

SECTION K

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS GOALS

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee believes that the public schools belong to the people who created them by consent and support them by taxation, and the support of the people must be based on their understanding of and their participation in the aims and efforts of the schools. Therefore, the Committee declares its intent:

1. To keep local citizens regularly and thoroughly informed through all available channels of communication on the policies, programs, problems, and planning of the school district, and to carry out this policy through its own efforts, those of the Superintendent, and such information officers as may be appointed.
2. To solicit the studied counsel of the people through advisory committees selected from the communities and appointed to consider problems that vitally affect the future of our children.

SCHOOL/PARENT RELATIONS GOALS

It is the general goal of the District to foster relationships with parents, which encourage cooperation between the home and school in establishing and achieving common educational goals for students.

While parents are individually responsible for their children, the District provides direct services of education and indirect services of childcare for students during the time when they are within the supervision of school personnel. Consistent with these shared responsibilities and as appropriate to the maturity of the student, members of the school staff will consult with parents regarding student progress and achievement, methods to enhance student development, and matters of correction.

Additionally, parental involvement in the schools is encouraged through regular communication with the school principal and staff, the parent/teacher organizations, the school volunteer program, and other opportunities for participation in school activities and District programs.

To foster relationships with parents that encourage the home and school to work together to establish and achieve common educational goals for students, the Superintendent and the professional staff will:

1. Consult with and encourage parents to share in school planning and in setting objectives and evaluating programs.
2. Help parents understand the educative process and their role in promoting it.
3. Provide for parent understanding of school operations.
4. Provide opportunities for parents to be informed of their child's development and the criteria for its measurement.

CROSS REF: KBE Relations with Parent Organizations

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS' RIGHTS

As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, § 34H, a non-custodial parent may have access to the student record in accordance with law and Department of Education Regulations. The school district will follow the law and the regulations developed by the Massachusetts DESE to standardize the process by which public schools provide student records to parents who do not have physical custody of their children ("non-custodial parents").

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 34H, a non-custodial parent may have access to the student record in accordance with the following provisions.

(a) A non-custodial parent is eligible to obtain access to the student record unless the school or district has been given documentation that:

1. The parent has been denied legal custody or has been ordered to supervised visitation, based on a threat to the safety of the student and the threat is specifically noted in the order pertaining to custody or supervised visitation, or
2. The parent has been denied visitation, or
 1. The parent's access to the student has been restricted by a temporary or permanent protective order, unless the protective order (or any subsequent order modifying the protective order) specifically allows access to the information contained in the student record, or
 2. There is an order of a probate and family court judge which prohibits the distribution of student records to the parent.

(b) The school shall place in the student's record documents indicating that a non-custodial parent's access to the student's record is limited or restricted pursuant to 603 CMR 23.07(5)(a).

(c) In order to obtain access, the non-custodial parent must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal.

(d) Upon receipt of the request the school must immediately notify the custodial parent by certified and first class mail, in English and the primary language of the custodial parent, that it will provide the non-custodial parent with access after 21 days, unless the custodial parent provides the principal with documentation that the non-custodial parent is not eligible to obtain access as set forth in 603 CMR 23.07 (5)(a).

(e) The school must delete all electronic and postal address and telephone number information relating to either work or home locations of the custodial parent from student records provided to non-custodial parents. In addition, such records must be marked to indicate that they shall not be used to enroll the student in another school.

(f) Upon receipt of a court order which prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to G.L. c. 71, § 34H, the school shall notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 71:34D; 71:34H
603 CMR 23.07 (5) Access Procedures for Non-Custodial Parents
20 U.S.C. §1232g Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

RELATIONS WITH PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

To foster relationships with parents that encourage the home and school to work together to establish and achieve common educational goals for students, the Superintendent and the professional staff will:

1. Consult with and encourage parents to share in school planning and in setting objectives and evaluating programs.
2. Help parents understand the educational process and their role in promoting it.
3. Provide for parent understanding of school operations.
4. Provide opportunities for parents to be informed of their child's development and the criteria for its measurement.

To accomplish the above and to enhance communications between parents and school officials, the Committee encourages the maintenance of formal parent organizations at each school building. For this purpose the Committee will officially recognize a parent organization at each building. These procedures will be observed:

1. Organizations will be officially recognized upon request by the building principal who will file a copy of the organizational papers with the Superintendent.
1. A vote, open to all parents of children enrolled, will designate the organization to be recognized if more than one organization makes the request.

CROSS REF: KBA School/Parent Relations Goals

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee endorses the concept that community participation in the affairs of the schools is essential if the school district and communities are to maintain mutual confidence and respect and work together to improve the quality of education for students. It therefore intends to exert every effort to identify the desires of the communities and to be responsive, through its actions, to those desires.

