

HUMAN RESOURCES

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 the purpose 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. All 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 staff 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 consist 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 or human resources whenever they suspect or question whether their own or another staff member’s conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy.

A staff member who has knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that a student has been a victim of physical abuse or sexual misconduct by another staff member is required by law to report such abuse or misconduct to the appropriate school administrator. The school administrator shall cause a report to be made to the proper law enforcement agency if the administrator has reasonable cause to believe that misconduct or abuse has occurred. During the process of making a reasonable cause determination, the school administrator shall contact all parties involved in the complaint.

The board recognizes that staff may have familial and pre-existing social relationships with parents/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 board supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, when the communication is unrelated to schoolwork or other legitimate school business, district staff are prohibited from communicating with students by phone, email, 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 violate 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 or designee will develop protocols for reporting and investigating allegations of a failure to maintain professional boundaries and develop procedures and training to accompany this policy.

Cross references:

[Board Policy 3204](#)

[Board Policy 3205](#)

[Board Policy 3210](#)

[Board Policy 3421](#)

[Board Policy 5215](#)

[Board Policy 5225](#)

[Procedure 5253P](#)

[Board Policy 5270](#)

Prohibition of Harassment,
Intimidation or Bullying of Students
Sexual Harassment of Students
Nondiscrimination
Child Abuse, Neglect and
Exploitation
Conflicts of Interest
Technology
Maintaining Professional
Staff/Student Boundaries
Disciplinary Action and Discharge

Legal references:

[Chapter 9A.44 RCW](#)

[Chapter 9A.88 RCW](#)

[RCW 28A.400.320](#)

[RCW 28A.405.470](#)

[RCW 28A.405.475](#)

Sex offenses
Indecent exposure—Prostitution
Crimes against children—Mandatory
termination of classified
employees—Appeal—Recovery of
salary or compensation by district
Crimes against children—Mandatory
termination of certificated
employees—Appeal—Recovery of
salary or compensation by district
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](#)

[RCW 28A.410.095](#)

[RCW 28A.410.100](#)

[Chapter 28A.640 RCW](#)

[Chapter 28A.642 RCW](#)

[Chapter 49.60 RCW](#)

[Chapter 181-87 WAC](#)

[Chapter 181-88 WAC](#)

[Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#)

Revocation or suspension of
certificate or permit to teach—
Reprimand—Criminal basis—
Complaints—Investigation—Process
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
Revocation of authority to teach—
Hearings
Sexual equality
Discrimination prohibition
Discrimination—Human Rights
Commission
Professional certification—Acts of
unprofessional conduct
Definitions of sexual misconduct,
verbal abuse and physical abuse—
Mandatory disclosure—Prohibited
agreements

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