

Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES

PLAIN LANGUAGE CODE OF CONDUCT SUMMARY

Adopted: January 7, 2015 Revised: August 3, 2016

A full copy of the TST BOCES Code of Conduct is given to parents/guardians every year. It can also be found on the TST BOCES website (www.tstboces.org). What follows is a summary of that Code.

STUDENT RIGHTS

TST BOCES is committed to protecting the rights given to **all** students by state and federal law, and to creating a safe and caring learning environment where all students have the right to:

- Take part in all school activities on an equal basis regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Share their version of events to school personnel when accused of breaking the Code of Conduct.
- Receive school rules and, when needed, have school personnel explain the rules.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All TST BOCES students have the responsibility to:

- Show respect to other people and to property.
- Help make TST BOCES a safe and orderly place where all students can learn.
- Follow all TST BOCES rules.
- Go to school every day unless they are legally excused.
- Be in class on time and prepared.
- Work to the best of their ability on their school work and extracurricular activities.
- Ask questions when they do not understand.
- Ask for help in solving problems that might lead to discipline.
- Be respectful when given a direction by teachers, administrators or other school personnel.
- Dress appropriately for school and school functions.
- Take responsibility for their actions.
- Learn techniques to control their anger.
- Remember they are representatives of TST BOCES when participating in or attending extracurricular activities/events and display the highest level of sportsmanship.
- Understand to the best of their ability the Code of Conduct and how it relates to them.

TST BOCES believes that children learn best when there is a relationship between the school and parents/guardians. We encourage parents/guardians to help their children be the best student they can be by:

- Building good relationships with teachers.
- Knowing school rules and helping their children understand them.
- Sending their children to school prepared and ready to learn.
- Making sure their children come to school regularly and on time.
- Supporting their children's education and TST BOCES.
- Informing school staff of any changes in the home situation that may affect a student's ability to learn.

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT (DASA)

The Dignity for All Students Act is a law that focuses on making school a safe place by protecting **all students from bullying, harassing and discriminating behavior.** The Dignity Act "prohibits acts of harassment and bullying, including cyberbullying and/or discrimination, by employees or students on school property or at a school function, including but not limited to such conduct based on a student's actual or perceived, race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, or sex."

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying can include making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

DIGNITY ACT COORDINATORS

The Dignity Act Coordinators are thoroughly trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex and any other legally protected status.

The Dignity Act Coordinators are responsible for assisting in coordinating and enforcing the requirements of the Dignity for All Students Act, and are available to assist all students, parents/caregivers, and staff with questions and reporting.

Name	Program
Dr. Jeffrey Matteson	District Dignity Act Coordinator
Cheryl Button	Exceptional Education
Mary Meeker	Exceptional Education
Michelle Nolan	Regional Alternative School
Jeff Podolak	Career & Technical Education
Jennifer Astles-Steinmetz	Regional Dignity Act Coordinator

STUDENT DRESS CODE

A student's clothing, footwear and appearance should:

- Be safe, appropriate and not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.
- Understand that revealing and see-through clothing may need to be covered. For examples, shirts may not show cleavage and may be no higher, on the bottom, than the tops of the hips, and shorts, skirts, and dresses must be longer than the fingertips when hands are straight down.
- Include safe footwear at all times.
- Not include (while in the building) sunglasses or hats that cover the face.
- Not include items that are vulgar, obscene, or put down others race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Be appropriate for a specific job site when a student is on that site or preparing for that site.
- Not promote and/or endorse the use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs and/or encourage other illegal or violent activities.
- Not include the use or wearing of cell phones, pagers, personal listening devices or earphones during the school day.

Students who violate the Student Dress Code will be required to change their appearance by covering or removing the offending item and, if necessary, changing into an acceptable item. Any student who refuses to do so may be disciplined, up to and including in-school suspension for the day.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

The rules of conduct listed below focus on safety and respect for the rights and property of others. Students who do not accept responsibility for their own behavior and who violate the following rules may be subject to disciplinary action.

- Engage in conduct that is disorderly. Examples include:
 - Running in the hallways.
 - Making unreasonable noise.
 - Using language or gestures that are profane, lewd, vulgar or abusive.
 - Restricting vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
 - Engaging in any willful act which disrupts the normal operation of the school community.
 - Trespassing. Students are not permitted in any school building, other than the one they regularly attend, without permission from the administrator in charge of the building.
 - Computer/electronic communications misuse, including any unauthorized use of computers, software, or internet/intranet account; accessing inappropriate websites; or any other violation of the TST BOCES' acceptable use policy.

- Engage in conduct that is insubordinate. Examples of insubordinate conduct include:
 - Failing to follow reasonable directions from teachers, school administrators or other school employee in charge of the student or otherwise showing disrespect.
 - Being late, missing or leaving school without permission.
 - Skipping detention

- Engage in conduct that is disruptive. Examples of disruptive conduct include:
 - Failing to follow reasonable directions from teachers, school administrators or other school employee in charge of the student.

- Engage in conduct that is violent. Examples include:
 - Committing an act of violence (such as hitting, kicking, punching, and scratching) upon a teacher, administrator or other school employee or attempting to do so.
 - Committing an act of violence (such as hitting, kicking, punching, and scratching) upon another student, visitor to the school or attempting to do so.
 - Possessing a weapon.
 - Displaying something that looks like a weapon.
 - Threatening to use a weapon.
 - Intentionally damaging or destroying the personal property of a student, teacher, administrator, other TST BOCES employee or visitor, including graffiti or arson.
 - Intentionally damaging or destroying TST BOCES school property.

