

AR 5141.42 PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES OF STAFF WITH STUDENTS

Boundary Invasions

School employees and volunteers are professionally and ethically obligated to maintain professional boundaries with students when working in an educator's professional role. Staff is defined as school employees and volunteers. In any staff-student relationship, staff is expected to maintain professional boundaries with students and avoid any boundary invasion, which does not have a legitimate health, safety, or educational reason.

Schools must pay attention to boundary invasions and unprofessionalism because inappropriate boundary invasions by staff can morph into sexual grooming of students. If there is no legitimate health, safety, or educational reason for such boundary invasions, such boundary invasions are unwise and prohibited. Curtailing inappropriate boundary invasions reduces the opportunity for sexual grooming.

Inappropriate Boundary Invasion Examples

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

Taking an undue interest in a Particular Student:

1. Having a "special friend or a "special relationship" with a particular student.
2. Favoring certain students by giving them special privileges.
3. Favoring certain students, inviting them to come to the classroom at non-class times.
4. Getting a particular student out of class to visit the teacher during the teacher's prep period.
5. Engaging in peer-like behavior with students including rough-housing.

Using poor judgment in relation to a particular student:

6. Allowing a particular student to get away with inappropriate behavior.
7. Being alone with the student behind closed doors at school.
8. Giving gifts or money to the student.
9. Being overly "touchy" with certain students.
10. Touching students for no educational or health reason.
11. Giving students rides in the educator's personal vehicle, especially alone.
12. Frequent electronic communication or phone contacts with a particular student.

Becoming involved in the student's private life:

13. Talking to the student about the educator's personal problems.
14. Talking to the student about the student's personal problems to the extent that the adult becomes a confidant of the student when it is not the adult's job role to do so.
15. Initiating or extending contact with students beyond the school day in a private or non-group setting.

16. Taking a particular student on personal outings, away from protective adults.
17. Using email, text-messaging, instant messaging, or social networking to discuss personal topics or interests with students.

Not respecting normal boundaries:

18. Invading the student's physical privacy_ (*i.e.*, walking in on the student in the bathroom).
19. Inviting students to the educator's home.
20. Visiting the student's home.
21. Asking the student to keep certain things secret from his/her parents.

Sexually related conduct:

22. Engaging in sex talk with students (sexual innuendo, sexual banter, or sexual jokes).
23. Talking with a student about sexual topics that are not related to a specific curriculum.
24. Showing pornography to the student.
25. Hugging, kissing, or other affectionate physical contact with a student.

Reporting Violations and Administrative Follow Up

Reporting: Staff members must promptly report to the principal or administrative supervisor of any employee or volunteer suspected of engaging in inappropriate boundary invasions they become aware. Do not inform the employee or volunteer suspected of engaging in appropriate boundary invasions that a report has been made.

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal (or other administrator) if they believe a staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy or procedure.

Administrative Follow Up: The administrator to whom a boundary invasion concern is initially reported must document the concern and promptly provide a copy of that documentation to the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee. The Superintendent or Superintendent's designee shall see to it that (a) the alleged conduct is investigated, (b) any students involved are protected, (c) parents are informed, (d) where appropriate Office of Children's Services (OCS) and/or law enforcement are contacted, and (e) where appropriate, remedial and/or disciplinary action is taken.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

A.S. 47.17.020 and Board Policy require that persons who are mandatory reporters who, in the performance of their occupational duties have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm as a result of **child abuse** or **neglect**, shall immediately report the harm to OCS or to a peace officer if OCS cannot be reached and immediate action is necessary for the well-being of the child. If there is reasonable cause to suspect sexual abuse, a report must be promptly made to OCS.

Any situation where a school employee or volunteer is believed to have engaged in sexual abuse of a student should also be reported to law enforcement.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Training

Staff (including volunteers) will receive training on professional boundaries, inappropriate boundary invasions, and the relationship of inappropriate boundary invasions to sexual grooming. Such training shall take place at least every three years. All new employees and volunteers will receive such training within three months of employment or service. Such training will cover the information included in the training handout, E 5141.42-1, "School Guidelines for Preventing Sexual Abuse Against Students."

Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols

This policy and procedure will be included on the district website and in all employee, student, and volunteer handbooks.