

**MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL
STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES**

POLICY:

The purpose of this policy 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.

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors expects all staff members to maintain the highest professional, moral, and ethical standards in their interaction with students. Staff members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning through consistently and fairly applied discipline and established and maintained professional boundaries. The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in and outside of the educational setting, and consistency with the educational mission of the schools.

Staff members will not intrude on a student's physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve an educational or physical, mental, and/or emotional health purpose. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff member's duties in the district. Additionally, staff members are expected to be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other staff when interacting with students. Staff members will discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor whenever they suspect or are unsure whether conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy.

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, district employees are prohibited from inappropriate online socializing or from engaging in any conduct on social networking websites that violates the law, district policies, or other generally recognized professional standards. Employees whose conduct violates this policy may face discipline and/or termination consistent with the District's policies, acceptable use agreement, and collective bargaining agreements, as applicable.

The Superintendent or designee will develop staff protocols for reporting and investigating allegations and develop procedures and training to accompany this policy.

Cross References:

Policy No. 5470: Child Abuse or Neglect

Policy No. 5500: Sexual Harrassment of Students

Legal References:

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

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PROCEDURES

Maintaining Professional Staff /Student Boundaries

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, school employees 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 school 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 a school 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:

- Any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under the Board's policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students;
- 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 school by phone, text messaging, email, Instant Messenger, Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate 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, movies, shopping, traveling, and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities;
- Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non-emergency situation; and/or
- 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 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
- Social networking with students for non-educational purposes.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal (or another 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 principal (or another administrator) or the Superintendent if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

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's 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 and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff/student boundaries. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

This policy and its procedures shall be included on the District's website. All administrators and staff will receive copies of the District's reporting protocol.