- Engage in any conduct that endangers the safety, morals, health or welfare of others. Examples include:
 - Lying to school personnel.
 - Stealing the property of other students, school personnel or visitors lawfully on school property or attending a school function.
 - Defamation, which is an abusive attack on a person or group of people's character or reputation.
 - Discrimination, which includes the use of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability as a basis for treating another in a negative manner.
 - Harassment, including sexual harassment, which includes repeated actions or statements directed at an individual or group that is intended to be or which a reasonable person would see as ridiculing or demeaning.
 - Intimidation, which includes engaging in actions or statements that put an individual in fear of bodily harm.
 - Hazing, which includes any intentional or reckless acts directed against another for the purpose of initiation into, affiliating with or maintaining membership in any school sponsored activity, organization, club or team.
 - Selling, using or possessing obscene material.
 - Using vulgar or abusive language, swearing or cursing.
 - Smoking a cigarette, cigar, pipe, e-cigarette or using chewing or smokeless tobacco or possession of a lighter or matches.
 - Possessing, consuming, selling, distributing or exchanging alcoholic beverages or illegal substances, or being under the influence. "Illegal substances" include, but are not limited to, inhalants, marijuana, cocaine, LSD, PCP, amphetamines, heroin, steroids, look-alike drugs, and any substances commonly referred to as "designer drugs."
 - Inappropriately using or sharing prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
 - Gambling.
 - Indecent exposure. Example: exposing private parts of the body in a lewd or indecent manner.
 - Reporting warning of fire or other catastrophe without a valid reason, misuse of 911, or discharging a fire extinguisher.

- Engage in misconduct while on a school bus. It is crucial for students to behave appropriately while riding on TST BOCES buses to ensure their safety and that of other passengers and to avoid distracting the bus driver. Excessive noise, pushing, shoving and fighting will not be tolerated.

- Engage in any form of academic misconduct. Examples of academic misconduct include: plagiarism, cheating, altering records, assisting another student in any of the above actions.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

All students are expected to quickly report violations of the Code of Conduct to a staff member, especially in situations where another student has a weapon, alcohol or illegal substance on school property or at a school function. All TST BOCES staff who are authorized to give disciplinary consequences are expected to do so in a prompt, fair and lawful manner.

MANDATED REPORTERS

All school officials, including (but not limited to) teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses and school administrators are **mandated reporters**. Mandated reporters are legally required to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment. The school will make a report to CPS and/or law enforcement when they have **reasonable cause** to believe the student is being hurt or that the student may hurt someone else.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION/PENALTIES

Students who do not follow the Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action. Consequences are different depending on which rule a student breaks. The following is a list of possible consequences and the school personnel allowed to impose the penalty.

Penalty	Authorized Staff
Verbal warning or written referral	Any member of the TST BOCES staff
Written notification to parent/guardian	Principal/Supervisor, Other Administrator or Superintendent
Detention	Teachers, Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent
Suspension from transportation	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent
Suspension from social/extracurricular activities	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent
Suspension of other privileges	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent
In-school suspension	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent
Removal from classroom by teacher	Teachers, Principal/Supervisor
Short-term (five days or less) suspension from school	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent, Board
Long-term (more than five days) suspension from school	Principal/Supervisor, Superintendent, Board
Permanent suspension from school	Superintendent/ Board

STUDENT SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS

TST BOCES authorizes the superintendent, directors, and building principal/supervisor to conduct searches of students and their belongings when they have **reasonable cause** to believe the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or TST BOCES Code of Conduct. Before searching a student or the student's belongings, the authorized school official should try to get the student to admit that they have physical evidence that he/she violated the Code of Conduct, or get the student to voluntarily agree to the search. Whenever possible, searches should be done in the privacy of an administrator's office and the student will be there while their property is searched.

The rules in this Code of Conduct about searches of students and their belongings **do not apply to student lockers, desks and other school storage places**. Students have no reason to expect privacy in these places and school officials have control over them. This means that student lockers, desks, and other school storage places can be searched at any time by school officials, without the student being told or giving their consent.

TST BOCES is committed to working with police officers and local law enforcement to make sure that the school stays safe. But, police officials have limited authority to interview or search students in schools or at school functions, or to use schools in connection to police work. Police officials can enter school property or a school function to question a student or conduct a formal investigation involving students only if they have:

- A search or an arrest warrant; or
- Probable cause to believe a crime has been committed on school property or at a school function; or
- Been invited by school officials.

Before the police can search or question students, the building principal/supervisor must first try to notify the student's parent/guardian to give them an opportunity to be present during the police questioning or search. Questioning and searches may not be done if the parents have not been notified, and the principal/supervisor will also be present during any police questioning or searches of a student on school property.

VISITORS TO TST BOCES

To ensure the safety of all TST BOCES staff and students, the following rules apply to visitors to the schools:

- Anyone who is not a regular staff member or student of the school will be considered a visitor.
- All visitors must report to the main office of the building/department when arriving at the school. There they will sign into the building and be given a visitor's badge. This badge must be worn the entire time the visitor is at the school. Visitor's badges should be returned to the main office before leaving the building.
- Parents or others who wish to observe/visit a classroom while school is in session are required to arrange the visit in advance with the classroom teacher and TST BOCES administrator to limit class disruption.
- Teachers are expected not to take class time to discuss individual matters with visitors.
- Any person on school property when they are not supposed to be will be reported to the principal/a designee and will be asked to leave. The police may be called if needed.