All citizens will be encouraged to express ideas, concerns, and/or questions about the schools to district administration, to any appointed advisory bodies, and to the Committee.

Residents who are specially qualified because of interest, training, experience, or personal characteristics, will be encouraged to assume an active role in school affairs. From time to time, these people may be invited by the Committee to act as advisers, either individually or in groups.

The Committee and the staff will give substantial weight to the advice they receive from individuals and community groups interested in the schools, particularly from those individuals and groups they have invited to advise them regarding specific problems, but will use their best judgment in arriving at decisions.

CROSS REF: BDF, Advisory Committees to the Regional School Committee

PUBLIC GIFTS TO THE SCHOOLS

The Superintendent will have authority to accept gifts and offers of equipment for the schools in the name of the Committee when the gift is of educational value.

Gifts that would involve changes in school plants or sites will be subject to Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee approval.

Gifts will automatically become the property of the school district. Any gift of cash, whether or not intended by the donor for a specific purpose, will be handled as a separate account and expended at the discretion of the Regional School Committee, as provided by law.

The Superintendent will bring donations in excess of \$5,000 to the Committee for their formal approval. The Committee directs the Superintendent to assure that an appropriate expression of thanks is given all donors.

LEGAL REF: M.G.L. 71:37A

First Reading, November 1, 2016
Second Reading, December 21, 2016
Adopted by ASRSD, December 21, 2016
RSC Revised, March 1, 2022

PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee is a public servant, and its meetings and records will be a matter of public information except as such meetings and records pertain to individual personnel and other classified matters.

The Regional School Committee supports the right of the people to know about the programs and services of their district and will make every effort to disseminate information. All requests for information will be acted on fairly, completely and expeditiously.

The official minutes of the Committee, its written policies and regulations, and its financial records will be open for inspection at the office of the Superintendent by any citizen desiring to examine them during hours when the office is open. No records pertaining to individual students or staff members will be released for inspection by the public or any unauthorized persons by the Superintendent or other persons responsible for the custody of confidential files. The exception to this will be information about an individual employee (or student) that has been authorized in writing for release by the employee (or student, or student's parent).

Each building administrator is authorized to use all means available to keep parents and others in the particular school's community informed about the school's program and activities.

It is the intention of the Regional School Committee to post meeting agendas, minutes and other related district documents in a timely manner.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 4:7; 66:10; 39:23B

CROSS REFS: BEDG, Minutes
GBJ, Personnel Records
JRA, Student Records

NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS/NEWS RELEASES

Every effort will be made to assist the press and other communications media to obtain complete and adequate coverage of the programs, problems, planning, and activities of the school district.

All representatives of the media will be given equal access to information about the schools. General releases of interest to the communities will be made available to all the media simultaneously. There will be no exclusive releases except as media representatives request information on particular programs, plans or problems.

In order that school district publicity is given wide coverage and is coordinated into a common effort and purpose, the following procedures will be followed in giving official information to the news media:

1. The Ayer Shirley School Committee chairman will be the official spokesman for the Committee, except as this duty is delegated to the Superintendent.
2. News releases that are of a system-wide or a sensitive nature or pertain to established Committee policy are the responsibility of the Superintendent.
3. News releases that are of concern to only one school, or to an organization of one school, are the responsibility of the principal of that particular school.

While it is impossible to know how news releases will be treated by the press, every possible effort should be made to obtain coverage of school activities that will create and maintain a dignified and professionally responsible image for the school district.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

Although no member of the community will be denied the right to have their complaints heard and investigated, they will be referred through the proper administrative channels for solution. Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

The Committee believes that complaints are best handled and resolved as close to their origin as possible, and that the professional staff should be given every opportunity to consider the issues and attempt to resolve the problem. Therefore, the proper channeling of complaints will be as follows:

Level 1 Teacher	(if unresolved, move to Level 2)
Level 2 School Building Administrator & Teacher	(if unresolved, move to Level 3)
Level 3 Superintendent, Teacher and Administrator	

Matters referred to the Superintendent must be in writing informing of the issue in question and steps previously taken.

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee expects the professional staff to receive complaints courteously and to make a proper reply to the complainant.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Complaints about school personnel will be investigated fully and fairly. However, before any such complaint is investigated, the complainant must submit his/her complaint in writing. Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

Whenever a complaint is made directly to the Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee as a whole or to a Regional School Committee member as an individual, it will be referred to the school administration for study and possible solution.

