

 <p>SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS</p>	<p>MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES</p>	<p>Policy No. 5253 September 9, 2020 Page 1 of 3</p>
---	--	--

Purpose

This policy provides all district staff and students with information about their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults and to ensure that contact and communication with students are conducted in a professional manner. For the purposes of this policy and its procedure, the terms “district staff,” “staff member(s),” and “staff” also include volunteers and contracted service providers.

Interactions Between Staff and Students

The School Board expects all staff to maintain the highest professional standards in their interaction with students. Staff are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning by consistently maintaining professional boundaries.

Professional staff/student boundaries are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that district staff have for students.

The interactions and relationships between district staff and students should be based upon mutual respect, trust, and commitment to the professional boundaries between staff and students in and outside of the educational setting, and consistent with the educational mission of the district.

District staff will not intrude on a student’s physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve a legitimate educational or school business purpose connected to the staff’s job, or an emergency situation. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff’s duties in the district. Inappropriate boundary invasions can take various forms. Any type of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct with a student is an inappropriate boundary invasion.

Additionally, staff members are expected to be aware of the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other staff when interacting with students. Staff members will notify and discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they suspect or question whether their own or another staff member’s conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy.

The Board recognizes that staff may have familial and pre-existing social

relationships with parents/guardians and students. Staff members should use appropriate professional judgment when they have a dual relationship to students to avoid violating this policy, the appearance of impropriety, and the appearance of favoritism. Staff members shall notify, in writing, their building administrator or supervisor of any pre-existing social relationships with parents/guardians and students. Staff shall proactively discuss these circumstances with their building administrator or supervisor.

Electronic Communication

The School Board supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, when the communication is unrelated to school work or other legitimate school business, district staff are prohibited from online socializing, phone calls, texting, skyping, instant messaging, or use of any other telecommunications device, or from engaging in any conduct that violates the law, district policies or other generally recognized professional standards, unless done for a legitimate educational or school business reason connected to their job or an emergency situation. This prohibition includes staff “friending” or “following” students or accepting “follow” or “friend” requests from students on private social media accounts. Employees must conduct themselves in ways that do not distract from or disrupt the educational process. Nothing in this policy prohibits employees, faculty, staff, or students from the use of approved educational websites if such sites are used solely for educational purposes.

Policy Violations

Staff shall discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they suspect or are unsure whether their conduct, or the conduct of other staff, is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy. If a person is dissatisfied with the response of the building administrator or supervisor, the individual may bring it to the attention of the Human Resources Division.

Employees whose conduct violates this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination, consistent with the district’s policies, acceptable use agreement, and collective bargaining agreements, as applicable. All district staff shall report any boundary violation that constitutes abuse, neglect, or exploitation under Board Policy No. 3421 to their supervisor or appropriate school administrator. In addition, all professional school personnel shall report any boundary violation that constitutes abuse, neglect, or exploitation under Board Policy No. 3421 to law enforcement or Children’s Protective Services within 48 hours.

The Superintendent or their designee is directed to develop training and a procedure to implement this policy.

Adopted: October 2011

Revised: September 2020; July 2013

Cross Reference: Policy Nos. 3200; 3207; 3207SP.A; 3208; 3208SP.B; 3240; 3421; 5006; 5010, 5201; 5251

Related Superintendent Procedure: 5253SP

Previous Policies: N/A

Legal References: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Chapter 9A.44, RCW – Sex offenses; Chapter 9A.88, RCW – Indecent exposure – Prostitution; RCW 28A.400 Crimes against children; RCW 28A.405.470 Crimes against children – Mandatory termination of certificated employees - Appeal - Recovery of salary or compensation by district; RCW 28A.405.475 Termination of certificated employee based on guilty plea or conviction of certain felonies - Notice to superintendent of public instruction - Record of notices; RCW 28A.410.090 Revocation or suspension of certificate or permit to teach - Criminal basis - Complaints - Investigation – Process; RCW 28A.410.095 Violation or noncompliance – Investigatory powers of Superintendent of Public Instruction - Requirements for investigation of alleged sexual misconduct towards a child – Court orders - Contempt - Written findings required; RCW 28A.410.100 Revocation of authority to teach – Hearings; WAC 181-87 Professional Certification - Acts of Unprofessional Conduct; WAC 181-88 Sexual Misconduct, Verbal and Physical Abuse - Mandatory Disclosure - Prohibited Agreements
Management Resources: