

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES PROCEDURES

The purpose of this procedure is to provide all staff, 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, employees maintain boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that educational personnel have for students.

A boundary invasion is an act or omission by an employee 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 an employee that does not have an educational purpose; and results in abuse of the staff/student professional relationship.

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 or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board's policy 3207, *Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying*.
- 2) Showing pornography to a student.
- 3) Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship.
- 4) Socializing where students are consuming alcohol, drugs or tobacco.
- 5) 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 program performance.
- 6) Sending students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose.
- 7) Banter, allusions, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature with students.
- 8) Disclosing personal, sexual, family; employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students.
- 9) Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members with personalized

terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.

- 10) 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 program business) without including the parent/guardian.
- 11) Exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student.
- 12) 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 program-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities.
- 13) Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation.
- 14) Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy, (e.g. walking in on the student in the bathroom).

Appearances of Impropriety

The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, staff should avoid these situations. If unavoidable these activities should be preapproved by the appropriate administrator. If not preapproved, 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, unless the parent/guardian is present.
- 4) Social networking with students for non-educational purposes.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the program 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 program administrator or the supervisor of the employee suspected of engaging in inappropriate conduct that violates this policy.

The program administrator to whom a boundary invasion concern is reported must document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the Compliance Officer or designee. The Compliance Officer or designee will maintain a separate non-personnel file of all boundary invasion reports made to Personnel.

Whenever boundary invasion concerns occur, the Compliance Officer or designee will review the full history of concerns relating to the person complained about and will provide a summary to the Superintendent.

All professional program 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 program 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 RCW 26.44. Reporting suspected abuse to the program administrator or supervisor does not relieve professional program personnel from their reporting responsibilities and timelines.

Unless their supervisor is the staff member of concern, program personnel are to inform the site administrator of the concern/report. If their supervisor is the staff member of concern, program personnel are to inform the Compliance Officer or designee of the concern/report.

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 providing direct services to students and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff /student boundaries within three (3) months of employment. Continuing employees providing direct services to students will receive refresher training every three (3) years.

Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

This policy and procedure shall be included on the NWESD website and in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks. Annually, all administrators and staff providing direct services to students will receive copies of the NWESD's reporting protocol.

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