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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE EDUCATOR ETHICS

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### Protect Yourself

#### HEALTHY BOUNDARIES FOR EDUCATORS

**More than ever, children need healthy, clearly-defined relationships** with adults to feel safe and to develop into competent and responsible human beings. As educators, we are their role models -- not their friends, their confidantes, or surrogate parents.

**Your professional behavior, values, and responsibilities** – both in and outside of school – are more important than popularity among students or a need to please others.

**Remember that your competencies are in teaching** your subjects and in providing students with an excellent, well-rounded education. You are employed by the Public Schools of Brookline in a specific role. Leave the counseling to the counselors.

*Remember -- at all times -- that you are the adult, the professional, the role model.*

#### IN SCHOOL

**Follow the Internet Use Policy.** Remember that any emails sent on a school computer can be retrieved. Emails can be considered public documents. Internet activity on a school computer can be tracked.

**Dress appropriately.** The way you dress should never be a distraction to your students.

**Use caution with self-disclosure about your personal life.** Discretion is important.

**Avoid being alone with students.** One-on-one tutoring should be done in a public place like the library. Leave your door open when conferencing.  
**Be consistent in your treatment of students.** Do not make exceptions for a favored few. Do not advocate on students' behalf to bend policies.

**Professional Demeanor.** As a professional, maintain appropriate physical space/contact between yourself and your students

#### OUTSIDE SCHOOL

**You are a private citizen, but you are also always an educator.** Your out-of-school conduct can affect your job security. The line between our public and private lives is less clear, so what you post on a blog, on your MySpace page, on Facebook, can be accessed by students. If you wouldn't want the Superintendent reading it aloud to you in a meeting, don't post it.

**Do not extend your contact with students outside of school.** Do not send text messages or IMs, give out your phone number, or invite students to your house. Do not drive students in your car. Do not give personal advice about boyfriends or girlfriends. Always be careful when sending emails.

## **STAYING WITHIN BOUNDARIES**

**Don't be afraid to correct inappropriate behavior.** Remind students of the limits of your relationship as an educator. Reaffirm the helping nature of the relationship. Make a plan for getting the student appropriate help. Immediately report any incidents of behavior or comments by students that might be misinterpreted later; don't let situations escalate.

**Be friendly, not a friend.** Conversations with students should be warm and caring and provide support for their learning and growth. Relationships should be centered on school events and activities. Student-teacher conduct should be appropriate and understood by the general population – not laced with “inside” references.

*Maintain a culture of professionalism and respect, providing a healthy atmosphere  
for student growth.*

**Support the school culture of professionalism.** Don't ignore situations. Help create a culture of intolerance for inappropriate behavior. Letting incidents slide sends the message that you believe such behavior is acceptable.

## **IT'S THE LAW**

**Massachusetts law requires school superintendents** to report to the Commissioner of Education in writing wherever a licensed educator is dismissed, not renewed, or resigns after committing misconduct that might warrant revocation or other limitation of the educator's license.

### **According to state regulation 603, CMR 7.17(8)(h)**

Administrators' Obligation to Report. Any administrator who has dismissed, declined to renew the employment of, or obtained the resignation of any educator for any of the reasons cited in 603 CMR 7.14 (8) (a) shall report in writing such resignation or dismissal and the reason therefore to the Commissioner within 30 days. This obligation to report also applies when an administrator acquires relevant information after an educator's dismissal, resignation, or non-renewal. Failure to make such reports shall be grounds on which the Commissioner may revoke the administrator's license.

When the Department of Education receives a report under this regulation, it will conduct an investigation of its own to determine whether the facts warrant revocation, suspension, or limitation of an educator's license.

***If you have any questions about your rights and responsibilities,  
speak to your BEU representative or an administrator.***

*A collaborative effort by the Public Schools of Brookline and the Brookline Educators Union, February 2009*