



Book	Policy Manual
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Title	Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries
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Purpose and Authority

These procedures and guidelines discourage improper employee interaction with students at all district schools and improper interaction shall be handled following applicable laws and policies. The Moon Area School District shall not be civilly liable for any improper interaction by an employee with a student that is prohibited as provided in this policy.

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 and Delegation of Responsibility

For purposes of this policy, **legitimate educational reasons** include matters or communications related to teaching, counseling, athletics, extracurricular activities, treatment of a student's physical injury or other medical needs, school administration or other purposes within the scope of the adult's job duties.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults 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]

Electronic Communication - includes any direct communication facilitated by voice or text-based telecommunication devices, or both, computers, as well as those devices that facilitate indirect communication using an intermediate method, including, but not limited to Internet-based social networks. It shall also include the transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature, in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electric, or photooptical system and pertains to both personal and School Board-issued devices.

Educational Services - constitutes provision of direct and indirect classroom instruction, as well as extracurricular activities provided by the Moon Area School District.

Electronic mail - the transmission of text-based information or communication by use of the Internet, computers, a facsimile machine, a pager, a cellular telephone, a video recorder, or any other electronic device or means sent to a person identified by a unique address or address number and received by that person.

Text messaging - the transmission of text between cellular telephone numbers or from an email address to a cellular telephone number and is prohibited between teachers and students.

Computers/Electronic Devices - pertains to and includes: (i) desktops; (ii) workstations; (iii) electronic readers or devices in the nature of an iPad or kindle; (iv) laptops; (v) servers; (vi) routers; (vii) digital switches; (viii) smart phones; (ix) PDA's; (x) Smart Watches and (xi) any other digital device in the nature of any of the foregoing.

Social networks - locations on the Internet where users may interact with other users -- examples are Facebook, SnapChat, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and other social network sites available on the Internet.

Improper or inappropriate communications - any communication between employee and student, regardless of who initiates the communication, that may be viewed as derogatory, sexual or lewd in content, threatening or harassing, discriminatory, simple fraternization, or suggestive in nature.

Cloud application - shall mean any service or resource available on the Internet including such services or resources as virtual servers or any electronic storage that is outside of the school district's firewall, including such things as a Google or Google Chrome account; My Drive; Skydrive; Adobe Creative Cloud; Dropbox; Evernote; and other similar services.

Student record - shall mean any item of information gathered within or outside the district that is directly related to an identifiable student.

Group Communication - shall mean communication between an individual and a group of people, between a group of people and another group of people, or within the group itself. A group is normally considered as a collection of people that number three (3) or more.

All electronic communications from coaches and advisors to team or club members shall be sent in a single communication to all participating team or club members, except for communications concerning an individual student's medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the communications will be copied to the building principal, parent and/or athletic director.

Adults shall not follow or accept requests for current students to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites and shall not create any networking site for communication with students other than those provided by the district for this purpose, without the prior written approval of the building principal.

Guidelines

The Moon Area School District prohibits any type of close personal relationship between a school employee and a student that may be reasonably perceived as unprofessional, such as excessive personal attention outside of school. School employees shall not communicate with students, entertain students, socialize with students, or spend an excess amount of time with students in such a manner as to reasonably create the impression to other students, their parents, or the public that an improper relationship exists.

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out 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 s/he has maintained an appropriate relationship with the student.

All electronic communication conducted by an employee with a student must be relative to the educational services provided to the student and shall be delivered by means provided by or otherwise made available by the school district for this purpose. Approved school district electronic communication methods are school district email, school websites, LMS, SIS, Office 365 and other electronic communication that is approved by the Moon Area School District.

School district employees are prohibited from using any school district electronic communication with a student for a purpose not related to educational services, except for communication with an immediate family member, with the exception of emergent situations.

School district employees shall not use personal profiles on social network sites with or to communicate with any student or parent of the school district. School district employees may create a separate professional social media page for classroom instruction and must comply with Policy No. 815 and Social Media Guidelines.[5]

School district employees are prohibited from communicating with any student while on a disciplinary suspension or administrative leave without express prior written approval from the Superintendent or the Director of Human Resources.

School district employees are prohibited from downloading or saving any student record on any computer, network or cloud application owned, leased or in an account possessed by the employee that is not a computer or network drive that is owned or leased by the school district.

All communication must be transparent by maintaining openness, visibility, and accountability; accessible and considered a matter of record; and professional by using correct grammar and tone and choosing an appropriate subject matter and word choice.

All text messaging is prohibited by an employee with a student, unless a family member. All communication must be relative to the educational services provided to the student. Text messaging should never be used as a communication tool between teachers and students.

Prohibited Conduct

Romantic or Sexual Relationships -

Adults shall be 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. [\[17\]](#). [\[18\]](#)

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 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 objects, pictures, or depictions.

Social Interactions -

In order to maintain professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with students are appropriate.

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

1. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students.
2. Exchanging notes, emails or other communications of a personal nature with a student.
3. Giving personal gifts, cards or letters to a student without written approval from the building principal.
4. Touching students without a legitimate educational reason. (Reasons could include the need for assistance when injured, a kindergartner having a toileting accident and requiring assistance, appropriate coaching instruction, or appropriate music instruction).
5. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional adult-student relationship.

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.
9. Sending or accompanying a student on personal errands.
10. Inviting a student to the adult's home.
11. Going to a student's home without a legitimate educational reason.
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 with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
15. Telling a student personal secrets or sharing personal secrets with a student.
16. For adults who are not guidance/counseling staff, psychologists, social workers or other adults with designated responsibilities to counsel students, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a student initiates such discussions, the student should be referred 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.[3][4]

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 immediately notify the Superintendent, principal or other administrator.[3]

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.[6][7]

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 and his/her immediate supervisor, within fifteen (15) days of discovery of such misconduct.[8][9]

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 Safe Schools Act, the Superintendent or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15]

It is a violation of this 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.

Investigation

Allegations of inappropriate conduct shall be promptly investigated in accordance with the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment.[3][19]

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 reporter or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the reporter, or a witness is found to have intentionally 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 district 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.

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.[16]

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.

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.

"Opt-Out" Procedure

A parent or legal guardian must submit written documentation to the principal reflecting the desire for his or her child to be excluded from electronic communication through text messaging, phone communication, and/or social network communication from any school employee.