



**Responsible Office:** Office of Human Resources

## **BOARD POLICY 4505**

### **STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

#### **PURPOSE**

The Board of Trustees (“Board”) believes in promoting the well-being of its employees by maintaining high standards of work performance and professional conduct. This policy and any associated governing documents shall set forth the Washoe County School District’s (“District”) standards of professional conduct and the processes used to address unacceptable behavior and related employment issues in the workplace, or outside the workplace when conduct impacts an employee’s ability to do his/her job and/or influences the District’s overall effectiveness.

#### **POLICY**

##### **1. Governing Principles**

- a. The District will work collaboratively with all employees to advance initiatives that improve student achievement and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- b. Nevada state law and progressive discipline plans will be utilized to fairly and consistently address employee behavior, conduct, and/or performance that is incompatible with the policies of the District, as well as the individual collective bargaining agreements.
- c. The District shall encourage and maintain a culture of openness, trust and integrity in business practices. Effective ethics is a team effort and all staff members are expected to be familiar with the ethics guidelines established by this policy, its associated regulations, and any applicable federal or state laws and regulations.
- d. The District shall reinforce the importance of integrity and the tone will start at the top. Members of the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent and every employee and volunteer must consistently maintain an ethical stance and support ethical behavior.
- e. The Board recognizes that in order to fulfill the District’s mission and strategic goals, the educational community must operate within an organizational culture of respect. Such a culture of respect ensures

equitable opportunities for all students to learn and employees to work to optimal capacity. A culture of respect begins in every classroom and is expanded through the District and the community it serves.

## 2. Governing Practices

- a. Employee Standards of Conduct. All employees of the Washoe County School District are expected to:
  - i. Conduct themselves at all times in a manner that supports the mission of the District and the performance of their duties.
  - ii. Maintain a neat, clean and professional appearance. The District reserves the right to insist that the dress and grooming of staff not present potential health or safety problems or cause disruptions.
  - iii. Report to work as scheduled and seek approval from their supervisors in advance for any changes to the established work schedule, including the use of leave and late or early arrivals and departures. Leave and related employee benefits shall be utilized in the manner for which they were intended.
  - iv. Devote full effort to job responsibilities during work hours, and perform assigned duties and responsibilities with the highest degree of public trust.
  - v. Maintain the qualifications, certification, licensure, and/or training requirements identified for their positions.
  - vi. Resolve work-related issues and disputes in a professional manner and through established processes.
  - vii. Report to management circumstances or concerns that may affect satisfactory work performance, including any inappropriate (fraudulent, illegal, unethical) activities of other employees, or misconduct toward a student.
  - viii. Work cooperatively with others to achieve the goals and objectives of the District.
- b. Employee Responsibilities and Duties. The Board shall establish the general responsibilities and duties of personnel through the District's Strategic Plan, budgeting process, and other initiatives. It shall be the duty of the Superintendent and the Chief Human Resources Officer to implement the directives of the Board with regard to the general responsibilities and duties of personnel.

c. Ethics and Conflict of Interest

- i. Ethics. The Board, Superintendent, and management shall set the tone for ethical behavior throughout the District by maintaining an ethical culture, clearly communicating acceptable behavior and expectations to each employee, and creating an environment that reinforces and encourages ethical behavior throughout all levels of the District. The ethical tone maintained and demonstrated by management and staff is an essential element of a positive ethical environment.
- ii. Conflict of Interest (See Administrative Regulation 4530, Ethical Standards / Conflict of Interest)
  1. Pursuant to Nevada state law, a "conflict of interest" is the private or personal interest of a public officer or employee, or of someone close to a public officer or employee, that is sufficient to affect his or her independence of judgment or the objective exercise of public duty. (See NRS 281A.420)
  2. No employee shall receive unlawful compensation, commission or personal profit in the course of performing District duties nor shall the office or position of any employee be used for unlawful purposes or for personal gain.
  3. Any District employee, including coaches and advisors, who own, contract with, are employed by, or volunteer with any entity other than the District, shall adhere to all District policies and administrative regulations regarding ethical behavior and shall not grant any privilege or benefit to another entity, its employees, or members at the expense of the District. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of District information technology network services, equipment, facilities, and/or property.
  4. Employees must disclose, to his/her supervisor, any conflict of interest regarding his/her position to the third degree of consanguinity or affinity at the time such potential conflict is realized. Conflict of Interest – Human Resources
  5. Hiring. No staff member shall serve on a hiring committee or make other hiring decisions regarding an individual who is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity.

