

HUMAN RESOURCES

Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries

School employees and volunteers are required to maintain professional and appropriate boundaries in their relationships with students that are consistent with legal and ethical standards of care.

Reporting Violations

All school staff members or volunteers must promptly notify the supervisor of a staff member or volunteer suspected of engaging in a boundary invasion toward a student.

Staff members should:

- Not wait before reporting suspicious behavior or try to determine whether there is an innocent explanation;
- Not confront or discuss the matter with the staff member at issue or with anyone else, but maintain confidentiality to protect privacy and avoid rumors; and
- Document for their own records that they notified an administrator, including to whom and what they reported

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal or designee if they believe a staff member or volunteer may be engaging in inappropriate boundary invasion conduct with a student.

Boundary Invasion

A boundary invasion is an act or pattern of behavior by a staff member or volunteer that does not have a bona fide health, safety, or educational purpose for the student. Staff members and volunteers shall not engage in boundary invasions of students, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Any type of inappropriate physical or sexual conduct with a student or any other conduct that violates the board's policies regarding student welfare, the educational environment, or conduct toward current or former students. Inappropriate physical conduct includes hugging, kissing, or being "overly touchy" with students without any legitimate educational or professional purpose;
- B. Showing intimate or unduly revealing photos to a student or asking a student to provide intimate or unduly revealing photos, taking inappropriate photographs of a student, or taking an inordinate number of photographs of a student;
- C. Any kind of flirtatious or sexual communications with a student;
- D. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff/student relationship. This includes, but is not limited to, favoring one or more students with special privileges, allowing them to remain in the classroom during non-class times, unilaterally removing a student from another class or activity, or engaging in "peer like" behavior with one or more students;

- E. Providing alcohol, drugs, or tobacco to students or failing to report their use of these substances;
- F. For non-guidance/counseling staff, allowing or encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members shall refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff. In either case, staff involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance;
- G. Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- H. Banter, allusions, jokes, or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- I. Commenting on a student's appearance in a flirtatious or sexual nature, or if the comments have no educational value;
- J. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, or employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students;
- K. Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members or volunteers with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- L. Maintaining personal contact (including "friending" or "following") a student on any social networking application or device;
- M. Sending phone, email, text, instant messenger, or other forms of written or electronic communication to students when the communication is unrelated to schoolwork or other legitimate school business. If staff members have educational or legitimate school business to conduct with students, they should use only district-approved applications to text or call. Communications that are one-way and sent to the entire class may be sent directly to students through one of these applications. If any communication is directed to a small group of students or an individual student, staff shall include a parent/guardian unless doing so would jeopardize the safety, health or welfare of the student. Staff members should use school email addresses and the contact information on file for the student and parent/guardian from the district student information system and not personally collected contact information, except in an emergency situation;
- N. Exchanging or providing personal gifts, cards, or letters with an individual student;
- O. Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for beverages, meals or movies, shopping, traveling and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities;
- P. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation or failing to timely report that occurrence;
- Q. Providing a student with information or views about other students or staff members without a legitimate professional purpose;
- R. Asking a student to keep a secret or not to disclose any inappropriate communications or conduct;

- S. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy, (e.g., walking in on the student in the bathroom or a hotel room on a field trip);
- T. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others; and/or
- U. Any home visits unless other adults are present, the student(s) are invited for an activity related to school, and the student's parent/guardian and an administrator are informed and have consented.

Investigation and Documentation

When an administrator receives information that a boundary invasion has occurred or might have occurred, the administrator must document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the appropriate regional superintendent, the district Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Officer, and general counsel. The Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Officer will investigate and document the matter, and if a boundary invasion has occurred without a legitimate educational or safety purpose, ensure that appropriate action is taken and documented. The district will maintain a file documenting reports, letters of direction, and discipline relating to professional boundary investigations.

Reminder About Reporting Sexual Abuse

All school personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a student has experienced sexual abuse by an adult, or another student are required to make a report to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement. Reporting suspected abuse to the building principal or supervisor does not relieve professional school personnel from their reporting responsibilities and timelines.

Disciplinary Action

Staff member or volunteer violations of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations may occur by ignoring professional boundaries, as well as by failing to report another staff member or volunteer who is ignoring professional boundaries. In any disciplinary situation, the superintendent or designee should consider whether the conduct violates the code of professional conduct in [Chapter 181-87 WAC](#) and whether a report to the Office of Professional Practices is warranted.

Training

All new staff members and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff/student boundaries within three (3) months of employment or beginning of service. Such initial training may be on-line training. Site administration and classified employee supervisors shall see to it that more detailed, live training covering this entire procedure shall occur every two (2) years for all schools and work sites. Site administration and classified employee supervisors will also address professional boundaries at staff meetings early in the year.

Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

[Board Policy 5253](#) and this procedure will be included on the district website and in all employee, student, and volunteer handbooks. Annually, all administrators and staff will receive copies of the district's reporting protocol.

Cross reference: [Board Policy 5253](#)

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