

CODE OF CONDUCT SUMMARY

The South Country Central School District Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and district personnel may deliver quality educational services without disruption or interference. Responsible behavior by students, teachers, other district personnel, parents and other visitors is essential to achieving this goal.

The district has a long-standing set of expectations for conduct on school property and at school functions. These expectations are based on the principles of civility, mutual respect, citizenship, character, tolerance, honesty and integrity.

The Board of Education recognizes the need to clearly define these expectations for acceptable conduct on school property, to identify the possible consequences of unacceptable conduct, and to ensure that discipline, when necessary, is administered promptly and fairly. To this end, the Board adopts this code of conduct.

Unless otherwise indicated, this code applies to all students, school personnel, parents and other visitors when on school property, attending a school function.

I. Students

The code outlines both rights and responsibilities of students. All district students have the right to:

1. A safe, healthy, orderly and civil school environment.
2. Take part in all district activities on an equal basis regardless of age, race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
3. Be protected from intimidation, abuse, threats, harassment or discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion or religious practice, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability by employees or students on school property or at a school-sponsored event, function or activity.
4. Present their version of the relevant events to school personnel authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty as in connection with the imposition of the penalty.
5. Access school rules and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from school personnel.
6. Address the Board of Education on the same terms as any citizen.

All district students have the responsibility to:

1. Contribute to maintaining a safe and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning.
2. Respect one another and treat others fairly in accordance with the District Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Dignity Act, regardless of actual or perceived race,

color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, or sexual orientation, gender, including gender expression and identity or actual or perceived sex. To conduct themselves in a manner that fosters an environment that is free from intimidation, harassment, bullying or discrimination. To report and encourage others to report any incidents of intimidation, harassment, bullying or discrimination.

3. Refrain from engaging in discrimination, bullying and/or harassment against any student or engaging any other conduct that would unreasonably and substantially interfere with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional and/or physical well-being; or would reasonably cause or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety.
4. Show respect to other persons and to property.
5. Be familiar with and abide by all district policies, rules and regulations.
6. Attend school every day unless they are legally excused and be in class, on time, and prepared to learn.
7. Work to the best of their ability in all academic and extracurricular pursuits and strive toward their highest level of achievement.
8. React to direction given by teachers, administrators and other school personnel in a respectful positive manner.
9. Utilize anger management strategies to support a positive learning environment.
10. Ask questions when they do not understand.
11. Seek help in solving problems that might lead to discipline.
12. Accept responsibility for their actions.
13. Conduct themselves as representatives of the district when participating in or attending school-sponsored extra-curricular events and to hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct, demeanor, and sportsmanship. Make constructive contributions to their school and to report objectively the circumstances of school-related issues.
14. Utilize time management techniques to balance academic and extra-curricular responsibilities.

II. Essential Partners

The code lists expectations of the district's essential partners in this effort including parents, teachers, coaches/advisors, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, support staff, principals, administrators, superintendent and the Board of Education. A list of these responsibilities is available in the full Code of Conduct.

III. Student Dress Code

All students are expected to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to dress appropriately for school and school functions. Students and their parents have the primary responsibility for acceptable student dress and appearance. Teachers and all other district personnel should exemplify and reinforce acceptable student dress and help students develop an understanding of appropriate appearance in the school setting.

The following standards of dress, grooming and appearance, including hair style/color, jewelry, make-up and nails, will be observed in all South Country Central School District schools:

1. All dress grooming and appearance must be safe, appropriate and not disruptive and must not interfere with the educational process.
2. Recognize that extremely brief garments are inappropriate and unacceptable. This may include but is not limited to the following: Tank tops, backless tops, single shoulder tops, tube tops, net tops, halter tops, spaghetti straps, exposed midriffs, plunging necklines (front or back) skirt/skorts above mid-thigh length, shorts that are excessively tight, garments that are revealing or see-through, net/mesh garments and pajamas.
3. Underwear must be completely covered with outer clothing at all times.
4. Pants must be worn at the waist.
5. Shirts must be no longer than fingertip length.
6. If worn, belts or overalls straps must be buckled.
7. Footwear must be worn at all times and must be appropriate for school activities. Footwear posing a safety hazard, as determined by law or the building principal, will not be allowed.
8. Head apparel may not be worn inside the school buildings. This includes but is not limited to hoods, hats and sunglasses.
9. Medals, medallions, jewelry with gang symbols, as defined in the Code of Conduct Appendix (Prohibited Gang Activity) or jewelry that may be deemed a weapon are not allowed. This includes but is not limited to rings covering multiple fingers, spiked necklaces or belts, belts with large removable buckles, chain like neckwear, ninja type stars, etc...
10. No outerwear shall be worn during the school day.
11. The wearing of any item that contains offensive or obscene symbols, signs, slogans or words denigrating any persons race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation is not permitted.
12. The wearing of any item that contains language or symbols promoting or endorsing violence, sex, drugs, alcohol, tobacco or vandalism is prohibited.
13. The wearing of any combination of clothing which law enforcement agencies currently consider gang related (these may change) is prohibited.

IV. Prohibited Student Conduct

All students are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and civil manner, respectful of others. Students must learn to assume and accept responsibility for their own actions as well as consequences of their misbehavior. Discipline will be used only when necessary and to place emphasis on the student's ability to grow in self-discipline.

Students may be subject to disciplinary action for the following violations:

1. action which disrupts the normal operation of the school community
2. conduct that is insubordinate

3. disruptive conduct
4. violent conduct
5. conduct that endangers the safety, morals, health or welfare of others, including misconduct on a school bus
6. academic misconduct including plagiarism, cheating, altering records

These violations are listed in greater detail with specific examples in the code.

V. Reporting Violations

Any student observing or having knowledge of a student possessing a weapon, alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substance on school property or at a school function shall report this information immediately to a teacher, the building principal or the superintendent.

Every effort will be made by school district personnel to protect the identity of the person reporting code of conduct violations.

The building principal will inform the superintendent immediately. Any weapons, alcohol, tobacco or illegal substances found shall be confiscated immediately, followed by notification to the parent, guardian, or person in parental relation to the student involved and the appropriate disciplinary action taken, up to and including permanent suspension and referral for prosecution.

The building principal must notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of those code violations that constitute a crime and substantially affect the order or security of a school as soon as practical, but in no event later than the close of business the day the principal learns of the violation. The notification may be made by telephone, followed by a letter mailed on the same day the telephone call is made. The notification must identify the student(s) and explain the conduct that violated the code of conduct and constituted a crime.

VI. Disciplinary Procedures and Penalties

Discipline is most effective when it deals directly with the problem at the time and place it occurs, and in a way that students view as fair and impartial. This is best accomplished when teachers utilize all the classroom management tools available. School personnel who interact with students are expected to use disciplinary action only when necessary and to place emphasis on the students' ability to grow in self-discipline. Handling disciplinary behavior problems at the classroom level will avoid placing undue burden on the other classroom teachers and administrators. Disciplinary action, when necessary, will be firm, fair and consistent, so as to be most effective in changing student behavior. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel authorized to impose disciplinary penalties will consider the following:

- The student's age.
- The nature of the offense and the circumstances that led to the offense.

- The student’s prior disciplinary record.
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline.
- Information from parents, teachers and/or others, as appropriate.
- Other extenuating circumstances.

As a general rule, discipline will be progressive. This means that a student’s first violation will usually warrant a lighter penalty than subsequent violations. This also means that the severity of a penalty will vary depending on whether the student’s behavior is minimally disruptive, moderately disruptive, substantially disruptive, or violent.

Please see the District “Progressive Discipline Policy” in its full content on the District’s website.

VII. Alternative Instruction

When a student of any age is removed from class by a teacher or a student of compulsory attendance age is suspended from school pursuant to Education Law §3214, the district will take immediate steps to provide alternative means of instruction for the student.

VIII. Discipline of Students with Disabilities

The board recognizes that it may be necessary to suspend, remove or otherwise discipline students with disabilities to address disruptive or problem behavior. The board also recognizes that students with disabilities enjoy certain procedural protections whenever school authorities intend to impose discipline upon them. The board is committed to ensuring that the procedures followed for suspending, removing or otherwise disciplining students with disabilities are consistent with the procedural safeguards required by applicable laws and regulations.

This code of conduct affords students with disabilities subject to disciplinary action no greater or lesser rights than those expressly afforded by applicable federal and state law and regulations.

