Standards of Professional Conduct for all Employees

I. Communication

Employees shall communicate in an appropriate/professional manner avoiding abusive language or profanity in written, oral, and nonverbal communication. Employees shall avoid unacceptable communications through social media with students and coworkers and the school community, including those actions outlined in Section VII of this regulation.

II. School Division Resources

Employees shall use School Board resources, including School Division time, property, and technology for authorized purposes.

III. Alcohol, Weapons, Drug Free Work Environment

Employees shall comply with the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) requirement that an alcohol, weapons, and drug free work environment be maintained.

IV. Achievement of Division Goals

A. Employees shall comply with all applicable laws and School Board policies, regulations, and notices.

B. Employees shall be committed to the achievement of the Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

V. Professional Behavior

Consistent with the School Board’s directive in Policy 561, “Responsibilities and Duties of Employees,” and the expectation that all school employees will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner so as to promote the best interests of PWCS:

1. All PWCS employees shall be role models for the students in the School Division. All school employees must recognize that as a condition of their employment in a World-Class educational system, they must model legal, ethical, moral, respectful and civil behaviors, both in and outside the workplace.
2. They shall demonstrate professional and ethical standards, as well as personal integrity, in all interactions both in the workplace and the community. They shall also demonstrate a high level of professional performance consistent with their assigned duties, responsibilities, and continuous improvement. Employees shall work in a collegial and collaborative manner with peers, school personnel, and the community to promote and support student learning.

VI. **Nondiscrimination**

All employees must exhibit respect for all manner of diversity among students, staff, and the community, and must adhere to all School Board policies and regulations prohibiting discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related conditions, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic information or any other basis prohibited by law. Conduct, words, other communications, or behaviors which create or contribute to a hostile work environment, or those directed toward coworkers, subordinates, or supervisors which are, or could be perceived as, disrespectful of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related conditions, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or other personal characteristics will not be tolerated.

VII. **Employee-Student Relations**

A. At no time shall an employee’s conduct or relationship with a student impede or negatively affect the student’s education or participation in educational programs or services.

B. Employees must recognize and establish appropriate boundaries between themselves and students, and must not engage in any behaviors or interactions with students, in person or through any communication media, which could be perceived as inappropriate, intimate, grooming, or harassing in nature. Accordingly, the following standards apply to all interactions between employees and students:

1. No employee shall engage in communications with students, either in person or through electronic, telephonic, video, or other modes of communication, in a manner that is excessive, inappropriate, unduly familiar, intimate, or sexual in nature, at any time, regardless of location.

2. Employees shall not engage in intimate, unduly familiar, or sexual conduct with any student at any location in or outside of school, including, but not limited to, conduct prohibited by Regulation 738-3, “Harassment of Students.”
3. Employees may use electronic communications with students for legitimate purposes connected to school programs or services, including participation in athletics and extracurricular activities. However, employees should communicate with students for such purposes using official PWCS email accounts, except in emergency or unusual situations. Any employee initiated communications must be directly related to a school program or activity, and shall be group communications with parents/guardians included in the same. Except as provided herein, employees shall not communicate with students using cell phone and other personal electronic forms of communication, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Snapchat, and texting. Employees should not provide students with access or invitations to their own personal social media sites, such as Facebook. Nor should employees access the personal social media sites of students.

4. Employees shall not cause any student to miss instructional time or school sponsored activities for non-educational purposes.

5. Employees shall not allow a student to occupy, ride in, or drive the employee’s personal vehicle without the knowledge and consent of the student’s parent or guardian and without at least one other adult in the vehicle.

6. Employees shall not assist or encourage a student’s use of controlled substances, including but not limited to, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, and should not attend any function where students are in possession of, or are using such substances.

7. Employees shall not purposefully meet with students outside school or school activities, without the knowledge and consent of the student’s parent/guardian.

8. Employees shall not solicit, discuss, propose nor arrange any personal, intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship with a student while they are PWCS students, even if the proposed relationship does not occur or would not occur until after the student reaches the age of majority and graduates or leaves PWCS.

9. Employees who have reason to believe, or are advised by other staff or supervisors, that their interactions with a student(s) may be viewed as inappropriate, unduly familiar, intimate, grooming, or sexual in nature, shall take all reasonable measures to immediately correct the same, including termination of any electronic or other non-school related communications.
10. Employees shall not help a student falsify or conceal information relating to the student’s health, safety, or welfare.

C. Any employee who has reason to know of a possible violation of these standards by any other PWCS employee shall report the same to his or her immediate supervisor or the Director of Human Resources. Any employee who has reason to believe a violation of these standards has occurred which may constitute child abuse or neglect has a duty to report the suspected violation under the procedures set forth in Regulation 771-1, “Child Abuse and Child Abuse Reporting Procedures.”

VIII. Relations with Co-Workers and Supervisors

Employees are expected to maintain a civil, respectful, and polite demeanor in all interactions with coworkers and supervisors. Failure to do so reflects a lack of judgment, professionalism, and control which is unacceptable in a school environment.

IX. Threats Against Other School Employees, Students, or School Property

No employee shall physically or verbally threaten the person, family, property, health, or mental well-being of any student or other school employee, nor the safety of PWCS schools, students, staff, or property. Such threats will be referred to law enforcement for criminal prosecution under Va. Code §18.2-60 or other applicable statute.

X. Conduct Outside the Workplace

The School Board recognizes that employees have the right to conduct their personal lives separate from their positions as School Board employees. However, employees must also recognize their duty to maintain that separation and their unique position as public school employees who serve the school community as role models, leaders, and instructors of students. In that respect, school employees are held to a higher standard of ethical and moral behavior, both in school and in the community.

Conduct or actions of school employees occurring outside school which undermine the employee’s position as a role model, reflect negatively on the reputation of the School Division, jeopardize the trust of the School Board and community in the employee’s integrity, or have a negative impact on school operations and student education, can serve as a basis for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:
A. Drug or alcohol abuse that becomes open or notorious;

B. Conviction of a felony, a crime of moral turpitude, other criminal offenses, or a finding of child abuse or neglect;

C. Inappropriate social networking activities on Internet sites or other public media; and,

D. Other conduct or statements by employees which are incompatible with their status as role models or reflect unfitness to carry out the duties of their positions.

XI. Professional Appearance

Employees shall dress in a professional manner that is neat, clean, appropriate, and safe in the work place, at school-sponsored activities, and when representing PWCS.

XII. Confidentiality

Employees shall be respectful of all confidential information within the confines of School Board policies, regulations, state statutes, and federal laws.

XIII. Conflict of Interest

Employees shall not profit financially or personally from any situation that conflicts with compensation provided by Prince William County Public Schools, and shall comply with the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, Va. Code § 2.2-3100 et seq.

XIV. Failure to adhere to these Standards of Professional Conduct provides just cause for disciplinary action, up to and including nonrenewal or dismissal from employment.

The Associate Superintendent for Human Resources (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and any related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS