

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

1. Establish 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 to help relationships.

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

5. Understand the emotional and physical development of students.

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

## Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

- \* All school district employees are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse immediately to law enforcement or the Department of Human Services (DHS) (ORS 419B.010).
- \* Concerns involving suspected child abuse by district employees must also be reported immediately to a supervisor (ORS 339.372). 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

You should report directly to your administrator and also call one of the following:

- \* DHS/Child Welfare 541-757-5019
- \* Albany Police Department 541-917-7680
- \* Linn County Sheriff's Office 541-967-3950

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

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For additional information contact:  
Greater Albany Public Schools  
Human Resources Department  
541-967-4503

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# Greater Albany Public Schools

## Maintaining Appropriate Staff - Student Boundaries

*Guidelines to Avoid the Appearance of Impropriety*

# Maintaining Appropriate Staff/Student Boundaries

Staff members closely involved with students must understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate interactions. Staff members must engage in appropriate interactions with students at all times and be aware of avoiding interactions which could appear inappropriate.

Appropriate interactions are those that create a safe environment in which students may grow, learn, seek help in solving conflicts and develop social skills.

Inappropriate interactions cross the boundaries separating student from adult needs and could create a relationship that becomes 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 frequently recognized for contributions.

Staff members who have regular 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 are those that create a **SAFE ENVIRONMENT** in which **STUDENTS** may grow, **LEARN**, seek help in solving problems and conflicts, and **DEVELOP** social skills.



# Appropriate Interaction

- \* Maintains appropriate personal space
- \* Maintains reasonable eye contact
- \* Appropriate comments regarding academic environment and social activities
- \* Staff/student appropriate communication and understood by general population
- \* Conversations with students that support their learning and growth; student’s perspective is focus of conversation
- \* Appropriate use of student conferences in a manner consistent with educational purpose
- \* Staff/student relationship centered on academics, school events and activities
- \* Maintains fair and equal treatment of all students with occasional exceptions
- \* Extracurricular and co-curricular activity leaders maintain clear standards around gender issues and harassment
- \* An occasional pat on the back, shoulder or arm
- \* Exercising good judgment on whether to touch students and/or under what circumstances; sensitive to individual preferences and cultural norms
- \* Referring serious student problems to the appropriately trained professional. Notifies administration if suspicion that student has romantic feelings toward staff member
- \* Use internet, e-mail and electronic communications only for educational purposes or school-sponsored events



# Inappropriate Interaction

- \* Invades personal space; physical proximity that is too close
- \* Maintain intense eye contact
- \* Comments that are personal or physical in nature (e.g., “you have great legs,” “you should wear that sweater more often,” “what big muscles you have”) or may have sexual overtones; condoning inappropriate topics for discussion; condoning verbal comments with sexual overtones; flirting
- \* Staff/student communication has implied messages and inside understanding not commonly understood by the general population
- \* Conversations with students disclose personal and confidential information so that the student becomes the confidant of the adult; staff revealing personal information that could make student uncomfortable; adult becomes focus of conversation
- \* Spending time alone with student in conferences beyond educational expectations; meets with students off campus
- \* Staff/student relationship maintained outside school events, manifested by taking a student to lunch off site, gift giving, outside social activities, transporting a child alone and/or in a private vehicle, or receiving/writing personal communication
- \* Pattern of covering for or providing excuses for particular students, writing passes repeatedly for favored students to cover tardies or absences
- \* Leaders of extracurricular and co-curricular activities encourage atmosphere of loose and inappropriate boundaries around gender and harassment issues
- \* Shoulder massage, lingering touches, squeezes, requested affection; hugs, kisses or invitations to “give me a hug,” “give me a kiss,” touches on private parts of bodies
- \* Touching students who may misinterpret the touch due to individual circumstances, cultural standards or developmental stage
- \* Staff members acting as helpers for serious student problems in circumstances where appropriate training in effective advising or counseling is warranted. Fails to notify administration of suspects student has romantic feelings toward staff member
- \* Frequently converses with students via electronic communication. Discusses personal issues with students via text messaging, social networking sites, email, etc