



EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

2025–2026 School Year



Frederick County Public Schools

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Introduction

Background and Context

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) is committed to operating in a manner that builds upon our core values:

- ★ Students are our priority and all students can achieve at high academic levels
- ★ Families, students and educators share the responsibility for student success
- ★ High expectations inspire high performance
- ★ All staff share the responsibility for a safe and supportive school environment contributing to excellence in education
- ★ The support of everyone in our community is essential to the success of our schools and students, and this success enriches our community
- ★ Continuous improvement in teaching, leadership and accountability is the key to our destiny.

Establishing a clear and comprehensive Employee Code of Conduct for public school employees is of paramount importance. This code serves as a foundational framework that articulates the expected behaviors, ethics, and responsibilities essential for fostering a positive and productive work environment within the educational system. It provides a guide for professional conduct, outlining the principles of respect, integrity, accountability, and collaboration that educators and staff should embody. By adhering to this code, public school employees uphold the trust of students, parents, colleagues, and the community at large. It promotes a culture of transparency, ensures consistency in actions and decisions, and ultimately cultivates a learning environment that nurtures academic growth, student well-being, and societal development.

The *Employee Code of Conduct* offers a summary of the expectations and standards of conduct for FCPS

employees. In addition, this *Code of Conduct* provides the disciplinary steps that FCPS utilizes to address employees' inappropriate behavior or failure to meet our expectations or standards of conduct.

Employee Code of Conduct applies to all FCPS employees, both certificated and non-certificated, full- and part-time, as well as substitutes, coaches and temporary employees. Many aspects of the *Code of Conduct* are based on pertinent Board policies, regulations, and Negotiated Agreements, as well as state and Federal Laws and regulations. This *Code of Conduct* is not a contract, nor does it replace or supersede any Board Policy or Superintendent Regulation. The Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools reserve the right to modify or amend any Board Policy or Regulation at any time. If there is any inconsistency between the contents of the *Employee Code of Conduct* and any Board Policy, Regulation, or the Negotiated Agreement, the Board Policy, Regulation, or the Negotiated Agreement will govern.

The *Employee Code of Conduct* is intended to provide a single summary and reference point of employee expectations and standards of conduct for all employees.

Administration of the *Employee Code of Conduct*

The *Employee Code of Conduct* provides the framework for the legal and system requirements that govern the expectations regarding FCPS employee conduct. These requirements include but are not limited to the following:

Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) and Other Federal and State Laws

The Education Article and COMAR establish the expectations for teachers, principals, assistant principals and other public school positions, which require a professional certificate from the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE). It also provides standards for suspension and dismissal when those certificated employees fail to adhere to the expectations.

Pursuant to Section 6-202 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, certificated employees may be suspended or dismissed for one or more of five different reasons, including immorality; misconduct in office (including a knowing failure to report suspected child abuse and neglect in violation of Section 5-704 of the Family Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland), insubordination; incompetence; and willful neglect of duty.

Pursuant to Section 4-205, the county superintendent is responsible for the appointment and oversight of non-certificated public school employees in accordance with local school system policies, procedures, and applicable collective bargaining agreements. While the statute does not enumerate specific grounds for discipline or dismissal, as it does for certificated staff under Section 6-202, it affirms the superintendent's authority to manage non-certificated personnel decisions within the framework of locally established protocols and negotiated agreements.

Additionally, numerous federal and state laws set forth expectations for all public school employees in terms of the security of another's person, property, or reputation; financial and program accountability; reporting child abuse and neglect; confidentiality of student and personnel records; and civil rights and nondiscrimination.

*Please note, state law disqualifies school vehicle drivers and attendants who do not adhere to the required expectations from driving and/or employment. See [marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/Regulations/COMAR.aspx](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/Regulations/COMAR.aspx), **COMAR 13A.06.07.07**, School Vehicle Drivers, and **COMAR 13A.06.07.08**, School Vehicle Attendants.*

Negotiated Collective Bargaining Agreements

FCPS has Negotiated Agreements with the following associations: Frederick County Teachers Association (FCTA), Frederick County Association of Supervisors and Administrators (FCASA), and Frederick Association of Support Staff Employees (FASSE). To review current agreements, please go to our website at:

fcps.org/labor/agreements

These Negotiated Agreements set forth expectations regarding employee conduct, employee due process rights and provisions that recognize that FCPS may discipline employees for cause. The inclusion of these provisions establishes a clear requirement that employees must meet defined standards of behavior; failure to meet these expectations may constitute cause for disciplinary action or dismissal.

Board Policies and Superintendent's Regulations

Board Policies and Superintendent Regulations establish the standards and create expectations for employee behavior in a wide variety of areas, including but not limited to: interactions with students, reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, fiscal responsibility, ethical and moral standards, confidentiality, nondiscrimination, regular attendance, etc.

All employees are responsible for demonstrating behavior that meets the expectations of federal and state laws and regulations, Negotiated Agreements, and FCPS Policies, Regulations and administrative procedures. Failure to meet these expectations may result in the use of employee discipline provisions under the collective bargaining agreements or, for certificated employees, the suspension and discharge procedures under Section 6-202 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, as appropriate, under the circumstances. In certain situations, multiple sets of guidelines or policies may apply to an employee's conduct. Such actions are initiated and determined on a case-by-case basis by FCPS, subject to grievance and appeal procedures provided by the law, Board Policies, standard operating procedures, and the Negotiated Agreements. ★

Expectations for Employee Conduct

FCPS expects all employees to perform their work with the necessary skill, while maintaining the highest standards of responsible and ethical conduct and to obey all applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures. Under no circumstance may any employee engage in any of the following activities:

- Immorality
- Misconduct in office (*which includes knowingly failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect*)
- Insubordination
- Incompetence
- Willful neglect of duty

Whenever employees face a matter that requires a decision concerning their behavior, FCPS expects them to consider whether it might violate law, Regulation, Policy or administrative procedure. Just as important, employees should not engage in any action or conduct that threatens the safety of students, fellow employees, or the broader community; undermines the employee's professional integrity; and/or makes them unfit to perform their assigned duties.