The Superintendent will develop, for approval by the Committee, procedures that assure prompt and fair attention to complaints against school personnel. The procedures will require that an employee who is the object of a complaint be informed promptly and be afforded the opportunity to present the facts as s/he sees them.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:5

CROSS REF: BEC, Executive Sessions

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL REGULATIONS

The following procedures are established to ensure that a citizen's complaint is given respectful attention and that the integrity of the educational program is upheld. "Complaint" in this regulation will be restricted in meaning to that criticism of particular school employees by a citizen of the Ayer Shirley Regional School District which includes or implies a demand for action by school authorities. Other comments and suggestions will be referred informally to affected personnel.

1. If a complaint comes first to the person against whom it is directed, s/he will listen courteously and may try to resolve the difficulty by explaining the background and educational purpose involved. If the complaint remains unsatisfied, the employee will refer him/her to the building principal or other immediate supervisor to have his/her views considered further. Whether the complaint terminates with the individual staff member involved or seems likely to go further, the staff member will immediately inform his/her supervisor of the complaint.

2. If a complaint comes first to the principal or other supervisor of the person criticized, s/he should listen courteously or acknowledge a letter promptly and politely, but should make no commitments, admissions of guilt, or threats. If the complaint involves a particular employee, the supervisor should suggest a conference between the complainant and the person criticized and should inform that person immediately of the complaint.

If the complainant has already met with the person criticized and remains unsatisfied, the supervisor should invite the complainant to file his/her complaint in writing and offer to send him/her the appropriate form regarding a school employee's behavior, character or qualifications.

3. If a complaint comes first to any other school employee, that employee will refer the complainant to the person criticized or his/her immediate supervisor and immediately inform both.

4. No further action on the complaint should be taken unless the complainant submits the complaint in writing.

5. When a written complaint form is received, the principal or other supervisor will schedule a conference with himself/herself, the complainant, the person criticized, and if advisable, the department chairman or other personnel that either the supervisor or the person criticized feels could contribute resolution of the problem.

6. If the complainant is not satisfied with the results of the conference above, s/he should then be referred to the Superintendent, who may handle the complaint personally or refer it to other personnel, as s/he may see fit.

LEGAL REF: M.G.L. 76:5

**PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CURRICULUM OR
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee, though it is ultimately responsible for all curriculum and instructional materials (including library books), recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the school district's educational philosophy and goals.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the schools may be expected from time to time. In such instances:

1. If a parent requests that his/her own child not read a given book, the teacher and/or school administrator should resolve the situation, perhaps by arranging for use of alternative material meeting essentially the same instructional purpose. This does not apply, however, to basic program texts and materials that the Regional School Committee has adopted.
2. The Committee will not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections, but recognizes that at times a reevaluation of certain material may be desirable. Should an individual or group ask to have any book or other material withdrawn from school use,
 - a. The person who objects to the book or other material will be asked to sign a complaint on a standard form on which s/he will document his/her criticism.
 - b. During the investigation of the complaint, the challenged material will remain in circulation.
 - c. Following receipt of the formal complaint, the Superintendent will provide for a reevaluation of the material in question, s/he will arrange for the appointment of a review committee from among the faculty to consider the complaint.
 - d. The Superintendent will review the complaint and the review committee's reevaluation and will render a decision in the matter. Should the decision be unsatisfactory to the complainant, s/he may appeal it to the Regional School Committee.

In summary, the Ayer Shirley Regional Committee assumes final responsibility for all books and instructional materials it makes available to students; it holds its professional staff accountable for their proper selection. It recognizes rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children; it will provide for the reevaluation of materials in library collections upon formal request. On the other hand, students' right to learn and the freedom of teachers to teach will be respected.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:5

CROSS REFS: IJ, Instructional Materials
IJJ, Selection and Adoption of Textbooks
IJL, Selection and Adoption of Library Materials

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

The providing of quality functional school buildings and facilities is positive proof of the communities' interest and dedication to all aspects of a well rounded educational program for all of the citizens. Since the Ayer Shirley Regional Schools are designed and operated to serve this important beginning phase of the total educational structure, first consideration must necessarily be given to the needs of the school age children. In accordance with this fundamental principle, regular school and related functions rate the highest priority in the extended use of the buildings and facilities. The Regional School Committee has determined two classifications of users with school related organizations (Class 1) usually not being charged for the use of school facilities. Other users will pay pre-determined fees for the use of school facilities.

