



MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

The purpose of this procedure is to provide all staff, students, volunteers and community members with information to increase their awareness of their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults.

In a professional staff/student relationship, school employees maintain boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that school personnel have for students.

An inappropriate boundary invasion means an act, omission, or pattern of such behavior by an employee that does not have an educational purpose; and results in abuse of the staff/student professional relationship.

This procedure addresses the relationship between students and District staff. The Board recognizes that staff may have familial and pre-existing social relationships with parents or guardians and students. Employees should use appropriate professional judgment when they stand in a dual relationship to students so as to avoid violations of District policy, the appearance of impropriety, or the appearance of favoritism.

Unacceptable Conduct and Appearances of Impropriety

The following activities are examples of inappropriate and unacceptable boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, staff should avoid these situations as well as any other situation that may create the appearance of impropriety. If unavoidable, these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the staff person must report the occurrence to the appropriate administrator as soon as possible. Examples of unacceptable conduct and appearances of impropriety include but are not limited to:

- A. Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
- B. Showing inappropriate images to students, including pornography;
- C. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship, including exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student, which are unrelated to school activities;
- D. Pushing students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships if the staff is non-guidance/counseling staff. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members are expected to refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff;
- E. Engaging in conversations with students that disclose personal and confidential information so that the student becomes the confidant of the adult or disclosing

personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students;

- F. Sending or taking students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- G. Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- H. Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- I. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, e-mail, instant messenger or messaging apps, Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters for non-educational purposes (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) without the prior permission of the student's parent/guardian;
- J. Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for beverages, meals or movies, shopping, traveling and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities;
- K. Socializing in situations where students are consuming alcohol, drugs or tobacco;
- L. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation without previous permission of the parent/guardian;
- M. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy, (e.g. walking in on the student in the bathroom);
- N. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home unless other adults are present, the student(s) are invited for an activity related to school, and the student's parent or guardian is informed and has consented;
- O. Visiting a student, in his/her home, unless invited by the student's parent or guardian as part of a school activity;
- P. Conducting ongoing, private conversations with individual students that do not have an educational purpose, are unrelated to school activities or the well-being of the student, and that take place in locations inaccessible to others; and/or
- Q. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others or in an inaccessible location, except for in the context of school counselors providing professional counseling support services, teachers working with students in an afterschool setting or during testing, or a school nurse providing medical services to a student.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal (or other administrator) if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal or the supervisor of the employee suspected of engaging in inappropriate conduct that violates this policy.

The administrator to whom a boundary invasion concern is reported must document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the Human Resources department Administrator(s). The Human Resources department Administrator(s) will

maintain a separate non-personnel file of all boundary invasion reports made to human resources.

All professional school personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a student has experienced sexual abuse by a staff member, volunteer, or agency personnel working in the school are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to RCW 26.44. Reporting suspected abuse to the building principal or supervisor does not relieve professional school personnel from their reporting responsibilities and timelines.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The violation will also be reported to the state Office of Professional Practices, as appropriate. Violations involving sexual or other abuse will also result in referral to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement in accordance with the board's policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Dissemination of Policy and Training

This policy and procedure will be included on the district website and in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks.

All new employees and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff/student boundaries within three months of employment. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

Adopted: July 25, 2018