Specific examples of the behavior that FCPS expects from all of its employees, as well as inappropriate or disruptive behavior that warrants correction or discipline, are highlighted on the following pages. An employee's failure to perform expected behaviors, as well as an employee's performance of inappropriate behaviors (including but not limited to the items listed on the following pages), may result in the employee receiving disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination.

Staff are expected to avoid actions that compromise the safety of students or impede their ability to fulfill their duties effectively.

Employees should understand that not all inappropriate or unethical conduct may be specifically referenced in this document. The examples on the following pages are illustrative yet non-exhaustive. Inappropriate conduct that is not listed, however, may warrant disciplinary action. Please note that the standards for employee conduct set forth in the *Employee Code of Conduct* also apply to email, social media, text messages, message apps, and other electronic communications.



Examples of Expected Conduct in the Workplace

In any professional setting, maintaining a high standard of behavior and conduct is paramount to fostering a productive, respectful, and harmonious work environment. These expected conduct guidelines serve as a compass, guiding employees towards behaviors that not only align with the organization's values and goals but also ensure individual and collective success. Adhering to these principles cultivates a culture of respect, collaboration, and efficiency, ultimately promoting a workplace where employees thrive, interact positively, and contribute their best to the organization's mission and vision.

Punctuality and Regular Attendance	Professional Appearance	Respect and Courtesy	Effective Communication
Arrive on time for work and meetings and notify supervisors in advance of any absences or tardiness. Leave should be taken appropriately and only when available.	Present yourself in a professional manner through appropriate dress and grooming that reflects industry norms for your role.	Treat colleagues, clients, and stakeholders with respect and courtesy including polite language and avoid discriminatory remarks.	Clearly and respectfully communicate ideas, thoughts, and concerns. Listen actively to others and seek to understand their perspectives.
Accountability and Responsibility	Teamwork and Collaboration	Adherence to Policies, Regulations & Standard Operating Procedures	Confidentiality and Integrity
Take ownership of tasks and assignments. Meet deadlines and fulfill commitments.	Work collaboratively and cooperatively with team members and colleagues. Contribute positively to team goals and objectives.	Familiarize yourself and comply with policies, procedures, and guidelines. Report any violations or concerns to the appropriate authority.	Maintain confidentiality of sensitive organizational information. Uphold ethical standards and act with integrity in all interactions.
Productivity and Efficiency	Continuous Learning and Improvement	Conflict Resolution and Professionalism	Health and Safety
Manage time effectively to achieve individual and team goals. Minimize distractions and stay focused on assigned tasks.	Stay updated on trends and advancements relevant to your role. Seek opportunities for professional development and growth.	Address conflicts constructively and professionally, seeking resolution in a respectful manner. Avoid engaging in gossip or spreading rumors.	Adhere to safety protocols and guidelines to maintain a safe working environment. Report any unsafe conditions or incidents promptly.
Student and Stakeholder Focus	Adaptability	Flexibility	Nepotism
Prioritize stakeholder satisfaction and provide excellent service in interactions with students, staff, families, and guests.	Be open to change and adapt to new processes, technologies, or roles as needed.	Handle unexpected challenges with a positive and flexible attitude.	Disclose any personal or familial relationships that have a supervisory or hiring impact.

Examples of Inappropriate Conduct in the Workplace

Maintaining a professional and respectful work environment is fundamental for the success and well-being of any organization. Recognizing and addressing inappropriate conduct within the workplace is vital to upholding these standards. Inappropriate behavior can erode trust, disrupt teamwork, and create a toxic atmosphere that ultimately hampers productivity and employee morale. This non-exhaustive list serves as a guide to identifying behaviors that are unacceptable within the professional realm.

Harassment and Discrimination	Bullying or Intimidation	Violence or Threats	Insubordination
Any form of harassment—whether sexual, racial, gender-based, or otherwise discriminatory—is strictly prohibited.	Verbally, emotionally, or physically bullying or intimidating colleagues, students, families, or guests.	Threatening or engaging in violent behavior towards others within the workplace.	Disrespecting or defying authority, not following instructions, or challenging supervisors in an inappropriate manner.
Dishonesty and Misrepresentation	Conflict of Interest	Theft or Fraud	Substance Abuse
Lying, falsifying information, or misrepresenting facts to colleagues, students, families, or guests.	Engaging in activities or relationships that conflict with the organization's interests or compromise impartial decision-making.	Stealing property or engaging in fraudulent activities, including misusing financial resources.	Using drugs or alcohol in a manner that impairs job performance, safety, or violates organizational policies.
Inappropriate Use of Technology	Improper Dress and Grooming	Gossip and Rumors	Misuse of Authority
Misusing technology for personal reasons, engaging in cyberbullying, or accessing inappropriate content.	Wearing attire or maintaining appearance inconsistent with professional expectations.	Spreading rumors or gossip about colleagues or the organization, which can damage reputations and morale.	Abusing positions of power or authority for personal gain or to exploit others.
Sabotage	Lack of Accountability	Disruptive Behavior	Nepotism
Deliberately sabotaging projects, processes, or colleagues' efforts to hinder progress or create discord.	Avoiding responsibility for mistakes, blaming others, or refusing to acknowledge errors and take corrective actions.	Engaging in disruptive conduct that interferes with productivity, teamwork, or a positive work environment.	Working in a position or being assigned to a location if it creates a supervisor/employee relationship with an immediate family member.

Examples of Expected Conduct with Students

The relationship between public school system employees and students lays the foundation for a safe, supportive, and successful educational experience. Recognizing and abiding by the expected conduct outlined in this list is paramount to fostering a nurturing environment where students can learn, grow, and flourish. The conduct expected from public school employees is not just about compliance with rules; it is about upholding a standard of behavior that respects the dignity and well-being of each student. It establishes the framework for a positive and inclusive atmosphere that promotes academic progress, emotional growth, and a strong sense of community within the educational institution. By following these guidelines, public school employees demonstrate their commitment to the welfare and development of the students they serve, ultimately contributing to a brighter future for all.

