

Crossing the Line

Guidelines for Appropriate Adult/Student Interactions

BP 4119.21, Codes of Ethics

The School Board expects district employees to maintain the highest ethical standards, to follow district policies and regulations, and to abide by the code of ethics of the education profession adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, the Municipality of Anchorage code of ethics, and state and federal laws. Employee conduct should enhance the integrity of the district and the goals of the educational program.

The School Board encourages district employees to accept as guiding principles the codes of ethics published by professional associations to which they may belong.

Members of the teaching profession are obligated by law to abide by the code of ethics and professional standards adopted by the **Professional Teaching Practices Commission (20 AAC 10.010)**. Employees who violate provisions of the code of ethics and professional standards may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The district may report any violation of the code of ethics to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

BP 5141.1, Child Abuse and Neglect

Abuse and neglect affects the wellbeing of students. Teachers, school administrators, paid athletic coaches and volunteers who interact with children in a school for more than four hours a week shall be trained on the recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect in accordance with state law. An athletic coach who is an unpaid volunteer is not required to report child abuse or neglect unless the coach volunteers for more than 4 hours a week for 4 consecutive weeks, or for 20 hours a week in a one-month period, has received training, and signed a form acknowledging the obligation to report. District employees shall cooperate with the child protective agencies responsible for reporting, investigating and prosecuting cases of child abuse.

The district shall provide notice of child abuse and neglect mandatory reporter training to all public and private schools in the district. All mandatory reporters, including qualifying volunteers, are invited to participate in the training at no cost.

In addition to the required training provided above, the Superintendent or designee may invite classified personnel who have regular contact with students to participate in child abuse and neglect training. Classified personnel should immediately report instances of suspected child abuse or neglect to the site administrator.

Alaska Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Law

Sec.47.17.020. Persons required to report.

(a) The following persons who, in the performance of their occupational duties, or with respect to (8) of this subsection, in the performance of their appointed duties, have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm as a result of child abuse or neglect shall immediately report the harm to the nearest office of the department:

- (1) practitioners of the healing arts;
- (2) school teachers and school administrative staff members, including athletic coaches, of public and private schools;
- (3) peace officers and officers of the Department of Corrections;
- (4) administrative officers of institutions;
- (5) child care providers;
- (6) paid employees of domestic violence and sexual assault programs, and crisis intervention and prevention programs as defined in AS 18.66.990;
- (7) paid employees of an organization that provides counseling or treatment to individuals seeking to control their use of drugs or alcohol;
- (8) members of a child fatality review team established under AS 12.65.015(e) or 12.65.120 or the multidisciplinary child protection team created under AS 47.14.300.

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Adult/Student Interactions

The Anchorage School District is committed to ensuring safe and healthy learning and work environments for students and employees. Regardless of role or position, all District employees are subject to allegations of professional misconduct. The following information may help prevent such allegations and will help ensure that learning and work environments are safe, friendly, and caring for students and employees.

Appropriate Interactions:

1. Exercise good personal and professional judgment by respecting physical boundaries and personal space.
2. Be accepting of, and sensitive to, individual and cultural differences.
3. Work with students in highly visible environments, except as may be required to safeguard student privacy or confidentiality. When possible have another adult present when attending to the personal needs of students.
4. Develop clear routines, processes and procedures that have clear boundaries for respectful and professional interactions.
5. Immediately report to your supervisor any situation that could potentially lead to allegations of misconduct.
6. Secure district and parental approval regarding all school-sponsored activities including school activities that occur out of district or off school property.
7. Teach students the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact.
8. Eliminate jokes and sarcasm.
9. Help students understand and maintain appropriate verbal and physical boundaries and let students know when they are overstepping these boundaries.
10. Model appropriate professional conduct as specified in the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, Professional Teaching Practices Commission.
11. Compliment or commend students without initiating hugs or touching.
12. Hugs are a common occurrence especially at the elementary level. District employees will observe the following guidelines relative to hugs/hugging:
 - a. Staff should not encourage or initiate hugs/hugging. Hugging, if any, should only be initiated by the student.
 - b. Hugs/hugging must occur in the presence of others, preferably other adults;
 - c. Side hugs only;
 - d. Hugs/hugging will not include, lifting, sitting students on your lap, kissing, or rubbing the student's head or shoulders.

13. Limit the use of email and cell phones to educational use only.

14. Be cautious when using nicknames for students. Ask students what name they prefer.

Inappropriate Interactions

- A. Communicating with students via your personal cell phone, personal email account, or through social media, especially when the content of the communication is personal rather than connected to a school activity.
- B. Maintaining adult-student relationships outside of school activities, including taking students to lunch, gift-giving, or exchanging personal notes.
- C. Invading personal space; close physical proximity.
- D. Physical contact unless necessary for the safety of the student or the safety of others. This includes shoulder massages, lingering touches or squeezes, or engaging in any incidental forms of touching.
- E. Being too personally involved with students; disclosing personal and confidential information so that the student becomes your confidant.
- F. Meeting with or seeing a student in a private non-school setting including your home, especially when the student is alone.
- G. Letting a student drive your car; giving a student a ride in your car, especially when the student is alone or when the ride is not connected to a school activity.
- H. Any action that could lead to the perception that a student is the teacher's favorite, including being overly attentive to any student.
- I. Spending time alone with a student beyond educational expectations other than during a school-related emergency.
- J. Sharing personal information about a student with a third party.
- K. Assigning duties to student aides intended to meet personal needs such as personal errands.
- L. Any interaction that would have parents question the appropriateness of the interaction.