

## **Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries**

### **Purpose**

This policy provides all staff, students, volunteers and community members with information about their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults. This policy applies to all district staff and volunteers. For purposes of this policy and its procedure, the terms “district staff,” “staff member(s),” and “staff” also include volunteers.

### **General Standards**

The Liberty Board of Directors expects all staff members to maintain the highest professional standards when they interact with students. District staff members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning by consistently maintaining professional boundaries.

Professional staff/student boundaries are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that district employees have for students.

The interactions and relationships between staff and students should be based upon mutual respect, trust, and commitment to the professional boundaries between staff and students in and outside of the educational setting, and consistency with the educational mission of the schools.

District staff will not intrude on a student’s physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve a demonstrated educational purpose. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff member’s duties in the district. Inappropriate boundary invasions can take various forms. Any type of sexual conduct with a student is an inappropriate boundary invasion.

Additionally, staff members are expected to be aware of the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other staff when interacting with students. Staff members will notify and discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they suspect or question whether their own or another staff member’s conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy.

The board recognizes that staff may have familial and pre-existing social relationships with parents or guardians and students. Staff members should use appropriate professional judgment when they have a dual relationship to students to avoid violating this policy, the appearance of impropriety, and the appearance of favoritism. Staff members shall pro-actively discuss these circumstances with their building administrator or supervisor.

### **Use of Technology**

The Liberty School Board of Directors supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, when the communication is unrelated to school work or other legitimate school business district staff are prohibited from communicating with students by phone, e-mail, text, instant messenger, or other forms of electronic or written communication. District staff members are prohibited from engaging in any conduct on social networking websites that violates the law, district policies or other generally recognized professional standards. This prohibition includes prohibiting staff from “friending” and/or “following” students on social media.

Staff whose conduct violates this policy may face discipline and/or termination, consistent with the district’s policies, acceptable use agreement and collective bargaining agreements, as applicable.



The superintendent or designee will develop staff protocols for reporting and investigating allegations and develop procedures and training to accompany this policy.

**Cross References:**

- 3205 - Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited
- 3207 - Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying
- 3210 - Nondiscrimination
- 3421 - Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Prevention

**Legal References:**

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
- Chapter 9A.44, RCW – Sex offenses
- Chapter 9A.88, RCW – Indecent exposure – Prostitution
- RCW 28A.400.320 Crimes against children — Mandatory termination of classified employees — Appeal — Recovery of salary or compensation by district
- RCW 28A.405.470 Crimes against children - Mandatory termination of certificated employees - Appeal - Recovery of salary or compensation by district.
- RCW 28A.405.475 Termination of certificated employee based on guilty plea or conviction of certain felonies - Notice to superintendent of public instruction - Record of notices.
- RCW 28A.410.090 Revocation or suspension of certificate or permit to teach - Criminal basis - Complaints - Investigation - Process
- RCW 28A.410.095 Violation or noncompliance - Investigatory powers of superintendent of public instruction - Requirements for investigation of alleged sexual misconduct towards a child - Court orders - Contempt - Written findings required
- RCW 28A.410.100 Revocation of authority to teach - Hearings
- Chapter 28A.640, RCW Sexual Equality
- Chapter 28A.642, RCW Discrimination Prohibition
- Chapter 49.60, RCW – Washington State Law Against Discrimination
- WAC 181-87 Professional Certification - Acts of Unprofessional Conduct
- WAC 181-88 Sexual Misconduct, Verbal and Physical Abuse - Mandatory Disclosure - Prohibited Agreements

**Management Resources:**

- 2019 - March Policy Issue
- 2015 - October Policy Issue

Adoption Date: 05.27.10  
Classification: Encouraged  
Revised Dates: 02.10; 12.11; 10.15; 03.19  
Current Version Adopted: 12.20