Approval for public use shall be consistent with recognized needs and values for their intended use, in compliance with the Town of Ayer and the Town of Shirley lease agreements, and in conformity with state laws. In this connection, Section 71 of Chapter 71 of Massachusetts General Laws reads in pertinent part as follows:

“For the purpose of promoting the usefulness of public school property the School Committee of any town may conduct such educational and recreational activities in or upon school property under its control, and, subject to such regulations as it may establish, and consistently and without interference with the use of the premises for school purpose, shall allow the use thereof by individuals and associations for such educational, recreational, social, civic, philanthropic, and like purposes as it deems for the interest of the community. The affiliation of any such association with a religious organization shall not disqualify such association from being allowed such a use for such a purpose. “The use of such property as a place of assemblage for citizens to hear candidates for public office shall be considered a civic purpose within the meaning of this section. A School Committee shall award concessions for food at any field under its control only to the highest responsible bidder.”

Programs and activities having as their goal, cultural, educational, charitable, philanthropic, civic, and recreational values of non-commercial or non-personal nature are encouraged and will be given careful consideration by the school district when requests for school facilities are made.

PUBLIC SOLICITATIONS IN THE SCHOOLS

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee will place limits on commercial activities and fund-raising activities in the schools for the following reasons:

1. The school district should provide students, parents, and employees some measure of protection from commercial and charitable fund-raising organizations.
2. The school district should not give the public the impression of generally endorsing or sanctioning commercial and fund-raising activities.
3. Commercial and fund-raising activities may disrupt school routine and may cause loss of instructional time.

Following these guiding statements, the Superintendent and principals may permit commercial or fund-raising activities related to the objectives of the schools with the following exceptions:

1. No direct solicitation of students or employees may take place without permission of the Superintendent and with notification to the Regional School Committee.
2. No general or class distribution of commercial or fund-raising literature may take place without the Superintendent's permission and with notification to the Regional School Committee.
3. The Regional School Committee will work to establish strong community partnerships with local groups in an effort to increase revenue. These efforts will be consistent with state and federal regulations.

For the purposes of this policy, local PTA and PTO groups and groups representing school district employees will be considered "school groups" and will be governed by Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee policy solicitations.

LEGAL REF: M.G.L. 44:53A
CROSS REFS: GBEB, Staff Gifts and Solicitations
JJE, Student Fund-Raising Activities
JP, Student Gifts and Solicitations
KHB, Advertising in the Schools

First Reading, January 3, 2017
Second Reading, January 18, 2017
Adopted by ASRSD, January 18, 2017

ADVERTISING IN THE SCHOOLS

School-business relationships based on sound principles and community input can contribute to high quality education. However, the school districts must also protect the welfare of students and the integrity of the learning environment. Therefore, when working together, schools, community organizations and businesses must ensure that educational values are not distorted in the process.

Anyone requesting to hang signs on building and/or grounds must be approved by School Committee. The Director of Facilities will approve and oversee the hanging of banners and signs before they can be displayed to ensure there will be no damage to the physical plant.

The School Committee will allow use of advertising consistent with the criteria specified below:

- a. Use of advertising is permitted in connection with courses of study which have specific lessons related to advertising. It will be up to each school principal to decide whether the lessons related to advertising are appropriate.

- b. Use of advertising is permitted in such supplementary classroom and library materials as newspapers, magazines, television, the Internet, and similar media where they are used in a class such as current events, or where they serve as an appropriate research tool.

The School Committee will allow advertising consistent with the criteria specified below:

- a. Paid advertising is permitted in yearbooks, school newspapers, theatrical productions, and event programs as long as such advertising meets the criteria listed below. The building principal is responsible to review all material.

- b. Non-school organizations that are approved to use school grounds and facilities may use temporary advertising that is consistent with the criteria of this policy. Non-school organizations must comply with the specific procedures and processes determined by the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.

Advertising must meet the following criteria:

1. Consistency with District and School Academic Standards and Goals. All corporate support shall be consistent with State, District, and school academic standards and goals. Commercial involvement must also be structured to meet identified educational needs, not commercial motives.

2. Consistency with District Policies and Age-Appropriateness. All corporate support ~~or activity~~ must be consistent with District policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, age, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, limited English proficient, handicap, or homelessness, and must be age-appropriate for the students involved.

3. Certain Corporate Support. No corporate support will be permitted in the District or in the schools that:

- a. Promotes the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or firearms.
- b. Promotes hostility, violence or disorder
- c. Attacks or demeans any ethnic, racial, or religious group.
- d. Is libelous.
- e. Promotes any specific religion.
- f. Promotes or opposes any particular political view, candidate or ballot question.
- g. Inhibits the functioning of any school.

4. All corporate/business/organizational support may only cite the organization's name not specific products or services. Phrases such as "Your friends at", "Proudly supporting Ayer Shirley education", etc. may be used. The corporate/business/organizational review includes consideration of the primary products and services where usage of such product/service would violate policies of the district.

