



Human Resources – Series 5000

Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries – 5253P

Maintaining Professional Staff /Student Boundaries

The purpose of this procedure is to provide all staff members with information regarding what is deemed appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in regards to student interactions, and to increase staff awareness of their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct and sexual abuse by adults.

If you become aware of an adult engaging in behavior with children at school which may be construed as inappropriate boundary invasion, or “sexual grooming behavior,” you *must* report the matter immediately to your principal or the District Title IX Officer if the principal is somehow involved in the conduct.

The following behaviors or actions may be deemed inappropriate boundary invasion behavior:

- Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board’s policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students (Policy 5500);
- Showing pornography to a student;
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship;
- Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs or tobacco;
- 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;
- Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more students;
- Addressing student, or permitting students to address staff members with personalize terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- 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;
- Exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student;
- 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;

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

This list is not an exhaustive list. If a staff member engages in such behaviors, there may be great cause for concern based on the profiles of educators who became sexual abusers. ***The bottom line is that such behaviors cross the line from professional and caring into personal and dangerous and with rare exceptions are not acceptable.***

Staff Duties

Your role in preventing sexual abuse of students is two-fold: first, to avoid engaging in behaviors which could be mistaken for grooming behaviors; and second, to report situations where such behaviors take place.

1. *Do not engage in the behaviors* described above or behaviors like them. Keep your interactions with students on a professional level. Refer students who need emotional or other support to appropriately trained staff such as counselors. Staff can be caring while maintaining an appropriate level of professional decorum.
2. *Report the Concern:* If a staff member observes any adult engaging in the behaviors described above with students, or in other behaviors which raise concerns, inform your principal or the appropriate person at the District Office at your earliest opportunity.
 - a. Do not wait or mull things over or attempt to determine for yourself whether the behavior you have observed has a plausible, innocent explanation. You may not understand the entire situation, and allowing the conduct to continue could be bad for both the staff member and students.
 - b. DO NOT confront or discuss the matter with the suspected individual. Do not inform the person of your concern, unless it is a situation where immediate intervention is necessary to protect a child.
 - c. Maintain confidentiality. Failure to do so may impede official investigations and foster untrue rumors. You owe a legal duty of confidentiality to students on matters which a reasonable person would want to remain confidential. Therefore, you are directed not to tell your concerns to anyone other than the appropriate administrator, Child Protective Services or the police. If approached by anyone other than the appropriate administrator, CPS or the police, or a person conducting an official investigation on behalf of the District, you may not discuss the matter unless otherwise permitted in writing by the administrator in charge of the matter.
 - d. If you desire, and it is possible and appropriate, confidentiality will be maintained about the report to administration.
 - e. Document who you notified, where and when and what you reported for your own records.
3. *RCW 26.44 Mandatory Reporting Duties for Educators:* Washington law requires educators to ensure that a report is made to the proper law enforcement agency of any situation where the educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect.
 - Failure to make such a report may constitute a gross misdemeanor and be punishable under law.

- Failure to report child abuse may also result in disciplinary action by the District. Child abuse may include physical injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or negligent treatment or maltreatment. The report must be made at the educator's first opportunity, but in no case later than within 48 hours. Generally report intra-family abuse to Child Protective Services and other abuse to law enforcement (See Board Policy 3421). Please note that educators must also report the situation to an appropriate administrator and document action which has been taken to the Title IX office.
4. If you observe misconduct between students, you shall take appropriate action to intervene. "They are not my students," "It's my lunch time," "It is the duty monitor's or principal's job," or "I am in a hurry" are unacceptable excuses for not intervening.
 5. Any questions about anything related to this process may be referred to your site principal or the District's Title IX Officer.

Date: 5/2010