

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HUMBOLDT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

POLICY 4006

Personnel

STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARY POLICY

I. Policy Statement and Purpose

The **Humboldt County School District** (the District) is committed to maintaining a professional, safe, and respectful educational environment where all students can learn without distraction or exploitation. This policy establishes clear, ethical, and legal boundaries for all professional relationships between District staff and students. All employees are required to adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct, ensuring that all interactions are instructionally appropriate, transparent, and solely for the benefit of the student's education and well-being.

II. Definitions

1. **Staff Member (Employee):** Any individual employed by the District, including but not limited to teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, substitutes, paraprofessionals, and support staff.
2. **Student:** Any individual currently enrolled in or attending a District school or program, regardless of age.
3. **Professional Conduct:** Behavior that is ethical, appropriate, and based solely on the educational, supervisory, or guidance responsibilities of the staff member. Professional conduct requires a staff member to maintain a position of authority and responsibility at all times.
4. **Boundary Violation or Invasion:** Any act, communication, omission, relationship or pattern that undermines the professional relationship, lacks an educational purpose, exploits the staff member's position of authority, results in abuse of the staff/student professional relationship, or creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, inappropriate, or sexually suggestive.
5. **Reasonable:** What a hypothetical, ordinary employee would do, rather than the subjective intent of the individual involved.

III. Core Principles of Professional Conduct

Staff members must adhere to the following principles:

A. Maintain Objectivity: All interactions must be focused on instruction, supervision, and student development. Staff will avoid relationships that could compromise objectivity or impair professional judgment.

B. Transparency: Interactions outside the classroom or standard school setting should be transparent and conducted with the knowledge of supervisors and, where appropriate, parents/guardians. Interactions with students outside of school hours should only be initiated on school approved platforms (i.e. Finals site, GoTo Connect, GroupMe).

C. Privacy and Confidentiality: Staff must respect student privacy in accordance with law and District policy, except where mandatory reporting requirements supersede (e.g., suspected child abuse or harm to self/others).

D. Appropriate Communication: All communication must be professional in tone, language, and content, and must be related to school activities or the student's academic progress.

IV. Prohibited Conduct (Boundary Violations)

The following actions constitute unprofessional conduct and are strictly **prohibited**:

A. Inappropriate Communication (Digital and Electronic)

- Communicating with students through personal, private, or non-school-issued communication channels (e.g., personal cell phone, private social media accounts, encrypted messaging apps) for non-school-related matters.
- "Friending," "following," or connecting with current students on private social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat). All approved digital communications must occur through District-approved platforms and be subject to monitoring and retention policies.
- Sending or soliciting communications that are flirtatious, suggestive, sexually explicit, derogatory, or overly personal in nature.
- Discussing the staff member's personal, intimate, or romantic life with a student.
- Banter, allusions, jokes, or innuendos of a sexual nature with students.
- Disclosing personal, family, employment, sexual, or other private matters to one or more students.

C. Inappropriate Personal Relationships and Favors

- Dating, soliciting dates, or proposing romantic relationships with current students.
- Meeting with a student alone off campus for personal or social reasons that are not directly related to official, District-sanctioned events (e.g., tutoring in a public library, supervised school-related travel).
- Accepting personal gifts or large favors from a student or their family that are disproportionate to a modest token of appreciation
- Asking students to perform personal errands or services for the staff member. Exceptions are only permitted for services arranged privately outside of school functions, with the explicit knowledge and consent of the student's parent or guardian (i.e. house-sitting, babysitting, or yard care).

V. Permissible Conduct (Guidelines)

The following activities are permissible, provided they adhere to the Core Principles (Section III) and are conducted transparently:

- **Instructional Contact:** Brief, necessary, and appropriate physical contact required for instruction (e.g., assisting with a lab experiment, demonstrating an athletic technique, applying first aid).
- **Supervised Meetings:** Meeting with a student individually in a classroom or office, provided the door is left open or the meeting is conducted in a visible area.

- **School-Related Electronic Communication:** Using District-issued email or District-approved apps for communication regarding assignments, school activities, or academic concerns. Such communication must occur during professional, reasonable hours.
- **Mentoring/Counseling:** Providing appropriate advice, guidance, and support related to academic success, career planning, and overall well-being, while maintaining professional distance.
- **Connection to Services:** Providing appropriate connection to services that provide support to a student outside of their regular school hours. (Ex: Family Support Center, Division of Child and Family Services, Suicide Prevention Supports)

VI. Accountability and Reporting

A. **Mandatory Reporting:** Any employee who knows or reasonably suspects that another staff member has violated this policy or engaged in any conduct that may constitute child abuse or neglect **must immediately** report the conduct to their immediate supervisor, the building principal, and/or the District's Superintendent.

B. **Disciplinary Action:** Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, and may include criminal reporting to law enforcement as required by law.

C. **Training:** All staff members shall receive mandatory annual training on the requirements of this policy, professional ethics, and mandatory reporting procedures.