

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS

Code of Conduct for Families, Volunteers, and Visitors

I. Statement of Purpose

The participation of families (parents, guardians and caregivers), volunteers and visitors in the learning process and education community is directly correlated to the level of academic success a student will attain. Understanding this vital connection, this Code prioritizes strategies to build bridges in an effort to welcome persons onto our campus. Without meaningful parent and school partnerships, efforts in isolation to increase academic achievement will be futile.

Research has maintained for over 60 years that a positive relationship between home and schools is mutually beneficial for students, families and the school community, including the following:

- Benefits for Students:
- Improved student achievement, including math and reading scores;
- Higher motivation to excel in school;
- Better school attendance;
- Improved behavior at home and school; and
- Better social skills and adaptation to school.
- Rewards for families:
- The opportunity to closely monitor their child's performance and recognize and address any difficulty they might be having in school;
- Better relationships and communication with teachers; and
- Having a voice in decisions that enhance the academic environment of the school and improve the educational experience.

Advantages for the School Community:

- Immediate access to garner family support on school initiatives;
- Improved teacher morale;

- Higher ratings of teachers by parents, which can boost their reputation in the community; and
- Involved families can become powerful allies to engage communitywide support for educational excellence in all neighborhood schools.

This Code of Conduct applies to all families, volunteers and visitors who interact with schools and offices in the Memphis-Shelby County Schools district. It also applies to those who are present at school, in person or virtually, and at school-sponsored activities, meetings, and/or functions during and after regular school hours.

In order to create a climate and culture of support for all students, there is an expectation for all stakeholders to work together in *ensuring that every student attains high academic achievement, positive social and emotional development and gains readiness for college, careers, and a successful and productive life.*

The overarching expectation is that we work constructively together to address issues related to concerns, programs and services before they become a source of conflict. Any interaction between school personnel and families, volunteers and visitors should **start with assuming good intentions in others.** We also should all make a sincere effort to appreciate each other's perspective as we work together to support our children. Other positive and effective interactions should include:

- Respecting each other's time and responsibilities;
- Agreeing on a time and location to meet and/or discuss an issue;
- Listening carefully with a respectful exchange of opinions and suggestions;
- Approaching disagreements in a manner that treats others as integral parts of the decision making and encourages mutual problem solving; and
- Providing the opportunity for either party to seek a second opinion or other intervention when there is unresolved disagreement or when an answer to a difficult situation cannot be reached.

II. Guidelines

In order to maintain an orderly, respectful and secure educational environment for students and staff, it is essential that families and visitors are aware of their responsibilities and understand that adherence to these guidelines is essential for each school and office. Penalties for lack of adherence to this Code of Conduct shall be enforceable by the board of education and by local law enforcement officers if necessary.

III. Responsibilities of Families, Visitors and/or Volunteers

1. Recognize that the education of children is a joint responsibility of families and the school community;
2. Convey a supportive attitude toward education and the district;
3. Build mutually respectful and productive relationships with administrators, teachers, school staff, bus drivers, other families and their children's friends;
4. Review the student's school handbook with their child and review the student's individual rights and responsibilities with them;
5. Model, for students, appropriate behavior and adherence to policies and procedures;
6. Discuss with students expectations for adhering to classroom rules and the overall purpose;
7. Ensure that students are dressed and groomed in a manner consistent with the applicable school dress code;
8. Ensure that students bring only items appropriate and related to the instructional program to school;
9. Request support from appropriate school system staff to help their children to deal effectively with bullying and peer pressure;
10. Seek assistance for handling concerns, always allowing for the opportunity for school leadership to address them; start at the school level with the classroom teacher and then alert the principal when you have concerns with a teacher or other school-related issues;
11. Inform school officials of changes in the home situation that might affect student conduct or performance; and
12. Provide a place for study and ensure homework assignments are completed.

IV. Public conduct on school property

Schools are a place of work and learning. All persons on school property or attending a school function shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner. The building principal or their designee is responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. Anyone who is not a regular staff member or student of the school is considered a “visitor.” All visitors are required to abide by the rules for public conduct on school property established by procedures, state law, and school board policy.

Since having patrons visit schools can be invaluable in building public support, schools should solicit visitation by parents and others during special school events and activities and at other times during the school year. When parents/guardians or patrons call the school to inquire about visiting, they will be notified of the most desirable time to visit. Parents or guardians of children attending the school are not required to make an appointment to visit classrooms but must clear it with the principal or designee first. Additionally, parents must make appointments for teacher conferences through the school office or guidance office.

Notices shall be displayed in each building indicating that all visitors are required to register with the school office and obtain authorization from the principal or designee to be on the school premises.

Except on special occasions, upon arrival and departure from the school site, all visitors must report to and be processed in the school office using the district’s electronic management check/sign in/out system (e.g., Raptor). All visitors must sign in and out. Additionally, all visitors must be checked against the Sex Offender Registry unless they have already undergone a background check acceptable to the district (e.g., District employees, vendors, and volunteers on official District business and personnel from investigatory or regulatory agencies conducting official business of the agency).

