

CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT BOUNDARIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide all regular and temporary School District staff (certified, classified and substitutes; regardless of position and work location) and volunteers with information to increase their awareness of their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults.

All staff members are expected to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their interaction with students. Staff members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, through consistently and fairly-applied discipline and established and maintained professional boundaries.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in and outside of the educational setting, and consistency with the educational mission of the District.

Staff members will not intrude on a student's physical or emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve an educational purpose. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff member's duties in the District. Additionally, staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearances of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other staff when interacting with students.

Georgia Law (O.C.G.A. § 16-6-5.1-Sexual Assault) provides for FELONY prosecution for a teacher, administrator or the like to have sexual contact with a student under that employee's supervision **regardless of the age of the student**.

According to the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators, an educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to: (1) committing any act of child abuse—including physical and verbal abuse; (2) committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment; (3) committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student; (4) engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law; (5) soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student; and (6) furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or (7) failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students who are under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting). These prohibitions apply to all District staff, including both certificated and classified.

Unacceptable Conduct

At any time when staff has questions or concerns regarding conduct as it relates to the staff/student relationship, it is the responsibility of the employee to immediately seek direct clarification from an immediate supervisor. Examples of inappropriate boundary invasions by staff members include; but are not limited to, the following:

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- Physical contact with a student or any other conduct that could reasonably be considered harassment under the Board's policy on Harassment (JCAC, JCAC(2), and GAEB);
- Showing pornography to a student;
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship;
- Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- Withholding or misappropriating a student's personal items including clothing and food;
- Banter, allusions, jokes, innuendos or other conversation of a sexual nature with students unrelated to the staff member's professional duties;
- Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters unrelated to the employee's duties to one or more students;
- Concealment of or failure to disclose pertinent student information to parent/guardian, staff members, administrators, authorities or others involved in the educational interest and/or well-being of a student;
- Addressing students, or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner; and/or,
- Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy.
- Use of unauthorized physical restraint, barrier or any contact that limits a student's self-control or free movement.

Appearances of Impropriety

All staff members are expected to exercise good judgment in their interactions with students, and to avoid situations which may create an appearance of impropriety. The following activities are boundary invasions and can create the appearance of impropriety.

- Conducting private conversations or other private interactions with individual students that are unrelated to the staff member's duties or the student's well-being outside the view of others;
- Inviting students to a staff member's house without the knowledge and consent of the parent or guardian;
- Inviting students for social contact or initiating such contact on or off school grounds without the permission or knowledge of parents; and/or
- Transporting or accompanying students in a personal vehicle without the permission of parents/guardians or supervisor.

Electronic Communications

All staff members are expected to use good judgment and exercise professionalism in electronic communications with students. Staff should avoid the appearance of impropriety and refrain from inappropriate electronic communications. Factors which may be considered in determining whether electronic communications are inappropriate include:

- The tone, content, purpose and frequency of such communications;

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- Whether any effort was made to conceal the communication, or whether any effort was made to disclose such communications to parents and/or supervisors; and/or
- Whether the communications could be reasonably interpreted as encouraging an overly familiar, unprofessional, or romantic relationship.

Reporting Violations

Staff members must immediately report to the building administrator or supervisor any and all knowledge of, or any reasonable suspicion of, inappropriate relationships or violations of this directive. In the alternative, if the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to these supervisors, such report may be made to the Office of School Operations.

Violations of Guidelines

All Cherokee County School District employees (regular and temporary) are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the highest level of professionalism at all times. Therefore, violations of these guidelines, unprofessional conduct or failure to report a violation of these guidelines are basis for a recommendation for investigation, which could result in reprimand, suspension, termination of employment, loss of professional certification and criminal charges or other penalties.

Training

School District employees are required annually to review important policies, deemed District Critical Issues, to ensure a safe school/safe staff workplace environment.