Professionalism and Ethical Behavior	Respectful Communication	Safe Environment	Inclusivity and Equity
Demonstrate high levels of professionalism, integrity, and ethical behavior in all interactions with students.	Communicate with students respectfully, using appropriate language and tone. Listen attentively and give students the opportunity to express themselves.	Prioritize the physical and emotional safety of students at all times. Report any safety concerns or incidents promptly.	Treat all students fairly and equitably, regardless of their background, abilities, or demographics. Foster an inclusive environment that promotes diversity and acceptance.
Confidentiality	Appropriate Physical Contact	Positive Reinforcement	Fair Discipline and Conflict Resolution
Maintain the confidentiality of students' personal information, academic records, and any other sensitive data.	Exercise caution and ensure appropriateness when engaging in physical contact with students, following school system policies and guidelines.	Encourage and praise students for their achievements, efforts, and positive behavior. Provide constructive feedback to help students improve.	Implement fair disciplinary measures in accordance with school system policies. Resolve conflicts and disagreements with students in a respectful and constructive manner.
Academic Support	Empathy and Understanding	Proper Use of Technology	Adherence to Laws and Regulations
Provide academic guidance, assistance, and resources to help students succeed academically.	Demonstrate empathy and understanding towards students' challenges and concerns.	Use technology responsibly and in accordance with policies when communicating with students or using educational tools.	Comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies related to student interactions and safety.
Role Modeling Behavior	Collaboration with Colleagues Parents, and Caregivers	Continuous Learning and Development	
Set a positive example for students through your own behavior, attitudes, and work ethic.	Collaborate with other educators, staff, and parents/caregivers to create a supportive and conducive learning environment for students.	Stay updated on best practices in education, child development, and student engagement to enhance your effectiveness in supporting students.	

Examples of Inappropriate Conduct with Students

The integrity of our educational system is rooted in the trust, safety, and well-being of our students. Recognizing and addressing inappropriate conduct by public school system employees with students is not just a matter of policy; it is an ethical imperative essential to the healthy development of our young learners. This non-exhaustive list underscores the gravity of maintaining a safe and respectful environment within educational institutions. Inappropriate behavior by those in positions of authority can cause profound harm to students, erode their trust in the system, and hinder their academic and emotional growth. By articulating these unacceptable behaviors, we emphasize the need for a vigilant and proactive approach to protect our students, foster a culture of respect and care, and ensure that our educational spaces remain nurturing environments conducive to learning and flourishing.

Physical Abuse or Assault	Verbal or Emotional Abuse	Sexual Harassment or Misconduct	Bullying or Intimidation
Physically harming or assaulting a student in any way.	Engaging in derogatory, demeaning, or emotionally harmful language or behavior.	Engaging in any form of sexual attention, advances, or inappropriate touching.	Intimidating or bullying a student, either individually or as a group.
Discrimination or Prejudice	Invasion of Privacy	Improper Relationships	Misuse of Authority
Displaying bias, discrimination, or prejudice based on a student's race, ethnicity, gender, or religion.	Violating a student's privacy, such as by sharing personal information or accessing their personal belongings without consent.	Developing or engaging in inappropriate personal relationships with students, including romantic or excessively familiar relationships.	Abusing one's position of power or authority to manipulate, exploit, or coerce a student.
Inappropriate Discipline	Sharing Inappropriate Content	Unprofessional Communication	Neglect or Ignoring Safety
Administering disciplinary actions that are excessive, harsh, or degrading in nature.	Sharing, displaying, or distributing content that is sexually explicit, violent, or otherwise inappropriate for minors.	Engaging in inappropriate communication, including offensive jokes, offensive language, or any form of harassment.	Failing to address concerns or neglecting a student's safety by keeping or ignoring reports of unsafe conditions.

Examples of Inappropriate Conduct with Students (continued)

Unauthorized Political Activity	Unwanted Solicitation or Gifting	Misuse of Work Technology or Personal Devices	Tutoring Students Who Attend Your School
Avoid engaging in political activities during work hours or school-sponsored events, or using FCPS resources for political purposes.	Attempting to solicit or receive gifts, money, favors, or any personal benefits from students or their families.	Using personal or system technology to engage in improper online communication, taking student photos without consent, or sharing inappropriate content.	Staff may not tutor any students who attend or reasonably plan to attend their school, dress, family, or academic achievement.
Inappropriate Physical Interactions with Students			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting, kicking, or any type of corporal punishment. • Pulling and/or grabbing the student's clothing and/or backpack. • Touching that results in bruise, scratching, etc. • Tickling or kissing students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any type of massage given by or to a student. • Shaking, slapping, shoving, or pinching. • Ostracizing, or withholding food, light, or medical care; forcing the student to eat food they do not want. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withholding bathroom privileges, excessive time out, excessive exercising, or locking the student out of the classroom or school. • Physical restraint of students, except when consistent with techniques and/or strategies authorized in FCPS-sponsored MANDT training and the employee is trained and certified to use MANDT; or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other action that would cause physical injury, bodily harm or be emotionally intimidating to students. • Secluding a student is prohibited at all times.

Furthermore, physical restraint may not be used except in an emergency situation in which physical restraint is necessary to protect a student or other person from imminent, serious, physical harm after other less intrusive, nonphysical interventions have failed or been determined inappropriate. If you have questions or concerns regarding seclusion and restraint practices, please contact the Office of Special Education at specialeducation@fcps.org.

