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| Book         | Board of Education Policies                           |
| Section      | 4000 Personnel  |
| Title        | All Personnel - Professional Adult/Student Boundaries |
| Number       | 4019.1  |
| Status       | Active  |
| Adopted      | March 21, 2017  |
| Last Revised | March 16, 2017  |

# San Francisco Unified School District and County Office of Education

## Board Policy 4019.1

### All Personnel - Professional Adult/Student Boundaries

This Board Policy applies to the San Francisco Unified School District and the County Office of Education.

#### Purpose

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 and failure to maintain appropriate boundaries by adults. All adults are expected to maintain professional, moral, and ethical relationships with students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment.

The provisions of this policy apply to all district staff, volunteers and community members relative to their conduct with students (“adults”) in District schools and programs.

This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also boundary-blurring and grooming behaviors that undermine the professional adult/student relationship and can lead to misconduct or the appearance of impropriety.

#### General Standards

The Governing Board expects adults to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their interaction with students. Adults are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, through consistently and appropriately applied discipline and establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.

The interactions and relationships between adults and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, and an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in and outside of the educational setting. Relationships between adults and students should also be consistent with the educational mission of the schools.

Adults will not intrude on a student’s physical and emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to

serve a legitimate educational purpose. For purposes of this policy, the term “legitimate educational purpose” includes 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 employment duties.

### Appearances of Impropriety

Adults are expected to be aware of the appearance of impropriety in their own conduct and the conduct of other adults when interacting with students.

Even though the intent of the adult may be professional and there is a legitimate educational purpose for the conduct, the following activities can create the appearance of impropriety.

1. Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others;
2. Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the adult's home;
3. Remaining on campus with student(s) after the last administrator leaves the school site; and/or
4. Visiting a student's home unless home visits are a required and expected duty of the adult.

Whenever possible, adults should avoid these situations. If unavoidable these activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate administrator. If not pre-approved, the adult must report the occurrence to the appropriate administrator as soon as possible.

### Electronic Communications

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students.

Electronic and other communications with students shall be for legitimate educational purposes only. Adults shall not maintain personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, letter, electronic communication, or other means (beyond legitimate educational purposes) without including the parent/guardian and/or school principal.

When available, District email and District communication devices shall be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of District email or other District communication devices shall be in accordance with District policies and procedures.

Adults shall not communicate with students, for any reason, through use of a medium that is designed to eliminate all traces or records of the communication (e.g. “Snapchat”).

All electronic communications from coaches and advisors to team or club members shall concern only legitimate educational interests and 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 school principal.

Adults shall not follow or accept requests from current students or non-adult former students to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites and shall not create or participate in any networking site for communication with students other than those provided by the District for this purpose, without the prior written approval of the school principal.

## Boundary Violations

A boundary violation is an act or omission by an adult that does not have a legitimate educational purpose and has the potential to abuse the adult/student relationship. Examples of adult conduct that violate professional adult/student boundaries include but are not limited to the following:

1. Singling out a particular student or students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student relationship.
2. For non-guidance/counseling staff, encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships.  
If a student initiates such discussions, adults are expected to refer the student to appropriate guidance/counseling staff. In either case, adult involvement should be limited to a direct connection to the student's school performance.
3. Addressing students or permitting students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
4. Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, e-mail, instant messenger or Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, such as Facebook, or letters beyond homework or other legitimate school business without including the parent/guardian.  
This prohibition specifically includes "friending" or "following" students on social media unless the social media page is dedicated to legitimate school business. This also specifically includes the posting of student images or other personally identifiable information of students on an adult's personal website.
5. Exchanging personal gifts, cards or letters with an individual student for which it is directly or implicitly suggested that a student is to say or do something in return.
6. Touching students or initiating inappropriate physical contact without a legitimate educational purpose, i.e., initiating hugs.

Legitimate purposes could include the following: (a) assisting an injured student; (b) assisting a student with special needs who requires assistance with toileting or other physical assistance; (c) appropriate coaching instruction; (d) appropriate music instruction; or (e) to protect the safety of students or staff.