On special occasions such as school programs, athletic events, open houses, or similar public events, schools may choose not to require visitors to report to and be processed in the school office

upon arrival and departure. On such occasions, visitors must follow the guidance outlined by the school/school staff regarding entering and being on the school premises.

When on the premises, all visitors required to check/sign in/out shall be issued and visibly display a guest pass. All district employees, volunteers, or vendors/contract employees who are doing work at a school location must wear their identification badge prominently displayed. The official identification of personnel from investigatory or regulatory agencies that interact with the schools shall be sufficient for entering the school when the personnel are conducting official business of the agency. Such agencies may include, but are not limited to: the judiciary, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, local and state fire marshal's offices, the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department, and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

The principal may prohibit visits to his/her school at specific times (i.e., during standardized testing).

All school visitors must comply at all times with Board of Education policies, administrative rules and school regulations.

Visitors are prohibited from taking pictures of or making any type of recordings or transmissions of students and staff while visiting school property. Exceptions may only be granted in accordance with district policy/regulations and applicable state and federal law.

Conduct Prohibited on school property

No person shall:

1. Act in a threatening manner (i.e., gross disrespect, threatening, using loud or offensive or profane language, swearing, or displaying temper, or causing disruption to professional or academic climate) toward any staff member or student;
2. Approach someone else's child in order to discuss an issue or chastise them. (Such an approach to a child may be seen as an assault on that child and may have legal consequences);

3. Injure any other person or threaten to do so;
4. Damage or destroy school property, or threaten to damage or destroy school property or the property of a teacher, administrator, other district employee or any other person lawfully on school property;
5. Disrupt classes, school programs or other school activities;
6. Send abusive, harassing, or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other inappropriate written communication;
7. Record or videotape any interactions within the school building where there is an expectation of privacy (classroom instruction, conversations with teachers, students, staff), unless all participants to the conversation have given their permission for the recording or videotaping;
8. Misuse social media to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, school staff, and/or other parents/students through social networking and websites;
9. Misuse social media for cyberbullying and/or to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry;
10. Disrupt school transportation or confront transportation staff on the bus, the road, in neighborhoods, or on school system grounds, or enter upon a school bus without express permission to do so;
11. Distribute or wear materials on school grounds or at school functions that are suggestive and inappropriate, obscene, advocate illegal action, promote alcohol or illegal substances, appear libelous, obstruct the rights of others, or are disruptive to the school program;
12. Intimidate, harass or discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age;
13. Enter any portion of the school premises without authorization or remain in any building or facility after it is normally closed;
14. Obstruct the free movement of any person in any place to which this code applies;
15. Violate the traffic laws, parking regulations or other restrictions of vehicles while on school property;

16. Possess, consume, sell, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tobacco products, vaping products, controlled substances, or be under the influence on school property or at school functions;
17. Possess or use firearms or dangerous weapons in or on school property or at any school function, except in the case of law enforcement officers;
18. Loiter on school property or at school functions;
19. Gamble on school property or at school functions;
20. Refuse to comply with any reasonable order of identifiable school district officials performing their duties;
21. Willfully incite others to commit any of the acts prohibited by this code; or
22. Violate any federal or state statute, local ordinance, or Board policy while on school property or while at a school function.

V. Tips for families, Volunteers and Visitors

On some occasions, there may be strong disagreement over a school system decision, policy or procedure. The following are tips for how to effectively approach and address concerns.

- **Organize Your Thoughts**

Clearly state the issue or the problem you are experiencing. Make a list of questions you would like to ask. Identify several possible solutions you think would resolve your concern.

- **Stay Calm—Maintain a Civil Tone**

Focus on the facts, not on the person with whom you are discussing the issue. Avoid blaming, demanding, and saying “should.” Say “I believe...,” “I feel...,” rather than “You should...”

- **Clarify, Rather Than Assume**

If you are not sure about something or what you heard, ask for an explanation or clarification. Try to understand the views of the other person involved in the situation and the solutions they might propose.

- **Be Flexible**

Recognize that problems can be solved in more than one way. Be open to alternative solutions.

- **Keep Records**

Make notes of meeting dates and times, who you talked to, and what was discussed.

Save copies of letters, forms and other material related to your concern.

VI. Consequences for Violating the Code of Conduct

When a visitor's actions or presence in any manner disrupts the instructional program at a school, the teacher is authorized to notify the principal or designee. The principal or designee may exclude disruptive visitors from the classroom, portions of the school building, the entire school building, or other school premises. The district security and/or the police may be called if the situation warrants. Additionally, when a visitor's actions or presence in any manner disrupts a district work environment or district location/property, district staff at the location may contact the Superintendent or designee regarding limiting the visitor's access to the location or any area thereof. The district security and/or the police may be called if the situation warrants. All visitors who have their access to a school or district property or any portion thereof limited or who are banned from a school or district location/property shall receive written justification for the action and shall be provided with information on the duration of the ban or limitation on access. If the person is a parent of a student at a school, the school shall also provide the parent with information on appropriate ways to maintain parental involvement in school and their child's education. If warranted, the Superintendent or designee may review actions regarding banning a visitor from or limiting a visitor's access to a school, portions of a school, and/or a district location/property.