

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries are parameters that describe the limits of a relationship where one person entrusts their welfare and safety to a professional and often in circumstances where a power imbalance might exist. The purpose of this procedure is to provide staff members, students, volunteers and community members with information that defines effective and appropriate interactions between Académie Lafayette staff members and the community the school serves.

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. The act, omission, or pattern of behavior generally does not have an educational purpose; and often results in abuse of the professional relationship between staff and students.

When interacting with students, school staff must use good judgment and think very carefully about the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviors with students. The following include, but are not limited to, examples of unacceptable conduct and/or inappropriate boundary invasions by staff members:

- 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, 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 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

Whenever possible, staff should avoid situations that give the appearance of impropriety or create an actual impropriety. The following activities are examples of, but not limited to, boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety:

- Being alone with an individual student out of the view of others;
- Inviting or allowing individual students to visit the staff member's home;
- Visiting a student's home; and
- Social networking with students for non-educational purposes.

If the above activities are unavoidable, then written pre-approval should be obtained from your building administrator or his/her designee. If written pre-approval cannot be obtained, the staff person must report the occurrence, to his/her building administrator or his/her designee, as soon as possible.

Reporting Violations

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal or the head of school if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this procedure. Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal or the head of school if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

Disciplinary Action

Staff violations of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. The conduct may also be reported to a state agency for further investigation. Any conduct involving suspected abuse, sexual or otherwise, will be reported to the Children's Division and/or law enforcement in accordance with the board's policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Suspected violations by School Volunteers will result in immediate suspension of his/her volunteer assignment until an investigation has been completed. If a violation has been committed, disciplinary action may be taken up to and including the termination of his/her volunteer assignment. Any conduct involving suspected abuse, sexual or otherwise, will be reported to the Children's Division and/or law enforcement in accordance with the board's policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Training

New employees will receive training on appropriate staff /student boundaries within two (2) months of employment. Continuing employees will receive training every two (2) years. Volunteers will receive training prior to his/her first volunteer assignment for the school year and annually thereafter.

Dissemination of Procedure and Reporting Protocols

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