

OLYMPIC ESD 114 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

5253P

In a professional staff/student relationship, staff members must maintain boundaries that are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that school personnel have for students. For purposes of this policy, the terms “staff” and “staff members” also include volunteers. For purposes of this policy, the term “student” includes children and youth who may or may not be students in a K-12 school.

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 employee staff member 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:

- Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board’s policy 5011 on Harassment, Bullying and Intimidation.
- Showing pornography to a student.
- Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship.
- Socializing 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 outside of program/school by phone, email, Instant Messenger, internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters (beyond legitimate program/school business) without including the parent/guardian.
- 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 program/school- 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).

- 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 program/school work or other legitimate business.
- 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 should avoid these situations. If not directly related to specific job duties, these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the staff person must report the occurrence to the appropriate administrator, as soon as possible.

- Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others.
- Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home.
- Visiting a student's home and/or
- 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. Staff should use district 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 Olympic ESD program supervisor (or other 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 their supervisor (or other administrator) or the superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy or if they become aware of any potentially unsafe or illegal student activity.

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 the school are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to 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 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

Human Resources will review the policy and procedures with all new employees and volunteers at new employee orientation. Employees who work directly with children will receive training no less than every three years.