Expected Conduct in the Virtual Environment with Students

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, embracing virtual learning and tools is pivotal to providing continued education for students. The conduct of public school system employees in this digital realm carries immense significance. Upholding these standards is not just a matter of protocol; it is essential to maintaining professionalism, security, privacy, and engagement for students, colleagues, and the broader community. By adhering to these guidelines, public school employees ensure that all interactions in the virtual realm are conducted with the utmost professionalism, safeguarding sensitive information while fostering a secure and inclusive learning environment. This commitment supports meaningful engagement, enhances the educational experience, and strengthens the connections that prepare students for a successful future.

Please note that these standards also apply to email, social media, text messages, message apps, and other electronic communications, in addition to the virtual learning environment.

Examples of Expected Conduct in the Virtual Environment

Navigating a virtual environment requires public school system employees to adhere to professional conduct standards while utilizing digital and online platforms. Here are examples of expected conduct in a virtual or online environment with students.

Secure and Private Communication	Appropriate Use of Technology	Effective Communication	Student Engagement and Participation
Use secure, school-approved platforms for virtual communication to protect student privacy and data.	Use technology for educational purposes and follow guidelines regarding software, websites, and applications.	Clearly communicate lesson plans, assignments, and expectations to students and parents/guardians.	Encourage active participation and engagement during virtual classes, utilizing interactive tools and techniques.
Written Permission	Google Meets	Recording	Technical Support and Assistance
Request written permission for a student to participate in a live one-on-one video/virtual session with you.	Access Google Meets through the Staff Portal to ensure that the FCPS licensed account is utilized.	Always announce when an instructional session is being recorded.	Offer guidance and assistance to students experiencing technical difficulties during virtual learning sessions.
Safe Digital Environment		Data Protection and Privacy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor online behavior to prevent cyberbullying or inappropriate interactions among students. Always video conference from locations where the background is appropriate and the location is quiet. Supervise break-out rooms by popping in and out and observing students' online behavior every 5 minutes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguard student data and privacy by following all applicable laws and school policies. Provide written notice to the parents/guardians of students receiving IEP or 504 services in a live one-on-one video/virtual session. Document all one-on-one sessions in a log that includes staff name, student name, date, time and reason for the session. 	

Culture of Respect and Civility

Fostering a culture of respect and civility in the workplace is paramount for a thriving and harmonious professional environment. It lays the foundation for positive relationships, effective communication, and collaboration among employees. When respect and civility are woven into the fabric of organizational culture, employees feel valued and acknowledged, leading to higher job satisfaction and morale. It cultivates an atmosphere where diverse perspectives are welcomed, conflicts are addressed constructively, and creativity is encouraged. Ultimately, a respectful and civil workplace enhances productivity, teamwork, and employee well-being, contributing to the overall success and reputation of the organization.



Social Media Use

The Board's overarching goal for the use of social media is to foster relationships with the community, model positive digital citizenship for staff and students, and celebrate school system and student success. Social media, in this context, refers to any form of electronic communication through which users communicate interactively. Social media includes, but are not limited to, blogs and microblogs (like X, formerly known as Twitter), application software (like Instagram), and social networking websites (like Facebook). They also extend to video-sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Vimeo), professional networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn), messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat), live-streaming platforms (e.g., Twitch, Facebook Live, YouTube Live), and discussion forums (e.g., Reddit, Quora). This also extends to applications schools might use such as TeamSnap for organizing teams and events, as well as communication platforms such as Remind for messaging, ClassDojo for tracking behavior and progress, and Schoology or Google Classroom for managing assignments and grades. Employees are expected to use social media in a professional, respectful, and safety-conscious manner, ensuring their actions align with the values of the school system and do not infringe upon the rights of others or negatively impact the school's mission. Below are some common principles and guidelines that employees should follow to maintain professionalism and protect the interests of students and the school community.

Maintain Professionalism	Separate Personal and Professional Accounts	Think Before You Post	Respect Confidentiality and Establish Boundaries
Employees should maintain a professional tone and demeanor on social media platforms. Avoid sharing personal information that may compromise your professional image.	Keep personal and professional social media accounts separate. Use professional accounts for interactions related to your role as an educator.	Consider the potential impact of your posts on students, parents, colleagues, and the school community. Avoid posting content that may be offensive, inappropriate, or unprofessional.	Do not share confidential or sensitive information about students, colleagues, or the school. Respect privacy laws and policies. Be mindful of confidentiality that applies to students, staff, and our work with FCPS.
Be Mindful of Relationships	Understand and Follow School Policies	Be Cautious with Controversial Topics	Educate Yourself on Privacy Settings
Exercise caution when connecting with students, parents, or colleagues on social media. Employees may not connect with current students on personal social media accounts.	Familiarize yourself with the social media policies of our district. Follow these policies to ensure compliance and to avoid any potential issues.	Be mindful when discussing political or controversial topics. Remember that your public statements may reflect on the school and your role as an employee.	Understand the privacy settings of the social media platforms you use. Adjust settings to control who can see your content and limit access to your personal information.
Employer Identification	Establish Boundaries	Supportive Posture	Review and Monitor
Exercise caution and be mindful in identifying FCPS as your employer on personal social media or email accounts.	Be mindful of confidentiality when sharing information obtained through your employment on social media or personal accounts.	Avoid posting comments that would erode the public's trust in our Board, Superintendent, schools, or employees.	All employees are encouraged to regularly review their online interactions and content. Employees should report any harassment or bullying.

Social media is a tool to showcase positive aspects of education and your involvement in the school system and community. Should there be any concerns about the use of social media, employees should promptly report them to a supervisor or Human Resources so that they can be addressed.

Examples of Expected Respectful and Civil Conduct

Creating a respectful and civil work environment involves upholding fundamental principles and behaviors that promote a positive and harmonious workplace. Here are fifteen key tenets to foster such an environment.