7. 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 and visiting the student's home) outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities.
8. Transporting student(s) in a personal vehicle in a non-emergency situation and without proper written authorization forms in advance.
9. Being alone with a student without a legitimate educational purpose.

## Boundary Violations Constituting Serious Misconduct

A boundary violation that constitutes serious misconduct is an act, omission, or pattern of such behavior by an adult that does not have a legitimate educational purpose; and results in abuse of the staff/student professional relationship.

#### A. 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, regardless of the student's age.

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, banter, innuendo, 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 or in a manner that is not age appropriate;
8. Restricting a student's freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner;
9. Displaying or transmitting sexual objects, pornography, pictures, or depictions to a student; or
10. Any type of conduct that would be considered harassment under Board Policy.

#### B. Social and Other Interactions

Adults are prohibited from engaging in social and other interactions with students which abuse the student/staff professional relationship.

Prohibited social and other interaction involving students includes, but is not limited to:

1. Sending or accompanying students on personal errands unrelated to any legitimate educational purpose;
2. Furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to a student, or being present where any student is consuming these substances;
3. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more students;
4. Sharing personal secrets with a student;
5. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy (e.g. walking in on the student in the bathroom);
6. Taking a student out of class without a legitimate educational purpose;
7. Giving a student a ride alone in a vehicle in a non emergency situation without prior notification to and/or approval from the school principal as described above;
8. Engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct prohibited by other district policies or by state or federal law and regulations; or

## 9. Unnecessarily invading a student's privacy

### Exceptions

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational purpose 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.

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

There may be circumstances where there is an appropriate pre-existing personal relationship between an adult and a student's family that exists independently of the adult's position with the District (e.g., when their children are friends). This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.

It is understood that adults may be involved in other roles in the community through civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include District students. This policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in those 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.

### Duty to Report

An adult who observes or has knowledge of another adult's violation of this policy shall immediately report the information to the site supervisor. If the supervisor is the subject of the report, the adult will report instead directly to the Executive Director of Talent Management in Human Resources. The supervisor who receives a report must document, in writing, the concern and provide a copy of the documentation to the District's Executive Director of Talent Management.

When an adult observes conduct by another adult that creates a reasonable suspicion of child abuse (including sexual abuse), the adult shall report the conduct to San Francisco's Family and Children's Services in accordance with state law and District policy and Administrative Regulation 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting.

(cf. 1312.1 - Complaints Concerning District Employees)

(cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting)

### Investigation

Whenever the District receives a report concerning a possible boundary violation, the site supervisor and the assigned Talent Management Director will conduct a prompt investigation utilizing the procedures for investigations of allegations of serious misconduct. The investigation shall include a review the full history of concerns relating to the subject of the concern/complaint.

Immediate intervention shall be considered and implemented when necessary to protect student safety and/or the integrity of the investigation.

### Disciplinary Action

Any employee who is found to have engaged in conduct in violation of law, this or other Board policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. In the case of a certificated employee, the employee may be subject to a report to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The Superintendent or designee shall notify local law enforcement as appropriate.

(cf. 4117.7/4317.7 - Employment Status Reports)

(cf. 4118 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action)

(cf. 4218 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action)

An employee who has knowledge of but fails to report inappropriate employee conduct may also be subject to discipline.

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

### Confidentiality and Retaliation

The District prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint under this policy. Any employee who retaliates against any such complainant, reporter, or other participant in the District's complaint process shall be subject to discipline.

Reporting adults are specifically advised of the following:

1. Reporting adults are neither permitted nor responsible for investigating whether the conduct is inappropriate; and
2. Reporting adults are required to maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality protects both the student(s) and the adult who is the subject of the report. Failure to maintain confidentiality may impede the investigation and foster untrue and potentially harmful rumors. Nothing in this policy shall prevent any represented employee from consulting with his/her exclusive representative.

*Please note that compare references, or "cf", refer to CSBA model policies and do not necessarily indicate that the San Francisco Unified School District has adopted the referenced policy.*

Cross References      Rules Committee: March 6, 2017

First Reading: February 28, 2017

Last Modified by Aisha Owens on March 19, 2018