6. Evaluations. The Board of Trustees recognizes that an inherent conflict of interest and/or appearance of impropriety arises when a supervisor or other school employee evaluates another employee with whom he or she is involved within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity. Such a relationship between evaluator and the individual being evaluated taints the evaluation process, adversely affects employee morale and productivity, and compromises the District's interest in promoting qualified employees on a fair and objective basis.

d. Whistleblower Protection

- i. The District shall not suspend or terminate the employment of, or take other adverse personnel action against, an employee who in good faith reports a violation of law by the District or District employee to an appropriate authority, including school police or other law enforcement agency or through established District complaint processes.
- ii. "Good faith" refers to the employee's belief that the conduct reported was a violation of law or District policy/regulation; and that belief was reasonable in light of the employee's training and experience.

e. Culture of Respect.

- i. A culture of respect commits the District and its employees to:
  1. Mutual Respect
  2. Productive Collaboration
  3. Effective Communications
  4. Continuous Improvement
- ii. Through that commitment, all employees and volunteers are expected to:
  1. Treat others fairly, have mutual respect, promote a team environment, and avoid the intent and/or appearance of unethical or compromising practices;
  2. Demonstrate positive relationships with students; participate in conferences with colleagues and parents on students'

needs and progress; and establish an environment in which each student feels successful and productive.

3. Demonstrate respect for the District and toward all coworkers, students, parents/guardians, volunteers and other visitors to District properties and activities.
- f. All District employees and volunteers shall comply with all Board policies, administrative regulations and other governing documents of the District, as well as all local, state and federal laws and regulations. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. Third Degree of Consanguinity – (as defined by the State of Nevada Commission of Ethics) family relationships included within the third degree are children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, parents, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and great grandparents. Consanguinity can be by blood (birth), marriage (step children, etc.) or adoption.
2. Third Degree of Affinity – (as defined by the State of Nevada Commission of Ethics) the degree is the same as the degree of underlying relationship by blood. For example, a husband is related by marriage (affinity) to his wife's relatives in the same way that she is related to them by blood (sanguinity). Divorce or death terminates relationships by affinity created by a marriage unless a child of the marriage is living. If a child of the marriage is living, the marriage is considered to continue until the youngest child of that marriage reaches the age of 21.
3. Ethics is defined by Oxford Dictionaries as "moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity." Under Nevada state law, the Code of Ethical Standards is established through Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 281A.400 through 281A.430.

## **DESIRED OUTCOMES**

1. Through this policy, the Board seeks to:
  - a. Work collaboratively with all employees and employee groups, making the District an inclusive, progressive and respectful place to work;
  - b. create high employee morale, a community standard for a respectful environment, and increased student achievement;
  - c. Provide all District administrators the tools and resources to effectively evaluate, motivate, support and take corrective action when necessary while remaining in compliance with the District's policies, regulations and

collective bargaining agreements;

- d. Create avenues through which staff and the community may report suspected improprieties; and
- e. emphasize the expectation of ethical and transparent business practices.

### **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

1. This policy reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
  - a. Board Policy 4111, Equal Opportunity In Employment
  - b. Board Policy 4117, Licensed Employee Evaluation and Probation
  - c. Board Policy 4119, Separation
  - d. Board Policy 4160, Mandatory Self-Reporting By Staff: Charge, Arrest or Conviction of a Crime
  - e. Board Policy 4214, Alcohol and Drug Testing
  - f. Administrative Regulation 4219, Employee Discipline
  - g. Administrative Regulation 4530, Ethical Standards / Conflict of Interest
2. This policy complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) to include:
  - a. Chapter 281A, Ethics in Government
  - b. Chapter 288, Relations between Governments and Public Employees
  - c. Chapter 289, Peace Officers
  - d. Chapter 391, Personnel, and specifically:
    - i. NRS 391.274, Policy prescribing duties, roles and responsibilities of school counselors; limitation on time school counselors required to assist with test administration
3. This policy complies with federal laws and regulations, to include:
  - a. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

### **REVIEW AND REPORTING**

1. This document shall be reviewed as part of the bi-annual review and reporting process, following each regular session of the Nevada Legislature. The Board of

Trustees shall receive notification of any required changes to the policy as well as an audit of the accompanying governing documents.

2. Administrative regulations, and/or other associated documents, will be developed as necessary for the consistent administration of this policy.

**REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Revision	Modification
6/9/2015	1.0	Adopted
2/27/2018	2.0	Revised: removed freedom of speech; revised ethics and conflict of interest