Active Listening	Open Communication	Empathy and Understanding	Conflict Resolution
Encouraging individuals to listen attentively and without interruption, valuing and acknowledging each person's perspective.	Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and feedback openly and honestly.	Encouraging employees to understand & consider the feelings and experiences of others, promoting a supportive, compassionate atmosphere.	Implementing constructive conflict resolution strategies that focus on finding solutions and maintaining relationships rather than blame.
Appreciation and Recognition	Inclusive Decision-Making	Respect for Diversity and Inclusion	Courtesy and Politeness
Recognizing and appreciating employees' efforts, achievements, and contributions to the organization's success.	Involving a diverse range of employees in decision-making processes to ensure a variety of perspectives and ideas are considered.	Valuing and embracing diversity in all its forms and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels accepted and respected.	Encouraging courteous and polite interactions among employees, creating a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere.
Constructive Feedback	Mentorship and Support	Promoting Work-Life Balance	Equal Opportunities
Providing feedback in a respectful and constructive manner that focuses on improvement and growth.	Encouraging mentorship and offering support to colleagues, particularly to newer or less experienced employees.	Acknowledging and respecting employees' personal lives and striving to provide a healthy work-life balance.	Ensuring fair and equal opportunities for growth, advancement, and recognition regardless of gender, race, or other personal characteristics.
Accountability	Respectful Meetings	Community Involvement	
Encouraging employees to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, promoting a sense of ownership and integrity.	Conducting meetings in a manner that allows everyone to speak, share their opinions, and listen to others respectfully.	Encouraging employees to participate in community service and social responsibility activities, fostering a sense of giving back and empathy beyond the workplace.	

Examples of Disrespectful or Uncivil Conduct

A disrespectful and uncivil work environment is characterized by behaviors and conditions that undermine professionalism, mutual respect, and employee well-being. Here are fifteen key features that signify a disrespectful and uncivil work environment to avoid. This list is not exhaustive and other behaviors may be perceived as uncivil or disrespectful based upon the circumstances.

Harassment	Bullying	Discrimination	Insults and Offensive Language
Making derogatory comments, jokes, or gestures based on a person's race, gender, religion, age, disability, or other protected characteristics.	Intimidating, belittling, or repeatedly undermining a colleague through verbal abuse, humiliation, or exclusion from activities.	Treating individuals unfairly or differently based on their protected characteristics, such as refusing opportunities, promotions, or assignments due to bias.	Using offensive or derogatory language, name-calling, or personal attacks towards colleagues.
Gossip and Rumors	Lack of Communication or Ignoring Others	Microaggressions	Disruptive Behavior
Spreading false or malicious information about a colleague or discussing their personal matters in a negative or inappropriate manner.	Ignoring emails, messages, or requests for collaboration, creating a hostile environment through isolation.	Making subtle, indirect, or discriminatory comments or actions towards someone's background, beliefs, or identity, whether unintentional or not.	Interrupting meetings, failing to adhere to workplace protocols, or engaging in activities that hinder others focus and ability to do their job.
Lack of Respect for Authority	Public Shaming or Humiliation	Invasion of Privacy	Sabotage
Disregarding supervisors' instructions, undermining their authority, or openly challenging their decisions in an unprofessional manner.	Criticizing, belittling, or reprimanding an employee publicly, which can cause emotional distress and damage their reputation.	Intruding into personal matters, sharing private information without consent, or stalking colleagues online.	Deliberately undermining a colleague's work, projects, or reputation with the intent to harm their progress or success.
Inappropriate Use of Technology	Dismissive Behavior	Passive-Aggressive Behavior	
Using FCPS communication platforms to engage in offensive discussions, cyberbullying, or sharing inappropriate content.	Ignoring or dismissing others' ideas, opinions, or contributions without valid reasons or constructive feedback.	Expressing hostility, resentment, or negative feelings indirectly, such as through sarcasm, silent treatment, or backhanded compliments.	

Impact of Uncivil and Disrespectful Behavior

Uncivil and disrespectful behavior in the workplace has significant negative impacts on both individuals and the organization as a whole. The impact of these behaviors is harmful to the individual and the organization in the following ways:

- **Reduced Employee Well-being**
Uncivil behavior can cause stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction and overall well-being.
- **Poor Employee Performance**
Disrespectful interactions can demotivate employees, resulting in decreased productivity, lower engagement, and a decline in the quality of work.
- **High Turnover Rates**
Constant exposure to disrespectful behavior may drive employees to seek employment elsewhere, leading to high turnover rates and recruitment & training costs.
- **Toxic Work Culture**
A culture of incivility can spread, affecting the entire workplace and creating a hostile environment that hampers collaboration, teamwork, and creativity.
- **Damage to Reputation**
A workplace with a reputation for incivility can struggle to attract top talent, deter potential candidates, and damage the organization's public image.



How to Change Uncivil and Disrespectful Behavior

Changing uncivil and disrespectful behavior requires a collective effort involving leadership, clear policies, consistent enforcement, and a commitment to fostering a positive and respectful work environment. It is an ongoing process that necessitates vigilance and dedication from all members of the organization. Key steps that should be taken include the following:

Leadership Commitment	Clear Policies and Expectations	Employee Training	Encourage Open Communication
Leaders should communicate the importance of respectful behavior and hold everyone accountable, including themselves.	Establish clear policies outlining expected conduct, consequences for incivility, and reporting mechanisms for employees to voice concerns.	Provide regular training sessions on workplace conduct, communication, conflict resolution, and diversity and inclusion to educate employees about appropriate behavior and its impact.	Create an open-door policy where employees feel comfortable reporting incidents of incivility without fear of retaliation. Provide anonymous reporting options if needed.
Address Issues Promptly	Promote Respectful Communication	Reward Respectful Behavior	Mentorship and Role Modeling
Take reported incidents seriously and address them promptly and impartially through investigations and appropriate actions, emphasizing resolution and growth.	Encourage active listening, constructive feedback, and the use of respectful language in all interactions, whether in-person or online.	Recognize and reward employees who consistently exhibit respectful conduct, reinforcing the importance of civility within the organization.	Encourage mentorship programs where experienced employees guide newer colleagues on appropriate workplace behavior, leading by example.
Establish a Diverse and Inclusive Culture		Continuous Evaluation and Improvement	
Promote diversity and inclusion initiatives to foster understanding, empathy, and respect for all employees, regardless of differences.		Regularly assess the workplace environment, seek feedback from employees, and make necessary adjustments to policies and practices to create a culture of respect and civility	

Progressive Discipline

FCPS is committed to fair, impartial and consistent treatment of employees in the disciplinary process.

