

## **PERSONNEL**

### **Maintaining Professional Staff and Student Boundaries**

The purpose of this procedure is to provide all staff, agency personnel, contractors, students, volunteers and community members with information to increase their awareness of their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults. In a professional staff/student relationship, school employees maintain boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that school personnel have for students.

A boundary invasion is an act, omission, or pattern of behavior by a school employee that violates professional staff/student boundaries, does not have an educational purpose, and has the potential to abuse the staff/student relationship.

### **Unacceptable Conduct**

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

- A. Any type of inappropriate physical contact or communication with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the board's policies on Non-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment of Students, Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or the Washington State Law Against Discrimination (Chapter 49.60 RCW), or that constitutes misconduct under RCW 28A.640 and .642 or WAC 181-88-060; or any conduct between staff and students that would constitute a violation of Chapter 9A44 or 9A.88 RCW;
- B. Showing pornography to a student;
- C. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship;
- D. Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs or tobacco;
- E. Providing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to students;
- F. 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 maintain a direct connection between staff involvement and the student's school performance;
- G. Sending or taking students on personal errands;

- H. Banter, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- I. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students;
- J. Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar matter;
- K. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, e-mail, social media, communication applications, chat rooms, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business);
- L. Exchanging personal gifts, photographs, cards or letters with a student that are not directly related to school activities;
- M. Socializing or spending time with a student in person or virtually (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;
- N. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation;
- O. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy;
- P. Soliciting phone, email, text messages or other forms of written or electronic communication to/from students; and
- Q. Any other conduct that fails to maintain professional staff/student boundaries.

### **Appearances of Impropriety**

The following activities can create an impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, staff should avoid these situations. If unavoidable, these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the staff member must report such occurrences to the appropriate administrator as soon as possible.

- A. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others;
- B. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home;
- C. Visiting a student's home;
- D. Sending e-mails, text messages or other electronic communications to the student, even when the communication relates to school business, except where the parent or

guardian has consented to such communications and receives a copy of the communication. Staff should use school e-mail address and phone numbers and the parents' phone numbers for communications with students, except in an emergency situation;

- E. Social networking with students for non-educational purposes, in person or virtually; and
- F. Staff shall not initiate or respond by way of an individual text message(s) with a student without including a parent, administrator, colleague, or teammate.

### **Reporting Violations**

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal or supervisor if they believe a staff member, agency personnel, contractor, or volunteer may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy or procedure.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal or supervisor of the staff member, agency personnel, contractor, or volunteer suspected of engaging in inappropriate conduct that violates this policy or procedure.

The administrator to whom a boundary invasion concern is reported must promptly notify the Executive Director of Human Services, and Human Services will maintain a file documenting reports of this nature which are made.

### **Reporting Sexual Abuse**

All school personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a student has experienced sexual abuse by a staff member, volunteer, agency personnel, or contractor working in the District are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to Policy 3421 – Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention, and RCW 26.44. Reporting suspected abuse to the building principal or supervisor does not relieve school personnel from their reporting responsibilities and timelines.

### **Disciplinary Action**

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

## **Training**

All new employees will receive training on appropriate staff/student boundaries within 90 days of employment or service. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

## **Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols**

Policy 5253 and Procedure 5253P will be included on the District website and in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks. Annually, all administrators and staff will review the district's reporting protocol.

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