IX. Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment means any act of physical force upon a pupil for the purpose of punishing that pupil. No teacher, administrator, employee or agent of the South Country Central School District shall use corporal punishment against a pupil.

However, if alternate procedures and methods which would not involve physical force do not work, then the use of reasonable physical force is not prohibited for the following reasons:

- Self protection
- Protection of others
- Protection of property

- Restraining/removing a disruptive student, if that student has refused to comply with a request to refrain from further disruptive acts.

X. Student Searches and Interrogations

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring an atmosphere on school property and at school functions that is safe and orderly. To achieve this kind of environment, any school official authorized to impose a disciplinary penalty on a student may question a student about an alleged violation of law or the district code of conduct. Students are not entitled to any “Miranda” type warning before being questioned by school officials, nor are school officials required to contact a student’s parent before questioning the student. However, school officials will tell all students why they are being questioned.

In addition, the Board of Education authorizes the superintendent, building principals and/or designees, to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the district code of conduct. Factors to be considered in determining whether reasonable cause exists to search a student include:

- the age of the student
- the student’s record and past history
- the predominance and seriousness of the problem in the school where the search is directed
- the urgency to conduct the search without delay
- the reliability of information provided alleging the presence of an illicit item or substance
- visual observation leading to the reasonable suspicion that an illicit item or substance is possessed by a student.

An authorized school official may conduct a search of a student’s belongings that is minimally intrusive, such as touching the outside of a book bag, without reasonable suspicion, so long as the school official has a legitimate reason for the very limited search.

An authorized school official may search a student or the student’s belongings based upon information received from a reliable informant. Individuals, other than school district employees, will be considered reliable informants if they have previously supplied information that was accurate and verified, they make an admission against their own interest, they provide the same information that is received independently from other sources, or they appear to be credible and the information they are communicating relates to the immediate threat to safety. District employees will be considered reliable informants unless they are known to have previously supplied information that they knew was not accurate.

Before searching the student or the student’s belongings, the authorized school official should attempt to get the student to admit that he or she possesses physical evidence that they

violated the law or the district code, or get the student to voluntarily consent to the search. Searches will be limited to the extent necessary to locate the evidence sought.

Whenever practicable, searches will be conducted in the privacy of administrative offices and students will be present when their possessions are being searched.

Strip searches will only be carried out by law enforcement officials upon their determination.

XI. Visitors to the Schools

The board encourages parents and other district citizens to visit the district's schools and classrooms to observe the work of students, teachers and other staff. Since schools are a place of work and learning, however, certain limits must be set for such visits. The building principal or his or her designee is responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. For these reasons, 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 to the school must report to the main office and/or security desk upon arrival at the school. There they will be required to sign the visitor's register and will be issued a visitor's identification badge, which must be worn at all times while in the school or on school grounds. The visitor must return the identification badge to the main office and/or security desk before leaving the building.
- Visitors attending school functions that are open to the public, such as parent-teacher organization meetings or public gatherings, are not required to register, but are restricted to the area of function.
- Parents or citizens who wish to observe a classroom while school is in session are required to arrange such visits in advance with the classroom teacher(s), so that class disruption is kept to a minimum.
- Teachers are expected not to take class time to discuss individual matters with visitors
- Any unauthorized person on school property will be reported to the principal or his or her designee. Unauthorized persons will be asked to leave. The police may be called if the situation warrants.
- All visitors are expected to abide by the rules for public conduct on school property contained in this code of conduct.

XII. Public Conduct on School Property

The district is committed to providing an orderly respectful environment that is conducive to learning. To create and maintain this kind of an environment, it is necessary to regulate public conduct on school property and at school functions.

“School Property” is defined as in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot or land contained within the real property boundary line of a public elementary or secondary school, or in or on a school bus, as defined in Vehicle and Traffic Law §142.

“School Function” is defined as any school-sponsored extra-curricular event or activity, regardless of where such event or activity takes place.

The restrictions on public conduct on school property and at school functions contained in the code are not intended to limit freedom of speech or peaceful assembly. The district recognizes that free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the objectives of the district. The purpose of this code is to maintain public order and prevent abuse of the rights of others.

The full version of the South Country Central School Districts “Code of Conduct” and “Progressive Discipline Policy” is available at your child’s school or online at www.southcountry.org.