Workplace Investigations Process

All allegations of misconduct or concerns will be promptly and fairly investigated. In FCPS we utilize a three-meeting structure in completing workplace investigations — 1. fact-finding; 2. due process; and 3. outcomes. This three step process is designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and legal compliance. Here's why each step matters:

1. Fact-Finding Meeting

This is the investigative stage. The goal is to:

- Gather all relevant information and documentation.
- Hear from the employee and any witnesses.
- Clarify what happened without jumping to conclusions.

★ Why it matters: Ensures decisions are based on accurate and complete information, not assumptions.

2. Due Process Meeting

Once facts are gathered, this meeting:

- Gives the employee an opportunity to respond to the findings.
- Allows the employee to present mitigating factors or clarify misunderstandings.

★ Why it matters: Meets legal and ethical standards for fairness. The employee has the right to be heard before a final decision is made.

3. Outcomes Meeting

This is where:

- A decision is communicated (e.g., no action, counsel, warning, suspension, improvement plan, or termination).
- Expectations and next steps are outlined.
- Support or corrective actions are discussed.

★ Why it matters: Clearly communicates the results and reinforces accountability, while documenting the resolution.

This three-step approach treats employees fairly and ensures consistency in how investigations are handled.

Nondisciplinary Corrective Actions

In some circumstances, a supervisor may determine that a formal disciplinary action is not needed; however, the employee's behavior requires that the supervisor explain and clarify the expectations for future behavior. In these circumstances, the supervisor may first discuss with the employee the expectations followed up with written counseling (written follow-up to a verbal conversation), both of which describe the expectations about the employee's future conduct. The focus is on ensuring that the employee understands the expectations.

Disciplinary Actions

In other circumstances, a supervisor may identify that corrective disciplinary measures should occur. Typical disciplinary actions include the following:

- Written reprimand;
- Suspension; and/or
- Termination.

FCPS is not obligated to use any specific level of progressive discipline or to use the disciplinary actions in the order listed above. Progressive discipline is a flexible process. The particular facts of each situation determine which of the above actions will be appropriate. In determining the specific level of discipline for each case, the following considerations may be weighed:

- The number of different offenses involved;
- The seriousness of the offense and the evidence available;
- Time between prior disciplinary actions, if applicable;
- Prior work history of the employee;
- Performance evaluations; and

- Mitigating factors.

Lack of knowledge of the *Employee Code of Conduct* or applicable policies, regulations and procedures is not a defense to a charge of misconduct. Except for serious violations, generally the lowest appropriate level of disciplinary action should be utilized and then progress to a more severe level after a less severe disciplinary action has been applied and proven to be ineffective. However, a more serious violation may warrant suspension or termination, even for a first-time offense, or repeated offenses, depending on the situation. This could also happen when the infraction violates a standard of conduct that is not expressly referenced in this publication but involves common-sense application of governing principles or criminal law.

Mandatory Self Reporting

Staff are expected to adhere to high standards of conduct both inside and outside of the workplace. To support these expectations, staff members are required to self-report certain criminal charges, arrests, and convictions to allow FCPS to assess any potential impact on their employment. Specifically:

- Employees must self-report any charges, arrests, or convictions related to criminal conduct involving minors, felonies, or certain misdemeanors, including traffic citations while driving an FCPS vehicle.
- Reports must be made to the Department of Human Resources within three business days, and the employee's information must be included in the report.
- Failure to self-report or report an absence due to incarceration may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

Reasonable Suspicion Testing

As an employer, we take immediate steps to identify, document, and address situations where reasonable suspicion exists that an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This includes necessary steps for

supervisors to follow when such suspicion arises, ensuring compliance with laws and FCPS policies while maintaining a safe work environment. Employees suspected of being under the influence are required to undergo testing. Any failure to cooperate or a positive test result can lead to disciplinary action. This includes:

- Supervisors must discreetly observe and document employee behavior if there is reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use.
- Employees suspected of being under the influence must be removed from duty and transported for drug and alcohol testing.
- If an employee refuses testing, it will be considered a positive result.
- After-hours incidents should be reported to a supervisor, and testing arrangements will be made by Frederick Health Employer Solutions.
- Test results will determine whether an employee returns to duty or faces disciplinary action, with all related documentation kept confidential.

Process for Cases Involving Suspected Child Abuse, Other Criminal Activity, and FCPS Investigations

In any case in which an employee suspects an FCPS employee of child abuse, child sexual abuse, or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, an oral report must be made as soon as possible to Child Protective Services (CPS) at the Frederick County Department of Social Services. When making the assessment of whether to report, the employee is expected to err on the side of the child, consistent with state regulations that prioritize the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals.

Within 48 hours after the individual developed a suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult had been subjected to child abuse, child sexual abuse or neglect, a written report must be filed with CPS and a copy of the report must be sent to the State's Attorney for Frederick County. Additionally, employees should notify their supervisor or appropriate administrator.

The supervisor or administrator should enter a case into the Principal's CPS log and include the copy of the report sent to CPS, any written statements obtained, video footage if available, and any other information that could be pertinent for Security Services and the Employee and Labor Relations Office (ELRO) to adequately review the incident. Copies of CPS reports and supporting documentation should not be placed in a student's educational file.

In cases of child abuse, child sexual abuse, and neglect allegations in which CPS is investigating, the Director of School Management, Planning and Logistics in consultation with Human Resources also will conduct an investigation. An investigation by the Director of School Management, Planning and Logistics will be conducted for matters involving criminal investigations by a law enforcement agency.

