



## Maintaining Appropriate Staff/Student Boundaries

Positive relationships between employees and students are crucial to student success. However, Salem-Keizer Public Schools employees must understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate interactions with students. Employees must engage in appropriate interaction with students at all times and avoid any interactions with students that could appear inappropriate.

Appropriate interactions create a safe environment for students to learn, grow, seek help in problem solving and conflicts, and develop social skills.

Inappropriate interactions cross the boundaries separating student from adult needs and create relationships that become peer-to-peer rather than adult-to-child. Offenders may be judged by students and others to be the “best” staff members, are often popular with students and parents, and are frequently recognized for contributions.

Staff who have frequent one-to-one contact with students or who work in co-curricular activities can be more at risk for inappropriate interactions or student allegations of inappropriate interactions.

**Appropriate interactions create a SAFE ENVIRONMENT for STUDENTS to LEARN, grow, seek help in PROBLEM SOLVING and conflicts, and DEVELOP social skills.**

## Child Abuse and Sexual Conduct and Salem-Keizer Public Schools Employees Required information for employees (ORS 339.372):

- ❖ Child abuse and/or sexual conduct by district employees, contractors, agents, or volunteers will not be tolerated (Administrative Policy PAP-A001).
- ❖ Child abuse includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, emotional abuse, neglect, and threat of harm.
- ❖ Sexual conduct includes any verbal or physical conduct or verbal, written, or electronic communications by a school district employee, a contractor, an agent, or a volunteer that involve a student and that are: sexual advances or requests for sexual favors directed toward the student or; of a sexual nature that are directed toward the student or that have the effect of unreasonably interfering with the student’s educational performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile educational environment.
- ❖ Sexual conduct does not include touching or other physical contact that is necessitated by the nature of the school district employee’s job duties or by the services required to be provided by the contractor, agent or volunteer and for which there is no sexual intent; or verbal, written or electronic communications that are provided as part of the education program that meets state educational standards or District policy. The definition of sexual conduct does not apply to conduct or communications by current K-12 students who work, contract or volunteer for the Salem-Keizer School District and are in a consensual relationship with another K-12 student as long as the conduct does not create an intimidating or hostile education environment, and is not prohibited by law, District policies, or any applicable employment agreements.
- ❖ “Student” is defined as any person who is: in any grade from prekindergarten through grade 12; or twenty-one years of age or younger and receiving educational or related services from an education provider that is not a post-secondary institution of education; or who was previously known as a student by the person engaging in sexual conduct and who left school or graduated from high school within 90 days prior to the sexual conduct.
- ❖ If an employee is found to have abused a child or engaged in sexual conduct towards a K-12 student, disciplinary records will be released in accordance with ORS 339.378.

## Report Suspected Child Abuse

All Salem-Keizer Public Schools employees are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse immediately to law enforcement or the Department of Human Services/Child Welfare (DHS) (ORS 419B.010); Administrative Policy (PAP-A001).

Concerns involving suspected child abuse and/or sexual conduct by district employees, contractors, agents or volunteers must be reported immediately to the school administrator, or to the Executive Director of Human Resources and the Prevention and Protection Coordinator at 503-399-3061. However, reporting to a supervisor alone does not fulfill your legal obligation; suspected child abuse must also be reported to law enforcement or DHS.

Reporting obligations are in effect at all times, regardless of whether the information was obtained in an official capacity with the district.

## How to Report

To make a mandatory report, contact one of the following agencies:

- ❖ DHS/Child Welfare: 1-855-503-SAFE (7233)
- ❖ Law Enforcement:
 

Keizer Police Department	503-390-2000
Marion County Sheriff’s Office	503-588-5032
Polk County Sheriff’s Office	503-623-9251
Salem Police Department	503-588-6123

**If a child is at risk of imminent harm, call 9-1-1**

This brochure was created through a cooperative partnership:

Salem-Keizer Public Schools  
Salem Keizer Education Association  
Association of Salem Keizer Education Support Professionals  
Salem Association of School Administrators

*Work instructions are continually revised and improved. Users of this work instruction should check the QAM website for the most recent version.*

For additional information contact:  
Debbie Joa, Prevention & Protection Coordinator  
Human Resources, 503-399-3061

## Salem-Keizer Public Schools



## MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES

*Guidelines to Avoid the Appearance of Impropriety*



# Examples of Appropriate/Inappropriate Interactions

## Communication

### Appropriate Interaction

- ❖ Maintaining personal space and reasonable eye contact
- ❖ Dialoguing about the academic environment and school activities
- ❖ Having a conversation that supports a student's learning and growth where the student's perspective is the focus of conversation
- ❖ Being conscious of the physical environment (e.g., keeping the door and/or blinds open while meeting with a student)

### Inappropriate Interaction

- ❖ Maintaining intense eye contact
- ❖ Making comments that are physical in nature (e.g., "you have great legs," "you should wear that sweater more often") or may have sexual overtones
- ❖ Discussing or condoning inappropriate topics and/or making comments with sexual overtones or flirting
- ❖ Communicating to the student with implied, inside messages that are unknown by the general population
- ❖ Sharing personal and confidential information in which the adult becomes the focus of conversation
- ❖ Having any dialogue that makes the student feel uncomfortable or makes the student a confidant of the adult
- ❖ Inappropriately addressing students, or permitting students to address staff member with terms of endearment, pet names, first name or in an inappropriate and overly familiar manner



## Relationships

### Appropriate Interaction

- ❖ Conducting student conferences in a manner consistent with educational purpose
- ❖ Having staff/student relationships centered on academics, school events, and activities
- ❖ Notifying administration if a student is suspected of having romantic feelings toward staff member
- ❖ Maintaining fair and equitable treatment of all students
- ❖ Referring serious student problems and/or safety concerns to the appropriately trained professional

### Inappropriate Interaction

- ❖ Spending time alone with student in conferences beyond educational expectations
- ❖ Meeting with students off-campus without a legitimate educational purpose and without prior supervisor approval
- ❖ Transporting a student alone and/or in a private vehicle (regardless of whether the parent approved or not). For exceptions, see Administrative Procedure HUM-P010.
- ❖ Receiving or writing personal communication from/to student and or giving gifts
- ❖ A pattern of covering for or providing excuses for particular students, and/or writing passes repeatedly for favored students to cover tardies or absences
- ❖ A pattern of giving special privileges or showing favoritism to a particular student
- ❖ Extracurricular and co-curricular activity leaders encouraging or condoning an atmosphere of loose and inappropriate boundaries around gender and harassment issues
- ❖ Acting as helpers for serious student problems where appropriate training in effective advising or counseling is warranted
- ❖ Failing to notify administration if a student is suspected of having romantic feelings toward staff member
- ❖ Attendance at events or locations where students are consuming alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco, and failing to promptly inform the school administrator and/or law enforcement
- ❖ Maintaining or initiating personal contact with a student after the student has moved to another class or program without a legitimate educational purpose
- ❖ Dating a student or talking with a student about dating in the future
- ❖ Asking or allowing a student to go to the employee's home (e.g., allowing a student who is having a difficult time with their family or a student who ran away to spend the weekend at the employee's home)

# HINTS

## Staying Within Appropriate Boundaries of the Staff or Coach/Student Relationship

**1** Establish and maintain the parameters and nature of the relationship.

**2** Be prepared to develop a specific plan for addressing student needs and involve other adults in implementing the plan.

**3** Understand your own emotional needs.

*Staff members should be aware of their own emotional needs and how those needs might affect the staff/student relationship.*

**4** Understand propriety issues related to helping relationships.

*Professional and personal boundaries become blurred when staff members take students to lunch off-campus, write and receive personal communications or make physical contact.*

**5** Understand the emotional and physical development of students.

*Students who believe no one listens to them may transfer feelings of affection to the staff member. Refer students in these situations to the school counselor or school administrator.*

## Physical Contact

### Appropriate Interaction

- ❖ Occasionally giving students high fives or fist bumps
- ❖ Exercising good judgment on whether to touch students and/or under what circumstances; being sensitive to individual preferences and cultural norms
- ❖ Following District protocol (STS-W070 and STS-W071) and training when assisting students with toileting

### Inappropriate Interaction

- ❖ Invading personal space; being too close in physical proximity
- ❖ Giving shoulder massages, lingering touches, squeezes, requested affection, or touching private parts of a student
- ❖ Requesting/inviting affection (e.g., "give me a hug," "give me a kiss")
- ❖ Touching students who may misinterpret the touch due to individual circumstances, cultural standards, or developmental stage

## Electronic Communication

### Appropriate Interaction

- ❖ Using the Internet and/or other electronic devices appropriately in compliance with Administrative Policy HUM-A003
- ❖ Limiting electronic communication with students to that which is necessary for educational, school-sponsored extracurricular activities, and/or immediate safety concerns. Safety concerns must also be reported to the appropriate authorities and/or school district staff
- ❖ Utilizing district-approved tools for communicating with students as outlined in HUM-W050 (Electronic Communication Work Instruction)

### Inappropriate Interaction

- ❖ Communicating with students (with the exception of the employee's family members) via text messaging, social media, personal email, etcetera
- ❖ Adding current Salem-Keizer School District students (with the exception of the employee's family members), even those who are not in the employee's class or program, on social networking sites when not related to a legitimate educational purpose