the statements, without the addresses, of the filers, on a publicly accessible website. 5 ILCS 420/4A-108, amended by P.A. 102-664.

¹⁸ The SOEEA prohibits State employees from engaging in certain political activities and accepting certain gifts. 5 ILCS 430/. It requires all school districts to adopt an *ordinance or resolution* "in a manner no less restrictive" than the Act's provisions. See sample policy 2:105, *Ethics and Gift Ban*.

Districts may not inhibit or prohibit employees from petitioning, making public speeches, campaigning for or against political candidates, speaking out on public policy questions, distributing political literature, making campaign contributions, and seeking public office. 50 ILCS 135/, Local Governmental Employees Political Rights Act. An employee may not use his/her position of employment to coerce or inhibit others in the free exercise of their political rights or engage in political activities at work. *Id.*

¹⁹ This sentence quotes 105 ILCS 5/22-5 because the statute does not define important terms making it difficult to paraphrase. No appellate decision defines *school officer* or *apparatus*, or what is meant by *connected*. The statute was enacted in 1961, but earlier versions were in the School Code much longer. A violation of this prohibition is a Class A misdemeanor.

²⁰ *Id.*

For the purpose of acquiring profit or personal gain, no employee shall act as an agent of the District nor shall an employee act as an agent of any business in any transaction with the District. 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.²¹ A conflict of interest arises when an employee or any of the following individuals has a financial or other interest in or a tangible benefit from the entity selected for the contract:

1. A member of the employee's immediate family;
2. An employee's partner²²; or
3. An entity that employs or is about to employ the employee or one of the individuals listed in one or two above.²³

Employees shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to agreements or subcontracts.²⁴ 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*.²⁵

Guidance Counselor Gift Ban ²⁶

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

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²¹ 2 C.F.R. §200.318(c)(1) prohibits employees, officers, or agents of a school district from participating in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a federal award if they have a real or apparent *conflict of interest*. The uniform federal rules on procurement standards in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 also apply to eligible State grants through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) (30 ILCS 708/). Authoritative sources and guidance regarding conflict of interest and financial disclosure are provided through the GATA Resource Library at <https://gata.illinois.gov/>. See also ISBE's *Procurement and Purchasing Checklist* at: www.isbe.net/Pages/Federal-and-State-Monitoring.aspx. See sample policy 2:100, *Board Member Conflict of Interest*, at f/n 6, for further discussion.

²² See sample policy 2:100, *Board Member Conflict of Interest*, at f/n 7 for a discussion of the term *partner*.

²³ 2 C.F.R. §200.318(c)(1).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* The rule provides flexibility for school districts to "set standards for situations in which the financial interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value," along with "disciplinary actions to be applied for violations." Referring to sample policy 2:105, *Ethics and Gift Ban*, for these standards provides clarity and consistency. Sample policy 2:105 refers to **Limitations on Receiving Gifts** in the Ethics Act at 5 ILCS 430/10-10 – 10-30, along with discussion of the specific penalties available under the Ethics Act at 5 ILCS 430/50-5 in its **Enforcement** subhead.

²⁶ This section is only for those districts with a high school. 105 ILCS 5/22-93, added by P.A. 102-327 and renumbered by P.A. 102-813. *Guidance counselor* means a person employed by a school district and working in a high school to offer students advice and assistance in making career or college plans. *Id.*

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 501(c)(3) 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 (Code of Ethics for Ill. Educators)

LEGAL REF.: U.S. Constitution, First Amendment.
2 C.F.R. §200.318(c)(1).
5 ILCS 420/4A-101, Ill. Governmental Ethics Act.
5 ILCS 430/, State Officials and Employee Ethics Act.
30 ILCS 708/, Grant Accountability and Transparency Act.
50 ILCS 135/, Local Governmental Employees Political Rights Act.
105 ILCS 5/10-22.39, 5/10-23.13, 5/22-5, 5/22-85.5, and 5/22-93.
325 ILCS 5/, Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.
720 ILCS 5/11-25, Criminal Code of 2012.
775 ILCS 5/5A-102, Ill. Human Rights Act.
23 Ill.Admin.Code Part 22, Code of Ethics for Ill. Educators.
Pickering v. Board of Township H.S. Dist. 205, 391 U.S. 563 (1968).
Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 410 (2006).

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), 5:200 (Terms and Conditions of Employment and Dismissal), 5:290 (Employment Termination and Suspensions), 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited)