

The New Paltz Central School District

Code of Conduct

2020-2021

(Approved by the Board of Education June 17, 2020)

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Paltz Board of Education hopes that our students will become passionate learners who are empowered to achieve their dreams and act as good citizens of the world.

To achieve that goal, the Board strives to provide safe schools for all students regardless of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex and prohibit denigration of a student’s physical size/shape where all members of the school community behave with personal responsibility and mutual respect. The Board recognizes that to maintain such an environment, we must all live within certain boundaries and that inappropriate action by one person can infringe upon the rights of another. When conflicts arise, we are committed to nonviolent resolutions that encourage personal growth, responsibility and that treat each individual with respect and dignity.

This Code of Conduct describes the behavior that the Board expects from all members of the school community, identifies interventions if those standards are not met, and establishes procedures to ensure that discipline, when necessary, is prompt, fair and effective.

Attachment A defines the terms used in this Code.

II. STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students have a right to:	Students have the responsibility to:
A free education that will prepare them for active citizenship in a democracy.	Attend classes, observe school rules and work for satisfactory achievement.
A safe and secure environment that promotes learning.	Refrain from violence. Notify an adult of the presence of drugs, alcohol, weapons, harassment and other violent acts or threats of violence.
Speak and be heard.	Listen to others.
Take part in any school activity on an equal basis.	Participate and support others in school events.
Be treated with courtesy and respect.	Be courteous and respectful.
Freedom from bullying, harassment and other abuse or discrimination based on, for example, actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex and prohibit denigration of a student’s physical size/shape.	Speak up about and refrain from bullying, harassment and other abuse or discrimination based on, for example, actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex and prohibit denigration of a student’s physical size/shape.
Academic and emotional support.	Ask for help when it is needed, and offer help to peers when needed

Express themselves through their choices in clothing.	Adhere to the school dress code.
Communicate thoughts and beliefs that do not interfere with the rights of others or school operations.	Show consideration for people whose beliefs differ from their own.
Assemble peacefully.	Get permission from appropriate school personnel before assembling.
Learn strategies that develop cooperation, tolerance, and conflict resolution.	Use cooperative solutions.
Be informed of school policies and rules.	Abide by the Code of Conduct.

III. EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

All members of the school community should respect the rights and welfare of others, act ethically, and care for school facilities and equipment. The Board expects respectful behavior and civil conduct on all school property, including buses, and at all school functions, whether on or off school property.

The Board will not tolerate:

- Possession or use of weapons or illegal materials.
- Possession, distribution, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances (including synthetic drugs).
- Behaviors that infringe on the physical, mental or emotional well-being of others, or that disrupt the safe and supportive educational environment.
- Intimidation, harassment or discrimination on the basis of, for example, actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex, and prohibit denigration of a student's physical size/shape or for any other reason.
- Academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, copying, altering records, assisting another student in any of these actions).
- Damage to school property, including buses, or the property of others.
- The distribution of materials that are obscene, advocate illegal action or appear libelous.
- Entering or remaining on school property without authorization.
- Violation of any federal, state or local law, or Board policy.

Attachment B describes the specific expectations for staff, parents/legal guardians and visitors.

Attachment C describes the specific expectations for students.

Attachment D describes interventions for infractions of the Code.

IV. DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT

The Board of Education recognizes that a learning environment that is safe and supportive can increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. A student's ability to learn and achieve high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate students, is compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to bullying, taunting, hazing and intimidation. The District will strive to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment and will foster civility in the schools to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with the District's educational mission.

The District condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex and prohibit denigration of a student's physical size/shape by school employees or students on school property or at school-sponsored events and activities that take place on or off of school property. In addition, any act of discrimination or harassment outside of school-sponsored events, including cyberbullying, which can reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the educational process where it is foreseeable that the conduct might reach school property, may be subject to discipline. See **Attachment E - DASA Policy**

V. DRESS CODE

All students and staff should show healthy and respectful attention to their personal cleanliness and clothing. Adults should model and reinforce acceptable dress for students. **Attachment F** lists the specific dress code rules.

