

Procedure Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries

School employees are required to maintain professional and appropriate boundaries in their relationships with students that are consistent with legal and ethical standards of care.

A boundary invasion is an act, omission or pattern of behavior by an employee that:

1. Is without legitimate educational purpose;
2. Has the potential to abuse the relationship between the employee and the student; or
3. Violates legal and ethical standards of care.

Unacceptable Conduct

Examples of unacceptable incidents and/or patterns of conduct by employees in the area of boundary violations may include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Inappropriate physical contact with a student;
- B. Comments or actions directed to a student or students that could be considered harassment, such as speech intended to intimidate or belittle a student or persistent attention, without legitimate educational purpose;
- C. Showing pornography to a student;
- D. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship;
- E. Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs, or tobacco;
- F. Encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems or information about their relationships, unless doing so is related to an assigned employee duty. If a student initiates such discussions, employees are expected to exercise caution and ensure that the discussion has legitimate educational purpose, and if necessary, refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff;
- G. Sending students on personal errands that do not have legitimate educational purpose;
- H. Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students;
- I. Disclosing inappropriate personal information about private matters to students;
- J. Addressing students or permitting students to address employees with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- K. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, email, instant messenger or internet chat rooms, social networking web sites, cards, or letters without including the parent/guardian, unless such contact is for the purpose of conducting legitimate school business, such as assigning or clarifying homework assignments or conveying schedule information.
- L. Exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student;
- M. Socializing or spending time with students outside of the school day or school-sponsored events, except as required by educational responsibilities or as participants in organized community activities, unless the employee is also a parent and the social contact with the student is a result of the student's relationship with the employee's child; Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation; and/or
- N. Invading a student's privacy, (e.g., walking in on the student in the bathroom).

Appearance of Impropriety

The following activities are boundary violations and can create the appearance of impropriety or result in an impropriety. Whenever possible, employees should avoid these situations. If unavoidable, these activities should be reported to the employee's supervisor, and if possible, approved in advance of the activity.

- A. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others, except when necessary because of the employee's professional responsibilities;
- B. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the employee's home, unless the visit arises out of the student's relationship with the employee's child, or a relationship between the student's parent/guardian and the employee;
- C. Visiting a student's home, except as part of assigned professional responsibilities, unless the visit arises out of the student's relationship with the employee's child, or a relationship between the student's parent/guardian and the employee; or
- D. Social networking with students when there is no legitimate educational purpose for doing so.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parent/guardian are strongly encouraged to notify the principal or regional associate/assistant superintendent if they believe an employee has or may be engaging in conduct that violates this procedure.

Employees are required to promptly notify the principal, their supervisor, the human resources executive director, or the superintendent/designee if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this procedure.

All parties involved in the complaint will be notified as appropriate to the investigation in accordance with district policy and procedure and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Disciplinary Action

Employee violations of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations by employees holding professional certificates will also be reported to the 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 boundaries between employees and students within three months of employment. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

Cross Reference:

[Board Policy 5253](#) Maintaining
Professional Boundaries between
Employees and Students

Adopted: 12.12.17

Edmonds School District

Revised Dates: