

POLICY 1260

Community

Civility/Respectful Communications and Actions at School, on School Property, or at a School-Sponsored Activity or Function

Purpose

The Middletown Board of Education (the “Board”) is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment within the Middletown Public Schools (the “District”) that offers a positive school climate. Maintaining an environment that is supportive of learning, free of disruptive conduct, and provides models of appropriate behavior for students fosters students’ educational success. As such, the Board promotes civility and respectful communications among District employees, students, parents, volunteers and other third parties who are present at school, on school property, and at school-sponsored activities and functions. In addition, the Board discourages harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, or threatening communication or actions, some of which may be against the law.

The intent of this policy is to maintain a civil, respectful environment for teachers, students, administrators, staff, parents, volunteers, and other members of the school community.

The following describes expected standards for staff, students, parents, volunteers and other third parties while at school, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity or function.

Standards for Communications

The Board expects staff, students, parents, volunteers and other third parties while at school, on school property or at a school-sponsored activity or function to communicate and act in a manner that promotes respect for all individuals, regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, veteran status, status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or human trafficking, socio-economic status, or role within the school community. All adults participating in the school community are expected to communicate and act in a manner that models appropriate conduct for students. The Board will regulate communications and actions by staff, students, parents, volunteers and other third parties while at school, on school property or at a school-sponsored activity or function, when such communications or actions are contrary to these fundamental principles.

Specifically, the Board will regulate disruptive communications and/or actions by members of the school community when school officials determine that such communications:

- 1) cause sufficient interference with, disruption to, or undermining of the effective operation of a District school or the District (or, for students, when school officials can reasonably forecast significant disruption);
- 2) are used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
- 3) create a hostile environment;
- 4) breach confidentiality obligations of District employees; or
- 5) violate the law, Board policies and/or other school rules or regulations.

The Board shall address the conduct of an employee acting pursuant to their duties as a Board employee in a manner that comports with the First Amendment and other applicable law.

Examples of Disruptive Communications/Actions

Disruptive communications and/or actions that may be regulated under this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Boisterous, unruly conduct not appropriate for the forum, including but not limited to swearing or display of temper.
- Invading another person's space by moving close to the individual in an aggressive manner.
- Threatening to do physical harm to a teacher, school administrator, school employee, student, or member of the community.
- Damaging, destroying, or threatening to destroy or damage school property.
- Harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, or threatening verbal, written or electronic communications.
- Any other behavior which sufficiently disrupts the orderly operation of the school, a school activity, or any other activity sponsored by the District.

Each communication will be considered on the basis of the specific facts and circumstances in which it is made.

Student, Parent, Member of the Public Reports

Members of the school community who believe they were subject to communications and/or actions on the part of a staff member in violation of this policy may report such behavior to the building principal and/or the Superintendent's office.

Members of the school community who believe they were subject to communications and/or actions on the part of a student in violation of this policy may report such behavior to the building principal.

Disciplinary Consequences

Employees found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with applicable law and the terms of the relevant collective bargaining agreement or contract.

Students found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Board's policy concerning Student Discipline and applicable law.

Parents, volunteers, or other members of the school community found to be in violation of this policy may be directed to leave school property, a school building, or any activity sponsored by the District. Repeat violations may result in loss of privilege of volunteer status and/or a long-term denial of access to school property, school buildings, or activities sponsored by the District.

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Policy revised: