



Title: **Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries**

Code: 824

Book: Policy Manual

Section: 800 Operations

Authority

This policy applies to district employees, volunteers, student teachers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as **adults**. The term **adults** as used in this policy, does not include district students who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.

All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with district students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct.

The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures. [1]

This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the district or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include district students.

Definitions

For purposes of this Policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

"Extracurricular Environment" - school sponsored athletics and extracurricular activities, and all functions related to those activities (ex., banquets)

"Instructional Environment" - the regular school day and other instruction-related activities, such as after-school tutoring on-site at the District, homebound instruction, and instruction in the home.

"Legitimate educational reasons" - matters or communications related to teaching, counseling, athletics, extracurricular activities, treatment of a student's physical injury or other medical needs, school administration or other purposes within the scope of the adult's job or volunteer duties.

"Students" - students enrolled in the Central Greene School District, regardless of their ages, including students who attend school in the District's buildings, students who are educated in their homes, and students who are placed outside of the District for educational or disciplinary reasons.

"Electronic Communication" - Communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, emails, instant messages and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and other networking websites.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the district website, and by other appropriate methods.

The building principal or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.

Independent contractors doing business with the district shall ensure that their employees who have interaction with students or are present on school grounds are informed of the provisions of this policy. [2]

Guidelines

Adults shall establish and maintain appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that is prohibited by this policy or that creates the appearance of prohibited behavior.

Requirement and Prohibitions

a) Prohibited Conduct

Adults shall be prohibited from dating, courting, or entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any student enrolled in the district, regardless of the student's age. Students of any age are not legally capable of consenting to romantic or sexual interactions with adults.

The following conduct by any adult toward or involving a student of any age at any time is prohibited:

1. Sexual physical contact.
2. Romantic flirtation, propositions, or sexual remarks.
3. Sexual slurs, leering, epithets, sexual or derogatory comments.
4. Personal comments about a student's body.
5. Sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures.
6. Spreading sexual or romantic rumors.
7. Touching a student's body or clothes in a sexual or intimate way.
8. Accepting massages, or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care administered by an athletic trainer, coach, or health care provider.
9. Restricting a student's freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner.
10. Displaying or transmitting sexual objects, pictures, or depictions including self-exposure.
11. Any other sexual, indecent, romantic or erotic contact with a student.
12. Furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco, or any paraphernalia relating thereto.

This prohibition applies to conduct which occurs in any of the following settings or contexts:

- a. the instructional environment;
- b. the extracurricular environment;

c. pre-existing personal relationships between adults and the families of students;

d. civic, religious or other outside organizations; or

e. any other time or place outside of the instructional environment or extracurricular environment.

b) Social Interactions

In order to maintain professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with students are appropriate. The District prohibits adults from engaging in the conduct listed in items 1 through 20 below in the instructional and extracurricular environments, except that items 1 through 15 shall not be prohibited, if the student is a family member of the adult.

In addition, adults are strongly encouraged to refrain from the conduct listed at items 1 through 20 below at all other times, including in the context of adults' personal relationships with the families of students outside of the instructional and extracurricular environments, and in the context of adults' participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations, with the exception of items 1 through 15, if the student is a family member of the adult.

This Section shall not be construed to prohibit an adult from engaging in interactions with a student that are not otherwise prohibited by law or this Policy, and that are appropriate within the context of the student's and the adult's participation in a civic, religious or other outside organization, or the adult's personal relationships with a student's family outside the instructional or extracurricular environment.

Examples of prohibited conduct that violates professional boundaries include, but are not limited to:

1. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students.
2. Exchanging notes, emails or other communications of a personal nature with a student.
3. Giving personal gifts, cards or letters to a student without written approval from the building principal.
4. Touching students without a legitimate educational reason. (Reasons could include the need for assistance when injured, a kindergartner having a

toileting accident and requiring assistance, appropriate coaching instruction, or appropriate music instruction). Additional reasons include those legitimate safety reasons as set forth as follows:

- a) To quell a disturbance.
- b) To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects.
- c) For the purpose of self-defense.
- d) For the protection of persons or property. [5]

5. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional adult-student relationship.

6. Taking a student out of class without a legitimate educational reason.

7. Being alone with a student behind closed doors without a legitimate educational reason.

8. Initiating or extending contact with a student beyond the school day or outside of class times without a legitimate educational reason.

9. Sending or accompanying a student on personal errands.

10. Inviting a student to the adult's home.

11. Going to a student's home without a legitimate educational reason.

12. Taking a student on outings without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.

13. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a nonemergency situation without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.

14. Addressing students or permitting students to address adults with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.

15. For adults who are not guidance/counseling staff, psychologists, social workers or other adults with designated responsibilities to counsel students, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, the student should be referred to the appropriate school resource.

