

PERSONNEL

Professional Boundaries Between Staff and Students

The board of directors expects all staff members to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their interactions with students. Staff members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning through consistently and fairly applied discipline and established and maintained professional boundaries. For purposes of this policy, the term “staff member” refers to employees, volunteers and contractors working on behalf of the district.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students must be consistent with the educational mission of the district. These interactions and relationships must be consistent with district policies and procedures, including but not limited to policies relating to standards of professional and acceptable conduct. These interactions and relationships must also take place within appropriate professional boundaries both within and outside of the educational setting.

Staff members will not intrude on a student’s physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve an educational or safety-related purpose. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff member’s job duties. 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 are expected to refrain from engaging in conduct with students which is improper, or which creates the appearance of impropriety.

The board of directors supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, staff members are prohibited from inappropriate online socializing with students or from engaging in any conduct on social networking web sites that violates the law, district policies or other generally recognized professional standards.

Employees whose conduct violates this policy may face discipline up to and including termination, consistent with the district’s applicable policies and collective bargaining agreements.

Cross References:	Board Policy 3200	Student Rights and Responsibilities
	Board Policy 3207	Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying
	Board Policy 3208	Sexual Harassment
	Board Policy 5111	Disclosures and Background Checks for Employees
	Board Policy 5121	Unprofessional Conduct
	Board Policy 5223	Conflicts of Interest
	Board Policy 5242	Communications Responsibility
	Board Policy 5255	Disciplinary Action and Discharge
	Board Policy 5430	Volunteers
	Board Policy 5440	Student Teachers

Legal References:	RCW 28A.400	Crimes against children
	RCW 28A.405.470	Crimes against children – Mandatory termination of certificated employees - Appeal - Recovery of salary or compensation by district
	RCW 28A.405.475	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	Revocation or suspension of certificate or permit to teach - Criminal basis – Complaints - Investigation - Process.
	RCW 28A.410.095	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
	RCW 28A.410.100	Revocation of authority to teach - Hearings
	WAC 181-87	Professional Certification - Acts of Unprofessional Conduct
	WAC 181-88	Sexual Misconduct, Verbal and Physical Abuse - Mandatory Disclosure – Prohibited Agreements

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Professional Boundaries Between Staff and Students

The purpose of this procedure is to provide district staff with information regarding appropriate professional boundaries that must be maintained with students. In a professional staff/student relationship, school employees must conduct themselves in a way that maintains interpersonal boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that school personnel have for students.

A boundary invasion is an act or omission by an adult school employee, volunteer, or contractor, or that has the potential to abuse the staff/student relationship.

An inappropriate boundary invasion is an act, omission, or pattern of such behavior by a school employee, volunteer, or contractor that does not have an educational purpose, that exceeds the professional purpose and/or necessity of the adult individual's association with students, and that results in abuse or creates the appearance of abuse of the staff/student professional relationship.

A. Unacceptable Conduct

Examples of inappropriate boundary invasions by staff members include but are not limited to the following:

1. Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student;
2. Any conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
3. Showing pornography to a student;
4. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship;
5. Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs or tobacco;
6. For non-guidance/counseling staff, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, staff members are expected to 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;
7. Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
8. Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
9. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
10. Addressing students, or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
11. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, email, Instant Messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking Web sites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) without including the parent/guardian.
12. Exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student;

13. 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;
14. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation; and/or
15. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy, (e.g. walking in on the student in the bathroom).

B. Appearances of Impropriety

The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Staff are directed to avoid these situations whenever possible. If unavoidable, these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the staff person must report the occurrence, to the appropriate administrator, as soon as possible.

1. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others;
2. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home;
3. Visiting a student's home unrelated to a district purpose; and/or
4. Social networking with students for non-educational purposes.

C. Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal (or other administrator) if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal, program administrator, or Human Resources administrator if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

D. Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The violation may also be reported to the state Office of Professional Practices. Violations involving sexual or other abuse subject to mandatory reporting requirements will result in referral to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement in accordance with the board's policy on reporting child abuse and neglect.

E. Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

Training regarding this policy and procedure will be provided to staff. This policy and procedure shall be included in orientation materials for new employees, and shall be posted on the district web site. Information regarding this policy should be incorporated into staff and volunteer training materials on abuse and harassment.