

# Equity

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## Discrimination and Harassment: DCSB Policies & Procedures

Are you familiar with school board policies dealing with discrimination, generally, sex discrimination/harassment in particular, and other forms of conduct deemed inappropriate in the school or work place? Do you recall signing an acknowledgement stating that you received, read and understood the Professional Code of Conduct and agreed to abide by it. You may want to take another look. Your understanding of these policies and procedures may be the determining factor in your ability to resolve a complaint brought to your attention or to avoid being the individual against whom a complaint is filed.

### **Policies and Procedures 101: How to behave in an ethical and professional manner.**

School Board Policy: Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity.  
File: GBA

“The School Board shall promote and provide for equal opportunity in recruitment, selection, and promotion of all

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**“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them”**

**– James Baldwin**

## Laws that Govern DCSB Policies & Procedures

There is no expectation that DCSB employees become legal scholars, but everyone should be aware of the laws that prohibit discrimination and which we are governed by. They include the following:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin;
- The Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA), which protects men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment from sex-based wage discrimination.
- The Age Discrimination in employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), which protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older;
- Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local government;
- Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who work in the federal government, and
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991, which provides monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination.

personnel and nondiscriminatory practices in employment and in employee rights regarding race, sex, age, religion, marital status, disability, creed, or national origin. Any School Board employee who feels he/she has been discriminated against or who has been denied any rights described herein may file a complaint with the District's Supervisor of Equal Opportunity/Equal Access.

Any employee who has knowledge of any discrimination or other activities, which violate this policy, shall immediately report it according to established procedures and shall take any other appropriate steps necessary to procure its cessation."

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If you treat an individual differently because of his/her race, sex, age, religion, marital status, disability, or national origin, your actions may be considered discriminatory. In other words, does membership in any of these categories influence the way you behave, speak or make decisions in your capacity as a school board employee that affect a person's job or educational opportunities?

An unsatisfactory evaluation by a supervisor, a promotion, a disciplinary action against a student, even failure to make return phone calls, all could be seen as evidence of bias.

Effective and positive communication, whether verbal, written, or by any other means, is crucial to avoiding problems that might give rise to a complaint of discrimination. Consideration should be given, not only to the words we choose in communicating our thoughts, but also the tone and manner in which they are delivered. Additionally, sensitivity to different cultures and backgrounds may assist us in appreciating and responding to different perceptions and understanding.

Thorough documentation of incidences, conferences and actions taken to address concerns may prevent the filing of a complaint or lawsuit.

Allegations of discrimination are often the result of minor incidents that are overlooked or mishandled. Think before

you speak or act. If you become aware of conduct that may be discriminatory, take action immediately, or inform someone in authority so that they can address the matter in a timely manner.

### **Suggestions for avoiding problems through positive communication\***

- 1. Communicate School Board policies and procedures and the code of conduct regularly in publications.**
- 2. Use issues that come up as "teaching opportunities" in staff meetings or classrooms.**
- 3. Be aware of the sensitivity of all employees, e.g., senior workers, the disabled, women and minorities. Be conscious about the use of terms in discussions that might be misconstrued as showing bias, such as words that make reference to a person's age or closeness to retirement.**
- 4. Try to eliminate outdated language. Traditional roles have changed. Don't assume any job or activity is the exclusive realm of one sex.**
- 5. Make sure teachers and administrators support the school district's viewpoint in both the spirit and the letter of the law as administered through its policies and procedures.**
- 6. Encourage teachers, administrators and students to inform you of perceived problems and take immediate action to correct the situation.**

\*From the City of Jacksonville Office of Equal Employment Handbook, edited for the academic setting.

## Teaching Tolerance

The following is reprinted from Teaching Tolerance Magazine, Number 23, spring 2003:

A recent study conducted by Public Agenda ([www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)) and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, under the title "Aggravating Circumstances," found that 8 in 10 Americans think a lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem; 10 percent think the situation has become worse in recent years; 41 percent admit that they're part of the problem. And, most blame parents, popular culture and the entertainment media for what they perceive as the increasingly discourteous and disrespectful conduct of children. The following outline is adapted with permission from the National School Safety Center's School Safety Update (May 2002).