16. Failing to properly refer a student who initiates communication concerning personal or family problems or relationships, to the appropriate school resource, e. g., guidance counselor. **Even if the student is the adult's family member, if District Policy and procedures would otherwise require the referral, the referral shall be made.**

17. Failing to immediately advise the Building Principal, if a student initiates a sexual, romantic, or otherwise inappropriate conversation or makes a related comment, and/or failing to forward to the building principal a copy of the communication, if in written or audio format.

18. Responding to a student-initiated sexual, romantic, or otherwise inappropriate conversation or comment.

19. Failing to promptly report a communication from a student involving a matter which must be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act, or other applicable law.

20. Engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct prohibited by other district policies or by state or federal law and regulations.[6][7]

c) Electronic Communications

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students. This subsection shall not apply to adults who are family members to a student to whom the electronic communication is directed.

Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational reasons only.

When available, district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices or communication platforms shall be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices shall be in accordance with district policies and procedures. [8]

All electronic communications from adults shall be sent in a single communication to all participating team or club members, or all students in a classroom, as applicable, except for communications concerning an individual student's medical or academic privacy matters, or responses to communications from individual students for legitimate educational reasons

(ex. Inquiries from an individual student about an assignment or a practice/game time).

d) Exceptions

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out in this policy. The adult shall be prepared to articulate the reason for any deviation from the requirements of this policy and must demonstrate that s/he has maintained an appropriate relationship with the student.

Under no circumstance will an educational or other reason justify deviation from Subsection a, "Prohibited Conduct" of this policy.

There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a student's family, e.g., when their children become friends. This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.

It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through non-district-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include district students. Such community involvement is commendable, and 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 regarding all youth with whom they interact during their community involvement.

Reporting Inappropriate Or Suspicious Conduct

Any person, including a student, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and a student, shall immediately notify the Superintendent, principal or other administrator.
[6][7][9]

When any student, has concerns about, or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and him/herself or another student, that person shall make a report to the building principal, who shall immediately investigate and document the matter. If the matter presents a

significant concern, the building principal shall report the matter to the Superintendent.

All district employees, independent contractors, student teachers and volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, shall immediately report the suspected abuse, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. [10][11]

An educator who knows of any action, inaction or conduct which constitutes sexual abuse or exploitation or sexual misconduct under the Educator Discipline Act shall report such misconduct to the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the required form, and shall report such misconduct to the Superintendent and his/her immediate supervisor, within fifteen (15) days of discovery of such misconduct. [6][9][12][19]

If the Superintendent or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act or the Safe Schools Act, the Superintendent or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.
[10][11][12][13][14][15][16][17][19]

It is a violation of this policy to retaliate against any person for reporting any action pursuant to this policy or for participating as a witness in any related investigation or hearing.

Investigation

Allegations of inappropriate conduct shall be promptly investigated in accordance with the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment. [6][9]

It is understood that some reports made pursuant to this policy will be based on rumors or misunderstandings; the mere fact that the reported adult is cleared of any wrongdoing shall not result in disciplinary action against the reporter or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the reporter, or a witness is found to have intentionally provided false information in making the report or during the investigation or hearings related to the report, or if any individual intentionally obstructs the investigation or hearings, this may be addressed as a violation of this policy and other applicable laws, regulations and district

policies. **Obstruction** includes, but is not limited to, violation of “no contact” orders given to the reported adult, attempting to alter or influence witness testimony, and destruction of or hiding evidence.

[6][9][18][19][20][21][22][23]

Disciplinary Action

A District employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable district disciplinary policies and procedures. [9][16][18][19][20]

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

Training

The district shall provide training with respect to the provisions of this policy to current and new district employees, volunteers and student teachers subject to this policy. [24]

The district, at its sole discretion, may require independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds to receive training on this policy and related procedures.

References:

Legal

1. 24 P.S. 510
2. Pol. 818
3. 18 Pa. C.S.A. 3124.2
4. 24 P.S. 2070.9f
5. 22 Pa. Code { 12.5
6. Pol. 103
7. Pol. 103.1
8. Pol. 815

9. Pol. 104
10. 23 Pa. C.S.A. 6311
11. Pol. 806
12. 24 P.S. 2070.9a
13. 24 P.S. 1302.1-A
14. 24 P.S. 1303-A
- 15, 22 PA Code 10.2
16. 22 PA Code 10.21
17. 22 PA Code 10.22
18. Pol. 317
19. Pol. 317.1
20. Pol. 317.2
21. Pol. 113.1
22. Pol. 218
23. Pol. 233
24. 24 P.S. Section 12-1205.6
- 22 PA Code 235.1 et seq
- 23 Pa. C.S.A. 6301 et seq

Adopted: **August 15, 2023**
