

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

POLICY:

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 Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors expects all staff members 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. The interactions and relationships between district staff and students should be based upon mutual respect and 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 sensitive to 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 are unsure whether conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy and will follow the procedural guidance contained in the accompanying procedures for reporting potential professional boundary violations.

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors 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 proactively discuss these circumstances with their building administrator or supervisor.

Use of Technology

The Lake Stevens School District 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 procedures, or other generally recognized professional standards. Examples of prohibited social networking include but are not limited to "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. Staff who violate this policy may also be subject to referral to the Office of Professional Practice (OPP) with the State Superintendent.

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

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

RCW 28A.405.470 Crimes against children – Mandatory termination of certificated employees

RCW 28A.405.475 Termination of certificated employee based on guilty plea or conviction

RCW 28A.410.090 Revocation or suspension of certificate or permit to teach

RCW 28A.410.095 Violation or noncompliance

RCW 28A.410.100 Revocation of authority to teach

Chapter 28A.640 RCW – Sexual Equality

Chapter 28A.642 RCW – Discrimination Prohibition

Chapter 49.60 RCW – Washington Law Against Discrimination

WAC 181-87 Professional Certification – Acts of Unprofessional Conduct

WAC 181-88 Definitions of Sexual Misconduct, Verbal and Physical Abuse

Cross References

Policy 5500 – Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited

Policy 5580 – Harassment

Policy 5090 – Nondiscrimination

Policy 5470 – Child Abuse and Neglect

Policy 1805 – Social Media