

Purpose

This policy provides all staff, students, volunteers, and community members with information about their role in protecting children from inappropriate conduct by adults. This policy applies to all district staff and volunteers. For purposes of this policy and its procedure, the terms “district staff,” “staff member(s),” and “staff” also include volunteers.

General Standards

The board of directors expects all district staff to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in interactions with students. All staff members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning by consistently and fairly applied discipline and established and maintained professional boundaries.

Professional staff/student boundaries are consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that district employees have for students.

The interactions and relationships between employees and students should be based upon mutual respect, trust, and commitment to the professional boundaries between staff and students in and outside of the educational setting, and consistent with the educational mission of the district.

Employees will not intrude on a student’s physical or emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve a demonstrated educational or physical, mental and/or emotional health purpose. An educational purpose is one that relates to the employee’s duties in the district.

Additionally, when interacting with students, employees are expected to be aware of and sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other employees and volunteers. Employees will notify and discuss issues with their building administrator or supervisor or Human Resources whenever they suspect or are unsure whether conduct is inappropriate or constitutes a violation of this policy.

A staff member who has knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that a student has been a victim of physical abuse or sexual misconduct by another staff member is required by law to report such abuse or misconduct to the appropriate school administrator. The school administrator shall cause a report to be made to the proper law enforcement agency if he or she has reasonable cause to believe that the misconduct or abuse has occurred. During the process of making a reasonable cause determination, the school administrator shall contact all parties involved in the complaint.

The board recognizes that staff may have familial and pre-existing social relationships with parents or guardians and students. Staff members should use appropriate professional judgment when they have a dual relationship to students to avoid violating this policy, the appearance of impropriety, and the appearance of favoritism. Staff members shall proactively discuss these circumstances with their building administrator or supervisor.

Use of Technology

The board supports the use of technology to communicate for educational purposes. However, when the communication is unrelated to schoolwork or other legitimate school business, district staff are prohibited from communicating with students by phone, e-mail, text, instant messenger, or other forms of electronic or written communication. District staff members are prohibited from engaging in any conduct on social networking websites that violates the law, district policies or procedures, or other generally recognized professional standards. This prohibition includes prohibiting staff from “friending” and/or “following” students on social media. Employees whose conduct violates this policy may face discipline and/or termination.

The superintendent/designee will develop protocols for reporting and investigating allegations and develop procedures and training to accompany this policy.

Legal References:

	Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
RCW 9A.44	Sex offenses
RCW 28A.400.317	Physical abuse or sexual misconduct by school employees - Duty to Report - Training
RCW 28A.400.320	Crimes against children - Mandatory termination of classified employees – Appeal - Recovery of salary or compensation by district
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

Legal References:

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
RCW 28A.640	Sexual Equality
RCW 28A.642	Discrimination Prohibition
RCW 49.60	Washington State Law Against Discrimination
WAC 181-87	Professional certification - Acts of unprofessional conduct

WAC 181-88

Definitions of sexual misconduct, verbal and physical abuse - Mandatory disclosure – Prohibited agreements

Adopted:

October 18, 2016

North Thurston Public Schools
Board of Directors

Amended:

January 24, 2023

North Thurston Public Schools
Board of Directors