



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries (REVISED)
Code	824
Status	
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Last Revised	November 6, 2023

Authority

This policy applies to District employees, volunteers, student teachers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as **adults**. The term **adults** as used in this policy, does not include District students who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.

All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with District students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct.

The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.[\[1\]](#)

This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the District or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include District students.

Definition

For purposes of this policy, an adult has a **legitimate educational reason** if the adult is performing a task that is specified in his/her position description or contract agreement, performing a task related to a student's education or to discipline of a student, providing a service or benefit related to the student or student's family or maintaining the safety and security of the school community.

Delegation of Responsibility

The superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults as defined by this policy regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the District website, and by other appropriate methods.

The building principal or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.

Independent contractors doing business with the District shall ensure that their employees who have interaction with students or are present on school grounds are informed of the provisions of this policy.[2]

Guidelines

Adults shall establish and maintain appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that is prohibited by law and/or this policy or that creates the appearance of prohibited behavior.

Prohibited Conduct

Romantic or Sexual Relationships -

Adults are prohibited from dating, courting, or entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any student enrolled in the District, regardless of the student's age. Students of any age are not legally capable of consenting to romantic or sexual interactions with adults.[3][4]

Prohibited romantic or sexual interaction involving students includes, but is not limited to:

1. Sexual physical contact.
2. Romantic flirtation, propositions, or sexual remarks.
3. Sexual slurs, leering, epithets, sexual or derogatory comments.
4. Personal comments about a student's body.
5. Sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures.
6. Spreading sexual or romantic rumors.
7. Touching a student's body or clothes in a sexual or intimate way.
8. Accepting massages, or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care **legitimately** administered by an athletic trainer, coach, or health care provider.
9. Restricting a student's freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner.
10. Displaying or transmitting sexual material, objects, pictures, or depictions.

Social Interactions -

In order to maintain appropriate professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with students are consistent with the requirements of this policy.

Examples of prohibited conduct that violates professional boundaries include, but are not limited

to:

1. Disclosing sexual, employment concerns or other private matters unrelated to the educational program to one (1) or more students. Disclosure of such information requires prior approval of the building principal or designee.
2. Exchanging notes, emails, images or other communications, including communications through social media platforms, of a sexual nature or private matter with a student without a legitimate educational reason.
3. Excessive giving of gifts, cards or letters to a student, unrelated to the educational program without prior approval from the building principal or designee and/or gifts, cards or letters that are sexual in nature.
4. Physical contact with students of an intimate nature, or of personal nature without a legitimate educational reason. (Legitimate reasons for limited physical contact include but are not limited to: the need for physical assistance when injured or otherwise in distress, age-appropriate toileting accident assistance and physical assistance that is a part of a student's educational program; appropriate and commonly accepted contact related to coaching, art, music or other student instruction that may require limited physical contact; and culturally accepted physical forms of recognition of a nonromantic or sexual nature including (e.g. handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, etc). Questions regarding whether a particular type of contact is acceptable in the instructional setting shall be directed to the building principal prior to engaging in such contact.
5. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional adult-student relationship without a legitimate educational reason.
6. Taking a student out of class without a legitimate educational reason.
7. Being alone with a student behind closed doors without a legitimate educational reason.
8. Initiating or extending contact with a student beyond the school day or outside of class times without a legitimate educational reason. (Acceptable reasons include, but are not limited to, the attendance at an organized activity, athletic event or permission from the student's parent/guardian to attend a private event).
9. Sending or accompanying a student on errands without a legitimate educational reason.
10. Inviting an individual student to the adult's home without a legitimate educational reason and without prior permission from the student's parent/guardian and the building principal or designee.
11. Going to a student's home without a legitimate educational reason and prior permission from the student's parent/guardian and the building principal.
12. Taking a student on outings without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.
13. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a nonemergency situation without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.
14. Addressing students or permitting students to address adults in a derogatory, racist, sexual, sexist or otherwise deemed offensive manner.

15. Telling a student personal secrets or sharing personal secrets with a student or asking students to keep any conversation, gift or activity a secret.
16. Failing to report incidents in which students confide their private, personal or family issues and/or relationships that are abusive in nature or that could cause harm to self, others and/or property. If a student initiates such discussions, the student should be referred immediately to the appropriate school resource.
17. Furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to a student or being present where any student is consuming these substances.
18. Engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct prohibited by other District policies or by state or federal law and regulations.[5][6]

Electronic Communications -

For purposes of this policy, **electronic communication** shall mean a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, texts, chats, images, emails, instant messages and communications made by means of an Internet website or platform, including social media and other networking platforms.

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students. All other aspects of this policy apply with equal force to electronic communications.

Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational reasons only.