In every case of alleged child abuse, child sexual abuse, and neglect FCPS will conduct an internal investigation consistent with all applicable Board of Education policies and FCPS regulations and recommend appropriate discipline.

An investigation will be conducted even when CPS or when law enforcement screens out or closes the cases without taking action and/or the State's Attorney for Frederick County declines to bring criminal charges because such cases may involve violations of Board policies, FCPS regulations, Negotiated Agreements, or other standards.

While any investigations by CPS, law enforcement or another external agency is pending, FCPS may not, or will not interview witnesses, alleged victims or alleged perpetrators. In addition, FCPS must conduct all internal investigations in a manner that is fully cooperative with the external agencies that are investigating and that does not interfere with or jeopardize the external investigation.

Other critical incidents involving suspected criminal activity, such as drug distribution or use of weapons on

FCPS property, require reporting to law enforcement agencies. In cases of criminal activity, the Department of Safety and Emergency Management may conduct an internal investigation in a manner that is fully cooperative with law enforcement agencies that are investigating and that does not interfere with or jeopardize the external investigation.

All FCPS employees are expected to cooperate during the course of an FCPS investigation. Moreover, when identified as a witness in a legal proceeding, arbitration, appeal or similar, identified witnesses are expected to make themselves available and be cooperative. Failure to cooperate with an investigation, or when called as a witness, may be grounds for corrective action.

Transporting Students

In limited situations, FCPS employees may transport students in either personal or FCPS-owned vehicles. To ensure the safety of students and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, employees must adhere to the following expectations and conditions.

- **Employees are required to obtain permission from a student's parent or legal guardian before transporting that student.** While written permission is preferred, verbal permission may be accepted when necessary. In such cases, the employee must document the date and time the permission was granted, the full name of the parent or guardian who authorized the transport, and the method of communication used (such as a phone call or in-person conversation). This documentation is essential for transparency and accountability.
- **All employees transporting students must comply with applicable laws regarding the use of seat belts and child safety restraints.** It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that every passenger is properly secured before the vehicle begins to move.
- Only employees who have been authorized by FCPS to transport students may do so, and those individuals **must complete an annual affirmation.** By signing

this affirmation, the employee confirms their understanding and agreement with several important conditions. This includes:

1. An employee acknowledges that they are subject to the same expectations and requirements as drivers of FCPS-owned vehicles.
2. An employee certifies that their personal automobile insurance meets the minimum coverage levels established by FCPS Risk and Safety Management.
3. An employee agrees to follow all guidelines outlined in Policy 200-16, which governs the operation of FCPS vehicles.
4. In the event of an accident involving student transportation, the employee acknowledges that they are subject to Regulation 300-40, which details the requirements for drug and alcohol testing of CDL holders and other FCPS vehicle operators.

Employees who choose not to sign the annual affirmation will not be permitted to transport students under any circumstances. Any unauthorized transportation of students is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Administrative Leave or Temporary Placement

Any suspicion of inappropriate behavior by an employee may be the reason for placing the employee on administrative leave or temporary placement, pending the investigation into the allegations. Cases are reviewed on an individual basis, and generally a recommendation for administrative leave will be made when the allegation involves a physical altercation, similar incident of a serious nature, pending criminal charge, an allegation of a sexual or discriminatory nature, or incident that causes concern for the safety of students, coworkers, and/ or other individuals.

When a request for administrative leave or temporary placement is approved, the supervisor will notify the affected employee via official correspondence. This correspondence will instruct the employee accordingly, including refraining from being on FCPS property while on administrative leave, and detailing the administrative process followed by the Office of Human Resources.

While on administrative leave or temporary placement, instructional staff will be required to continue with lesson planning, entering grades, or assisting in the alternative work location, as appropriate. ★

Concern Resolution Process

Restorative Practices and Relationships

We value healthy relationships, collaborative problem solving, empathetic listening, and respect for all employees. We expect that when issues arise in the workplace or among members of our community, they are resolved in a way that promotes reflection and personal accountability. The aim of restorative practices are to develop community and to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships.

In order to support and address conflict resolution, employees can expect a fair process that is grounded in trust and communication. This includes engagement in the conflict resolution process, opportunities to share feelings and concerns, and a focus on positive resolution to be able to move forward and feel supported.

Employee Concern and Non-Discrimination Resolution Options

The Board of Education is committed to providing employees with a safe and supportive environment that fosters mutual respect, equity, inclusion and acceptance of the rich diversity that makes up our community. The following information outlines the range of ways in which employees can have concerns addressed and resolved. We encourage all employees to start by reaching out to their supervisor to address concerns. In addition, employees may reach out to the Board of Education Ombuds, who can help provide options for resolution of an FCPS concern or issue at fcps.org/ombuds or ombuds@fcps.org.



Informal Resolution

The informal concern resolution process assures prompt and equitable solutions for employees. This process does not suspend the right to file a formal complaint. Use the Employee Concern Process Map below to guide you through the process. If you have a concern about a violation of the negotiated agreement, please contact your association.

Website	Contact	Form
Employee Concern Resolution Process Map	HREmployeeRelations@fcps.org	Employee Concern Resolution Form

Bullying, Harassment, & Intimidation

FCPS employees, applicants or community members may file a complaint of discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, ancestry, national origin, age, marital status, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, or genetic information.

Website	Contact	Form
Notice of Non-Discrimination	eeo-titleix@fcps.org The EEO-Title IX email is only monitored by the Department of Human Resources.	Discrimination Complaint Form fcps.org/forms

Title IX

The Board prohibits sexual harassment of, or by, employees, students, volunteers, vendors, or others having business or contacts with the school system. All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated and appropriate action taken to end the harassment and protect the victim from retaliation.

Contact	Form
eeo-titleix@fcps.org The EEO-Title IX email is only monitored by the Department of Human Resources.	Title IX Discrimination Formal Complaint Form fcps.org/forms
Complaints of discrimination may also be filed with: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights; Maryland Commission on Civil Rights	

Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

This procedure outlines how employees can report alleged dishonest, fraudulent or illegal activities they believe may impact FCPS business operations.

