

## Maintaining Professional Employee /Student Boundaries

The purpose of this procedure is to provide all employees, 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 employee/student relationship, school employees or volunteers maintain boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that school personnel have for students.

A boundary invasion is an act or omission by an employee or volunteer that violates professional employee/student boundaries and has the potential to abuse the employee/student relationship.

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

### Unacceptable Conduct

Examples of inappropriate boundary invasions by employees or volunteers include but are not limited to the following:

- 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 Intimidation and Bullying (3207) and Sexual Harassment (5011);
- B. Showing pornography or other inappropriate images to a student;
- C. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional employee/student relationship;
- D. Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs, or tobacco;
- E. For non-guidance/counseling employees or volunteers, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, employees or volunteers are expected to refer the student to an appropriate guidance/counseling employee. In either case, employee or volunteer involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance;
- F. Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- G. Banter, allusions, jokes, or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- H. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters;
- I. Addressing students or permitting students to address employees or volunteers with personalized terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- J. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, e-mail, instant messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) without the awareness of the parent/guardian;
- K. 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, without the parent/guardian's awareness, except as participants in organized community activities;
- L. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation; and/or;
- M. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy

## **Appearances of Impropriety**

The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety if they occur outside the performance of an employee's or volunteer's duties. Whenever possible, employees and volunteers should avoid these situations:

- A. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others;
- B. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the employee's or volunteer's home;
- C. Visiting a student's home; and/or
- D. Social networking with students i.e., Facebook, Twitter, X-Box, etc.

If unavoidable these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the employee or volunteer must report the occurrence to the appropriate administrator as soon as possible.

## **Reporting Violations**

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

Employees or volunteers are required to promptly notify the principal, or the supervisor of an employee or volunteer 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.

Whenever boundary invasion concerns occur, the Human Resources department will review the full history of concerns relating to the person complained about and will provide a summary to the superintendent.

All professional school personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a student has experienced sexual abuse by an employee, volunteer, or agency personnel working in the school are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to board policy and procedure, and 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**

Employee or volunteer 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. 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.

## **Training**

All new employees and volunteers will receive training on appropriate employee/student boundaries within 90 days of employment. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

## **Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols**

This policy and procedure will be included on the district website and in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks. Annually, all administrators and employees will receive copies of the district's reporting protocol.

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