Stop for a moment to ask yourself the following questions:

- How do you react when others say please, thank you or excuse me; offer help or a sincere apology; or hold open the door for you?
- How do you feel when you use good manners?
- Can using good manners help children, you and adults feel more confident or help them to be more confident or help them to be more successful?
- Can good manners be used to communicate, manage tensions or to help make decisions that can diffuse or deal with difficult situations?
- Can teaching about and modeling good manners for children and youth make our schools safer?

### What are manners made of?

1. Peace-keeping strategies
2. Critical thinking and choices
3. Inclusion, goodwill and moral strength
4. Fairness, justice, kindness and trust
5. Grace, honor civility and mutual regard

### How to Start?

Respect and courtesy can be taught with simple words and actions. They are modeled as a matter of habit by thoughtful adults and peers. The teaching of manners initiated in early childhood and reinforced through later school years can be an effective school safety strategy.

Manners--as an exercise of critical thinking and choice in social situations, as skills of professional communication and stress management, and as expressions of trust and mutuality--can be practiced daily over a lifetime.



## Resources

The State of Florida has a wealth of resources for parents, teachers, students and administrators, which are available to ensure that we reach our goal of excellence in education and to provide equal opportunity and access to everyone. Many of the services are free. Take advantage of them!

[www.Facts.org](http://www.Facts.org)

Students can plan college courses, review transcripts and grades, run degree audits, check graduation status, search degrees offered in Florida, link to distance learning courses, and much more.

[www.fndfl.org/partnership](http://www.fndfl.org/partnership)

The Florida partnership for family involvement in education. Provides help for parents and teachers in working with their children and students, i.e., completing homework assignments.

[www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net)

The Florida Virtual School: Students can study courses over the internet FREE at their own pace.

[www.flamentoring.org](http://www.flamentoring.org)

Governor's mentoring program.

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

A 12-week course for 7<sup>th</sup> graders is available through this site to prepare for the process of applying to and entering college.

[Jonheymann@yahoo.com](mailto:Jonheymann@yahoo.com)

Take Stock in Children (Duval County, Jon Heymann, Executive Director).

[Mmurr@fccj.edu](mailto:Mmurr@fccj.edu)

Monica Murr, Coordinator, College Reach-Out Program, Jacksonville, Florida.

## DOING MORE THAN IS REQUIRED

We will periodically share with you information concerning the actions of individuals, groups, or organizations that help to develop and foster a philosophy of understanding of, inclusion, and equality for all members of our diverse communities. If you have a story to share please contact us at [jacksonj4@educationcentral.org](mailto:jacksonj4@educationcentral.org). We'll add your story here.

**Metrotown Institute**, an experience created and facilitated by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), is such a group. NCCJ offers every year, during the summer months, a 4-day, 3-night training ground to "open eyes, hearts and minds." The following is an excerpt from its invitation to participate in the institute:

*NCCJ's Metrotown Institute is a gathering of high school students, entering grades 10-12, who come together to explore options for living successfully an increasingly diverse, interdependent world.*

*At NCCJ's Metrotown Institute, students share ideas and feelings, discover their own unique talents, experience a variety of perspectives on gender roles, multicultural communication, religious traditions, self-esteem, and create solutions to the tough challenges we all face in the new millennium.*

*The goal of NCCJ's Metrotown Institute is to promote respect and understanding among all people...*

*Be prepared. When you've completed NCCJ's Metrotown Institute, you'll see the world through different eyes and you'll have made a lasting and positive difference in your own life and the lives of your new friends.*

For more information about this program, please contact its organizers directly at 904/306-6225 ([www.nccj.org](http://www.nccj.org)). You will be glad you did.

**"Every action in our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity."**

**– Author Unknown**

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