

ALL PERSONNEL - PROFESSIONAL ADULT/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

Original Adopted Date: 02/22/2022 | Last Revised Date:

Purpose

The purpose of this policy 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 and failure to maintain appropriate boundaries by adults. All adults are expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. The provisions of this policy apply to all District staff, volunteers and community members relative to their conduct with students ("employees") in District schools and programs.

This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also boundary-blurring and grooming behaviors that undermine the professional adult/student relationship and can lead to misconduct or the appearance of impropriety.

General Standards

The Governing Board expects adults to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their interaction with students. Employees are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, through consistently and appropriately applied discipline and establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.

The interactions and relationships between employees and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, and an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in and outside of the educational setting. Relationships between adults and students should also be consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

Employees will not intrude on a student's physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve a legitimate educational purpose. For purposes of this policy, the term "legitimate educational purpose" includes matters or communications related to teaching, counseling, athletics, extracurricular activities, treatment of a student's injury or other medical needs, school administration, or other purposes within the scope of the adult's employment duties.

Appearances of Impropriety

Employees are expected to be aware of the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other adults when interacting with students.

Electronic Communications

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, employees shall maintain professional boundaries with students.

Exceptions

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational purpose may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out in this policy.

It is further understood that adults may be involved in other roles in the community through civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include District students. This policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in those roles; however, adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity with regard to all youth with whom they interact in the course of their community involvement.

Duty to Report

When an employee observes conduct or has knowledge of another employee violating this policy that creates a reasonable suspicion of child abuse (including sexual abuse), or when an employee has reasonable suspicion of an adult harming or endangering a child, the employee shall report the conduct to San Joaquin County's Family and Children's Services in accordance with State law and District Board Policy and Rule 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting.

Investigation

Whenever the District receives a report concerning a possible boundary violation, the site supervisor and the assigned human resources administrator will conduct a prompt investigation utilizing the procedures for investigations of allegations of serious misconduct. The investigation shall include a review of the full history of concerns relating to the subject of the concern/ complaint.

Immediate intervention shall be considered and implemented when necessary to protect student safety and/or the integrity of the investigation.

Disciplinary Action

Any employee who is found to have engaged in conduct in violation of law, this or other Board Policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. In the case of a certificated employee, the employee may be subject to a report to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The Superintendent or designee shall notify local law enforcement as appropriate.

An employee who has knowledge of but fails to report inappropriate employee conduct may also be subject to discipline.

A volunteer, student teacher, independent contractor or an employee of an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in District schools and programs for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the Superintendent or designee.

Confidentiality and Retaliation

The District prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint under this policy. Any employee who retaliates against any such complainant, reporter, or other participant in the District's complaint process shall be subject to discipline.

Policy Adopted: 02/02/2022