Contact	Form
reports@lighthouse-services.com 855-990-0017 External fraud hotline	If the employee is not comfortable speaking to the supervisor or an outside-party hotline, or if the matter involves the supervisor, the employee is encouraged to contact the Executive Director of Human Resources.

Please view this video about reporting waste, fraud or abuse of taxpayer resources: youtu.be/7hiHweVNGRA

Concerns of Workplace Culture and Environment

The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Goal #5 prioritizes the student and staff experience. This goal focuses on procedures and practices that ensure safety and well-being of both students and staff. Progress toward this goal is measured annually through our staff and student climate survey.

Supervisors of each school building and/or department are expected to review the climate survey data with their staff and create associated action plans to deepen areas of success and address areas of concern. Principal supervisors add another layer of review for each school and may intervene to ensure appropriate resolutions to workplace culture.

Anonymous Reporting

Handling anonymous reporting in organizations is crucial for creating a safe and transparent work environment. It allows employees to come forward with concerns, grievances, or reports of misconduct without fear of retaliation. It is important to note that anonymous reports do not always provide a mechanism to follow-up and may limit the investigation overall. As much as is possible, anonymous complaints will be investigated. Two points to note:

- With respect to Title IX, respondents have a right to know the allegations made against them and by whom.
- The Board of Education's Fraud Hotline to report fraud or illegal activity impacting FCPS Business Operations accepts anonymous reports

The **Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) is an available benefit for employee support that offers someone to talk to and resources to consult whenever and wherever they are needed.

In order to provide comfort and care for employees in all concern areas, the following reporting structures are in place:

1. **Multiple Reporting Channels:** We provide a number of reporting channels to accommodate different preferences. Some employees may feel more comfortable reporting through an online form, while others may prefer a phone call or in-person option.
2. **Ensure Confidentiality:** We guarantee the confidentiality of the reporting process. We will only share information on a need-to-know basis, and limit access to the information to those directly involved in the investigation.
3. **Prompt and Thorough Investigations:** We will act promptly upon receiving a report, whether anonymous or identified. We will conduct thorough and impartial investigations to address the concerns raised.
4. **Non-Retaliation Policy:** We will clearly communicate and enforce a strict non-retaliation policy. Employees should feel secure in reporting concerns, knowing that they will not face adverse consequences for coming forward.
5. **Promote a Culture of Openness:** We will foster a workplace culture that values openness, integrity, and ethical behavior. We encourage employees to speak up about concerns and make it clear that the organization takes such reports seriously.
6. **Culture of Accountability:** We will keep records of anonymous reports, analyze trends, and use the information to identify and address systemic issues within the organization. ★

Summary

Frederick County Public Schools believes in fostering a workplace that is respectful, inclusive, and ethical. We believe that organizational culture is the responsibility of all employees and we must hold each other accountable and to a high standard of conduct.

As employees, we are expected to conduct ourselves with integrity, honesty, and professionalism at all times. We are committed to treating all individuals with dignity and respect, and to maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. We also take our responsibilities for compliance with laws and regulations seriously, and are committed to protecting the confidentiality and privacy of sensitive information. By adhering to this code of conduct, we contribute to a positive and productive workplace culture, and uphold the values and reputation of our organization.



Source Policies and Regulation References

fcps.org/boe/policies

Policy Name	Number
<i>Appeal and Hearing Procedures</i>	105
<i>Office of the Ombuds</i>	107
<i>Promoting a Drug-Free, Alcohol-Free, and Tobacco/Vaping Free Environment</i>	112
<i>Responsible Use of Social Media</i>	115
<i>Title IX - Sexual Harassment</i>	116
<i>Anti-Racism</i>	117
<i>Personnel</i>	300
<i>Employment Expectations</i>	303
<i>Conflict of Interest and Employee Ethics</i>	305
<i>Discrimination and Harassment - Employees/Applicants/Community Members</i>	309
<i>Political Activity</i>	314
<i>Promotion of Health and Wellness - Employees</i>	316
<i>Reporting Allegations of Fraud or Illegal Activity</i>	324
<i>Child Abuse and Neglect</i>	418
<i>Creating Welcoming and Affirming Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students</i>	443
<i>Educational Equity and Excellence</i>	444

Regulation Name	Number
<i>Responsible Use of Social Media</i>	100-08
<i>Operation of FCPS Owned Vehicles</i>	200-16
<i>Telework</i>	300-02
<i>Criminal Background Investigations</i>	300-07
<i>Reasonable Suspicion Testing (forthcoming)</i>	300-12
<i>Nepotism Family/Personal Relationships</i>	300-14
<i>School Security, Facility Access & Reporting Emergencies</i>	200-29
<i>Employee Attendance</i>	300-04
<i>Mandatory Self-Reporting of Arrests, Charges, or Criminal Convictions</i>	300-05
<i>Courtesy Consulting by A&S Personnel</i>	300-03
<i>Assault Leave</i>	300-08
<i>Severance of Employment for Personnel and References</i>	300-35
<i>Technology Use - Staff</i>	301-03
<i>Accommodations for Employees</i>	303-01
<i>Drug and Alcohol Testing - Drivers of CDL and FCPS Vehicles</i>	300-40
<i>Intellectual Property and Royalties</i>	305-01
<i>Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)/Non-Military</i>	300-42
<i>Terminal and Severance Pay</i>	300-43
<i>Employee Wellness</i>	316-01
<i>Reporting Allegations of Fraud or Illegal Activity Impacting FCPS Business Operations</i>	324-01
<i>Creating Welcoming and Affirming Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students</i>	400-36
<i>Physical Restraint and Exclusion Practices</i>	400-44
<i>Reporting Abuse and Neglect</i>	400-47
<i>Suicide Statements by Students</i>	400-63
<i>Teaching of Potentially Controversial Issues/Use of Historical Artifacts</i>	516-01