

# GRANITE FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PERSONNEL

### POLICY 4073: MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

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 Granite Falls School 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 Granite Falls School Board of Directors supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes only. However, district employees are prohibited from inappropriate online socializing or from engaging in any conduct on social networking Web sites 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.

Staff protocols for reporting and investigating allegations, procedures and training accompany this policy.

Legal References: RCW 28A.400

RCW 28A.405.470

RCW 28A.405.475

RCW 28A.410.090

RCW 28A.410.095

RCW 28A.410.100

WAC 181-87

WAC 181-88

Crimes against children

Crimes against children - Mandatory termination of certificated employees - Appeal - Recovery of salary or compensation by district.

Termination of certificated employee based on guilty plea or conviction of certain felonies - Notice to superintendent of public instruction - Record of notices.

Revocation or suspension of certificate or permit to teach - Criminal basis - Complaints - Investigation - Process.

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.

Revocation of authority to teach - Hearings.

Professional Certification - Acts of Unprofessional Conduct  
Sexual Misconduct, Verbal and Physical Abuse -  
Mandatory Disclosure - Prohibited Agreements

**ADOPTED: MARCH 17, 2010**  
**AMENDED: AUGUST 17, 2011**

### **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, texting, email, Instant Messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking Web sites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) without including the parent/guardian.
- Exchanging inappropriate 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-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-

- Isolating an individual student out of the view of others;
- Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home (excluding friends of the staff member's child(ren));
- 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 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 the principal (or other administrator), the superintendent, or compliance officer/designee if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

The administrator to whom a boundary invasion concern is reported must document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the superintendent or the compliance officer/designee. The superintendent or compliance officer/designee will maintain a separate non-personnel file of all boundary invasion reports made.

Whenever boundary invasion concerns occur, the superintendent or compliance officer/designee will review the full history of concerns relating to the person complained about and will provide a summary to the superintendent.

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 in the school are required to make a report to Child Protective Services or law enforcement pursuant to board policy and procedure 3421, *Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention*, and RCW 26.44. 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 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 the board's policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

### **Training**

All new employees and volunteers will receive training on appropriate staff /student boundaries within three months of employment. Continuing employees will receive training every three years.

### **Dissemination of Policy and Reporting Protocols**

This policy and procedure shall be included on the district Web site and in all employee, student and volunteer handbooks. Annually, all administrators and staff will receive copies of the district's reporting protocol.