VI. REPORTING CODE VIOLATIONS

Each individual in the school community has the responsibility to report code violations that he or she witnesses. Violations involving weapons, alcohol or illegal substances (including synthetic drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids) must be reported immediately. Students should report violations to the building principal or a school counselor, social worker, teacher or any adult they trust. Adults should report violations in accordance with District Policy 7310 When code violations break not only school policy but the law, the school principal or designee must promptly notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.

VII. DISCIPLINE

The Board believes that the best discipline is self-imposed. Adults should model self-discipline and help students accept responsibility for their actions.

Disciplinary action should be used only when necessary and in accordance with applicable contracts, laws, regulations and policies. Such actions should not just punish, but should encourage personal growth and individual responsibility. Staff members authorized to impose discipline should act in a prompt, fair and problem-solving manner.

School personnel administering student discipline should consider:

- The student's age, and prior disciplinary record.
- The nature and circumstances of the offense.
- The effectiveness of any prior discipline.
- Information from parents/legal guardians, teachers or others, as appropriate.
- Other extenuating circumstances.

Interventions. For students, these can range from an oral warning to permanent school suspension. Disciplinary action for staff will conform to law and applicable contracts. Visitors will be asked to leave the building. **Attachment D** more fully describes the possible interventions.

Procedures. All disciplinary action should adhere to District contracts, regulations and policies. Students accused of misconduct should be told by authorized personnel of the nature of the accusation. If necessary, authorized school staff should investigate the facts surrounding the alleged misconduct. Students will have an opportunity to tell their version of the events. Depending on the nature of the misconduct, students may be entitled to additional rights before an intervention is imposed. **Attachment G** more fully describes disciplinary procedures.

Minimum suspensions. A student who brings a weapon to school (including but not limited to a weapon under the Gun Free Schools Act) will be suspended for at least one calendar year, unless the Superintendent modifies the penalty based upon the student's age, prior disciplinary record, the belief that other forms of discipline may be more effective, other relevant information from parent(s)/legal guardian(s), teacher(s) or others, or other extenuating circumstances. A student who commits any other violent act or who repeatedly and substantially disrupts the educational process will be suspended for at least five days, unless the Superintendent modifies the penalty, based upon the factors listed above. **Attachment H** more fully describes minimum suspensions.

Alternative instruction for disciplined students. The district will provide immediate, alternative instruction to all students removed from classes by teachers or suspended from school.

Referrals. Students may be referred for counseling, a Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) petition through Family Court, or juvenile delinquency proceedings. **Attachment I** describes when students may be referred to such counseling or proceedings.

Disciplining students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities who are determined to have committed an act of misconduct may be referred to the District’s Committee on Special Education (CSE). A student will not be punished if the CSE determines that the conduct stems from the student’s disability. But when the CSE determines that discipline is allowed, it will conform to the federal and state laws and regulations governing the discipline of students with disabilities. Such students will not receive harsher punishments than students who are not disabled. **Attachment J** describes the specific policies for disciplining students with disabilities.

Use of physical force. Corporal, or physical punishment, is strictly forbidden. However, reasonable physical force may be used to:

- Protect oneself or others from physical injury.
- Protect another student, teacher or any other person from physical injury.
- Protect the property of the school or of others.
- Restrain or remove a disruptive or violent student who refuses to refrain from disruptive or violent acts where methods not involving the use of physical force cannot be reasonably employed to achieve the aforementioned purposes.

The district will file reports on incidents of the use of physical force with the Commissioner of Education in accordance with Commissioner’s Regulations. The Building Principal or designee is responsible for enforcing these rules, as described in **Attachment K**.

VIII. STUDENT SEARCHES AND INTERVIEWS

Searches. The Superintendent, building principals and assistant principals, may search students and their possessions for illegal matter, matter that threatens the health, safety, welfare or morals of fellow students or matter that violates this code, if there is reasonable individualized suspicion to believe a student is violating a law or this code of conduct. If a search is warranted, it must be reasonable in scope.

School computers, desks, lockers and storage spaces are school property and may be opened and inspected by school officials from time to time without prior notice or student consent, but mindful of the student’s rights and the nature of the school as an educational institution.

Questioning. School officials may question students about possible violations of school rules. The student’s parents/legal guardians may be contacted, however, there is no right for a student’s parents/legal guardians to be contacted while school officials are investigating violations of school rules.

Law enforcement may enter the schools if a crime has been committed on school property, if they have an arrest or search warrant, or if they have been invited by school officials. Prior to questioning students, law enforcement must give students their “Miranda rights” and school administrators or law enforcement must diligently try to notify the student’s parents/legal guardians and give them the opportunity to be present.

Child Protective Services (CPS) may interview students on school property without notification to the parents/legal guardians regarding allegations of suspected child abuse, maltreatment or neglect (including educational neglect).

Attachment L more fully describes the rules governing student searches and questioning.

IX. SCHOOL VISITORS

The Board encourages parents/legal guardians and other community members to visit our schools to observe the work of students, teachers and other staff. All visitors must first report to the office and obtain authorization for being on school premises. The building principal or his or her designee is responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. **Attachment M** more fully describes the policy governing school visitors.

X. PUBLIC CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

The district is committed to providing an orderly, respectful and safe environment that is conducive to learning. All persons on school property or attending a school function, whether on or off of school property, shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner.

No person, either alone or with others, while on school property or attending a school function, shall:

- Intentionally injure or threaten to injure any person.
- Intentionally damage or destroy school property or the property of others, or remove or use such property without authorization.
- Disrupt the orderly conduct of classes, school programs and activities.
- Distribute or wear materials that are obscene, advocate illegal action, appear libelous, obstruct the rights of others or are disruptive to the school program.
- Intimidate, harass or discriminate against any person on the basis of, for example, actual or perceived race, color, creed, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, age, gender, sexual orientation or disability, prohibit denigration of a student's physical size/shape or any other discriminatory reason.
- Harass, which includes a sufficiently severe action or a persistent, pervasive pattern of actions or statements (verbal, by electronic or other means), an identifiable individual or group which is intended to be, or which a reasonable person would perceive as ridiculing or demeaning.
- Intimidate, which includes engaging in actions or statements that put an individual in fear of bodily harm, including threats.
- Enter any school property without authorization or remain in any school premises after it is closed.
- Obstruct the free movement of any person.
- Violate traffic laws, parking regulations or other vehicle restrictions.
- Possess, consume, solicit a sale, sell, buy, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages, any form of tobacco including but not limited to, cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes and electronic smoking devices, or controlled substances (including but not limited to synthetic drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids), or be under the influence of the above.
- Possess, display or use weapons (unless specifically authorized by the district).
- Loiter, gamble, litter or spit.
- Refuse to comply with reasonable directives of school officials while they are performing their duty.
- Willfully incite others to commit any acts prohibited by the Code of Conduct.
- Violate any federal or state law, local ordinance or Board policy.

XI. DISSEMINATION AND REVIEW OF CODE

The school district will educate the community about this Code of Conduct by:

- Providing a summary of the code to all students and parents/legal guardians at the beginning of each school year, including a form encouraging comments on how to improve or change the code.
- Providing the code to all students and parents/legal guardians at the beginning of each school year.
- Providing a summary of the Code of Conduct written in a plain-language age-appropriate manner to students at a school- or grade-level assembly or within the classroom held at the beginning of the school year.
- Providing copies of the code, including any amendments, to all school personnel as soon as practical after adoption.
- Providing new employees with a copy of the code when they are hired.
- Providing copies of the code to any student, parent/legal guardian, or community member who asks for one.

Copies of the complete code are available on the District website. **Attachment N** more fully describes the district's plan for educating the community about the Code of Conduct.

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians:

New York State enacted Project SAVE (Safe Schools against Violence in Education Act) in 2000, to improve school safety and promote an environment of learning in our schools. To accomplish this end, all school districts must have a Code of Conduct. The purpose of our District Code of Conduct is to set expectations for behavior and to maintain order in our school community. These expectations are based on principles of good citizenship, mutual respect, tolerance and integrity.

The New Paltz District Code was developed by a District Wide Health Advisory Committee, including students, parents, community members, teachers and administrators. We have included feedback from public forums and surveys from students, parents and teachers, administrators and the Board of Education.

We encourage ongoing feedback from all areas of our school community and hope that you will use the tear off sheet below to include your comments and suggestions. Please include your name and telephone number for further contact, if needed, and return to:

New Paltz Central School District

Health Advisory Committee

196 Main St

New Paltz, NY 12561

This Code of Conduct Summary as well as the Full District Code Document is available at each school, the district office and on the district website.

Name _____

Phone number _____