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 board expects all district staff to maintain the highest professional standards when they interact with students. District staff 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 district 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 consistent with the educational mission of the district.

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 board 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 procedures, 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 and procedures, acceptable use agreement, and collective bargaining agreements, as applicable.

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

Cross References:	3205 - Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment of Students Prohibited

3207 - Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying of Students

3210 - Nondiscrimination

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

Chapter 181-87 WAC Professional certification — Acts of unprofessional conduct

Chapter 181-88 WAC Definitions of sexual misconduct, verbal and physical abuse - Mandatory disclosure — Prohibited agreements

Management Resources:

2019 - March 2019 - March Policy Issue

2015 - October Policy Issue

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