



MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

Boundary Invasions

In a professional staff/student relationship, staff members 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 or omission by a staff member that violates professional staff/student boundaries and has the potential to abuse the staff/student relationship.

An inappropriate boundary invasion means an act, omission, or pattern of such behavior by a staff member that does not have an educational purpose and results in abuse of the staff/student professional relationship.

Inappropriate Boundary Invasion Examples

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

- A. Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the district's policy on Sexual Harassment of Students (Policy 3205); Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (Policy 3207); Nondiscrimination (Policy 3210); Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX); 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 that would constitute a violation of Chapter 9A.44 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. 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;
- F. Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- G. Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;



Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

- H. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students;
- I. Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- J. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, e-mail, instant messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters beyond homework or other legitimate school business without including the building administrator/supervisor and parent/guardian;
- K. Exchanging personal gifts, cards, or letters with an individual student;
- L. 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;
- M. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation;
- N. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy, (e.g. walking in on the student in the bathroom);
- O. Soliciting phone, email, text messages or other forms of written or electronic communication to students without building administrator/supervisor and parent permission when the communication is unrelated to school work or other legitimate school business; or
- P. Any other conduct that fails to maintain professional staff/student boundaries.

Appearances of Impropriety

The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, staff members 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 the occurrence 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;
and/or



Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

D. Sending or soliciting email, text messages or other electronic communications to the student, even when the communication relates to school business, except where the parent or guardian and building administrator/supervisor has consented to such communications and receives a copy of the communication and receives a copy of the communication. Staff should use school email addresses and phone numbers and the

parent/guardian phone numbers for communications with students, except in emergency situations.

Reporting Violations

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

Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal or the supervisor of the employee 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 document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the Executive Director of Human Resources. The Executive Director of Human Resources will maintain a file documenting reports of this nature which are made.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

All professional school personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a student has experienced sexual abuse by a staff member, volunteer, or agency personnel working in the school are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to board policy and procedure 3421, Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention, and Chapter 26.44, RCW. 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 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.

Training

All new employees and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff/student boundaries within three months at a minimum of employment or service. Continuing staff will receive training every three years.

Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

This policy and 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.

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Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

Technology

"Electronic communications," for the purpose of this Procedure, means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, e-mails, instant messages, and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and social networking websites. The Superintendent and/or Principals and/or their designee will annually remind staff members and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line, digital world as well as in person. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process.

The annual orientation and reminder will give special emphasis to improper fraternization with students using electronic communications. Improper fraternization with students, includes but is not limited to:

1. School employees may not interact with any students currently enrolled in the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District as "friends" through any personal accounts on networking sites;
2. Electronic contacts with students should be through the district's computer and telephone systems whenever possible. When circumstances require a staff member to use their personal accounts/equipment, it should only be for legitimate school business;
3. All electronic contacts by coaches and extracurricular advisors with team members and members of extracurricular activities shall, as a general rule, be sent to all team members and activity participants and copied to the Athletic Advisor and/or Director;
4. Staff will not make a practice of giving out their private cell phone or home phone numbers to students. If a staff member considers such action to be necessary, they will confer with their Principal or supervisor prior to doing so;
5. Electronic communications that are inappropriate and therefore prohibited include but are not limited to:
 - a. Items with sexual content;
 - b. Items exhibiting or advocating use of drugs, alcohol or other illegal activities;
 - c. Items that pertain to students, including confidential information;



Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

- d. Any content that significantly affects the employee's ability to perform his/her job or disrupts the educational environment;
 - e. Any content that would violate district policies and procedures.
6. Staff shall have no expectation of privacy when using district technology, the district network and/or public social media venues;
7. Staff shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

The Superintendent or designees may periodically conduct internet searches to see if staff members have posted inappropriate materials on-line. When inappropriate use of computers or internet websites is discovered, the school Principals and Superintendent and/or a designee will seek to preserve the problematic or offensive material and will seek to maintain storage and chain of custody of the evidence.

Cell Phones

As a general rule, staff shall not contact students' cell phones unless directed to do so by the parent. Staff shall limit cell phone interaction with students to contact that pertains to legitimate school business. Legitimate school business includes but is not limited to:

- 1. Answering academic inquiries regarding homework, other classroom work or assignments;
- 2. Scheduling appointments for school related conferences and/or extra help;
- 3. Clarifying classroom expectations and/or assignments;
- 4. Notifications related to classroom, club or sports schedules, events, trips, assignments, and deadlines.

Cell phone contact with students shall be as brief and direct as possible. When brief contact is not sufficient and/or feasible to resolve the matter, where appropriate, teachers shall schedule face-to-face conferences during regular classroom and extra-help periods to confer with the student.

Text Messages

Any text messages by staff members, coaches and volunteers shall, as a general rule, be copied to a supervisor and be sent to the entire class, team, club or organization and not to any student individually. Staff shall not send messages containing material that:



Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

1. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
2. Violates the District's affirmative action policies;
3. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;
4. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
5. Is confidential information and not authorized for distribution;
6. Violates Board Policy No. 3207 and Procedure No. 3207P - Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying.

Electronic Communication

District staff shall adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via District owned or issued devices and the District network:

1. All messages shall pertain to legitimate school business;
2. District Staff shall not reveal District issued passwords to others. If a staff member believes that a password has been lost or stolen, or that email has been accessed by someone without authorization, the staff member must contact their immediate supervisor and/or Director of Technology. Where criminal activity is suspected, appropriate District representatives should notify law enforcement authorities.
3. Electronic messages on school owned or issued electronic devices and the District network shall be retained for the period of time specified by The Washington State Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule and Board Policy and Procedures;
4. Federal copyright laws shall be observed;
5. Staff shall not send messages that contain material that:
 - a. May be perceived as profane, obscene, racist, sexist or promote illicit, illegal or unethical activity;
 - b. Violates the District's affirmative action policies;
 - c. Is personal in nature and not related to the business of the district;



Regulations & Procedures No. 5253P Personnel

- d. Can be interpreted as provocative, flirtatious or sexual in nature;
 - e. Is confidential and not authorized for distribution;
 - f. Violates Board Policy No. 3207 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying.
6. Personnel shall become familiar with the District's policies and regulation on staff and student access to networked information resources and acceptable use of technology before initiating email use;
7. Employees learning of any misuse of the email systems shall notify the Director of Technology, Principal, Chief Financial Officer or Superintendent immediately.

Online Education

An online classroom is still a classroom. Though courses and/or assigned programs of home instruction may be online, appropriate classroom behavior is still mandatory. Respect for the participants is essential for learning and student achievement. No student shall be required to create an online "page" or otherwise have any online presence that the student or the student's parent finds objectionable.

Staff communications with students during online education will be limited to legitimate school business as set forth under cell phones, text messages and electronic communication, above. Professional standards and etiquette shall be observed at all times.