5. Sponsorship by individuals without attribution to a company, corporation, or service is allowed.

The School Committee will on a case by case basis consider corporate/company identification and recognition for significant contributions (greater than \$5,000 value) to fund school facility/capital items. Proposals must first go through the superintendent for preliminary review, meet the criteria cited above, and meet a specific need of the district. Proposals without review by the superintendent shall not be presented to the School Committee for final consideration.

Solicitation of Sales or use of the name of the school system to promote any product excluding testimonials approved by the Superintendent of Schools, will not be permitted by the Committee.

SOURCE: Local policy

CROSS REF.: JP, Student Gifts and Solicitations
KHA, Public Solicitations on the Schools
KCD, Public Gifts to the Schools
AC, Nondiscrimination
JFABD, Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

First Reading, June 21, 2017

Second Reading, August 21, 2017

Adopted by ASRSD, August 21, 2017

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee encourages parents and guests to visit classrooms to observe and learn about the instructional programs taking place in our schools. Such visits can prove most beneficial in promotion of greater school-home cooperation and community understanding of how we carry out the school district's mission and goals.

Visits by parents to several classrooms in a given grade for the purposes of comparing teaching styles to provide a basis for a request for student assignment to a particular teacher are strongly discouraged because the school district's policy of assigning a student to a particular class is the sole responsibility of the building principal in consultation with the staff of that school.

The following guidelines to classroom and school visits should be followed:

1. Parental requests for classroom visitations will be welcomed as long as the educational process is not disrupted. To this end we request that such requests be made at least forty-eight hours in advance to allow for proper arrangements to be made.
2. The building principal has the authority to determine the number, times, and dates of observations by visitors. This will be done in consultation with staff members so as to give adequate notice to the staff members of the impending visits.
3. For security purposes it is requested that all visitors report to the principal's office upon entering and leaving the building and sign a guest log showing arrival and departure times. Teachers are encouraged to ask visitors if they have registered in the principal's office.
4. Under ordinary circumstances classroom observations will be strongly discouraged during the first three weeks of school in September and during the month of June.
5. Any student who wishes to have a guest in school MUST ask permission of one of the administrative staff 24 HOURS in advance of the proposed visit. If permission is granted, the guest is expected to follow the standards of behavior expected of all students. Upon arrival the guest must register in the office. Any guest who fails to comply with student regulations will be asked to leave the school building and grounds immediately.

RELATIONS WITH BOOSTER ORGANIZATIONS

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee recognizes that the endeavors and objectives of booster organizations and similar groups can be a valuable means of stimulating interest in and endorsement of the aims and achievements of Regional School District.

Generally, actions initiated by boosters provide the atmosphere and climate to foster and encourage community-school relationships.

Booster-proposed plans, projects, or activities must be evaluated and promoted in light of their stated contribution to the academic as well as the athletic and fine arts programs of the schools. Care must be taken to avoid compromising or diluting the responsibilities and authorities of the Regional School Committee.

RELATIONS WITH SENIOR CITIZENS

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee shall make available a Golden Ayer Shirley Pass to any member of the communities who are 65 or older. The pass shall entitle the resident to attend free of charge any and all district-sponsored events except graduation.

For reserved seat events, the bearer shall be required to obtain a ticket before the event on a first-come first-served basis. A qualified person may obtain the pass in person with proper identification at the Superintendent's office.

RELATIONS WITH POLICE AUTHORITIES

Cooperation with law enforcement agencies is essential for the protection of students, for maintaining a safe environment in the district schools, and for safeguarding all school property.

Relationships between the schools and officials of law enforcement agencies in investigative matters concerning pupils will take into consideration the respective roles of the schools and law enforcement agencies in assisting and protecting the interests of the community, and ensuring the rights of all concerned.

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee also recognizes the potential enrichment that law enforcement agencies can make in the educational program.

Efforts should be made to develop and maintain a healthy attitude toward law enforcement agencies and personnel to promote better understanding and communication.

RELATIONS WITH PLANNING AUTHORITIES

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee will participate in local and state planning functions that could directly affect district schools and their immediate environment.

The Superintendent or designee will keep the Regional School Committee informed of planning matters bearing directly on the operation of district schools or school-sponsored programs, and will undertake action on behalf of the Committee to influence matters in the best interests of the students, the schools and the district.

RELATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES

The Ayer Shirley Regional School Committee and its administrative officers welcome all who seek to serve the residents of the community and will participate with them in the planning and execution of such projects as will be mutually beneficial for students.

It is Committee policy that administration inform elected and appointed officials of the local and county government of the desire to work cooperatively for improved services.