When available, District-provided email or other District-provided communication devices or platforms shall be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of District-provided email or other District-provided communication devices or platforms shall be in accordance with District policies and procedures. All policies related to the use of such devices and networks apply with equal force to electronic communications with students.[7]

All electronic communications from coaches and advisors to team or club members shall be limited to electronic communication systems that can be archived for a minimum of two (2) years (if applicable) and those systems shall be approved by the building principal. In the case of sports teams, all electronic communications systems shall be approved by the Athletic Director.

Adults shall not follow or send or accept requests for current students to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites or electronic communication platforms and shall not create any networking site or other electronic means for communication with students unrelated to the educational program, without the prior written approval of the building principal.

Exceptions

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from the rules regarding communications or methods for maintaining communications restrictions set forth in this policy. The adult shall be prepared to articulate the reason for any deviation from the requirements of this policy and must demonstrate that they have s/he has maintained an appropriate professional relationship with the student.

Under no circumstance will an educational or other reason justify deviation from the "Romantic and Sexual Relationships" section of this policy.

~~Circumstances may arise~~ There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a student's family, e.g. when their children become friends. This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are appropriate and normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.

It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through nondistrict-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include District students. Such community involvement is commendable, and this policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in such roles; however, adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity with regard to all youth with whom they interact in the course of their community involvement.

Reporting Inappropriate or Suspicious Conduct

Any person, including a student, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and a student, shall promptly notify the principal or Title IX Coordinator. Reports may be made using the Discrimination/~~Sexual~~ Harassment/Bullying/Hazing/Dating Violence/Retaliation Report Form or by making a general report orally verbally or in writing. Upon receipt of a report, school staff shall promptly notify the Title IX Coordinator building principal. [5][8]

All District employees, independent contractors and volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, shall immediately report the suspected abuse, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. [9][10]

An educator who knows of any action, inaction or conduct which constitutes sexual abuse or exploitation or sexual misconduct under the Educator Discipline Act shall report such misconduct to the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the required form, and shall report such misconduct to the superintendent, Title IX Coordinator and his/her immediate supervisor, promptly, no later than fifteen (15) days following discovery of such misconduct. [5][8][11][12]

If the superintendent or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act or the school safety and security provisions of School Code ~~Safe Schools Act~~, the superintendent or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. [9][10][11][12][13][14][15][16][17][18]

It is a violation of Board policy to retaliate against any person for reporting any action pursuant to this policy or for participating as a witness in any related investigation or hearing. [5][8]

Investigation

The Title IX Coordinator shall promptly assess and address allegations of inappropriate conduct in accordance with the procedures for reports of discrimination/~~or Title IX sexual~~ harassment. [5][8]

It is understood that some reports made pursuant to this policy will be based on rumors or misunderstandings; the mere fact that the reported adult is cleared of any wrongdoing shall not result in disciplinary action against the person making the report or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the person making the report, or a witness is found to have knowingly provided false information in making the report

or during the investigation or hearings related to the report, or if any individual intentionally obstructs the investigation or hearings, this may be addressed as a violation of this policy and other applicable laws, regulations and Board policies. **Obstruction** includes, but is not limited to, violation of “no contact” orders given to the reported adult, attempting to alter or influence witness testimony, and destruction of or hiding evidence.[5][8][12][19][20][21][22]

Disciplinary Action

A District employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable District disciplinary policies and procedures.[8][12][19]

A volunteer, student teacher, or independent contractor or an employee of an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in District schools for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the superintendent or designee.

Any person who intentionally or knowingly makes a false report or intentionally or knowingly induces a person to make a false claim may be subject to disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.

Training

The District shall provide training with respect to the provisions of this policy to current and new District employees, volunteers and student teachers subject to this policy.

The District, at its sole discretion, may require independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds to receive training on this policy and related procedures.

Legal

- [1. 24 P.S. 510](#)
2. Pol. 818
- [3. 18 Pa. C.S.A. 3124.2](#)
- [4. 24 P.S. 2070.9f](#)
5. Pol. 103
6. Pol. 103.1
7. Pol. 815
8. Pol. 104
- [9. 23 Pa. C.S.A. 6311](#)
10. Pol. 806
- [11. 24 P.S. 2070.9a](#)
12. Pol. 317.1
- [13. 22 PA Code 10.2](#)
- [14. 22 PA Code 10.21](#)
- [15. 22 PA Code 10.22](#)
- [16. 24 P.S. 1302.1-A](#)
- [17. 24 P.S. 1303-A](#)

18. Pol. 805.1

19. Pol. 317

20. Pol. 113.1

21. Pol. 218

22. Pol. 233

[24 P.S. 2070.1a et seq](#)

[22 PA Code 235.1 et seq](#)

[23 Pa. C.S.A. 6301 et seq](#)