

Procedure: Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries

Boundary Invasions

In a professional staff/student relationship, staff 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.

Unacceptable Conduct

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

- Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment;
- Showing or viewing pornography with or to a student;
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship;
- Being present 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 students, or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- Maintaining personal contact with a student, including soliciting contact from a student, outside of school by phone, texting, phone applications, email, Instant Messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking Web sites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) except where the parent or guardian and the ESD 112 Program Administrator have approved in advance, and receive a copy of the

communication. ESD 112 staff should use ESD emailed addresses and phone numbers, and the parent or guardians phone numbers for communications with students.

- 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 or ESD 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); or
- Any other conduct that fails to maintain staff/student boundaries.

Appearances of Impropriety

The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Staff should avoid these situations. If unavoidable, these activities should be preapproved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the staff person must report the occurrence to the appropriate administrator as soon as possible, and no later than the next day.

- Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others except when essential because of the employee's professional responsibilities;
- Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home;
- Visiting a student's home except as part of assigned professional responsibilities; and/or
- Social networking with students for non-educational purposes.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the ESD 112 Program Administrator, or any ESD 112 employee, 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 their supervisor, Executive Director, Cabinet Member, or Human Resources Department if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of the Maintaining Professional Staff/Student Boundaries policy and procedure 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 reporting child abuse and neglect requirements.

Training

All employees are required to complete training provided by ESD 112 on appropriate staff/student boundaries. An annual review will be provided to employees who work directly with children.