

SECTION: OPERATIONS

TITLE: MAINTAINING  
PROFESSIONAL  
ADULT/STUDENT  
BOUNDARIES

ADOPTED: January 9, 2017

REVISED:

# ST. MARYS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

	<p>824. MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL ADULT/STUDENT BOUNDARIES</p>
<p>1. Authority</p> <p>SC 510</p>	<p>This policy applies to district employees, volunteers, student teachers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as <b>adults</b>. The term <b>adults</b> as used in this policy, does not include district students who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.</p> <p>All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with district students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct.</p> <p>The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.</p> <p>This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the district or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include district students.</p>
<p>2. Definition</p>	<p>For purposes of this policy, <b>legitimate educational reasons</b> include 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 job duties.</p>
<p>3. Delegation of Responsibility</p>	<p>The Superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the district website, and by other appropriate methods.</p> <p>The building principal or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.</p>

<p>Pol. 818</p> <p>4. Guidelines</p> <p>18 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 3124.2 24 P.S. Sec. 2070.9f</p>	<p>The Business Manager or designee will notify independent contractors doing business with the district of this policy. Independent contractors shall ensure that their employees who have interaction with students or are present on school grounds are informed of the provisions of this policy.</p> <p>Adults shall establish and maintain appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that is prohibited by this policy or that creates the appearance of prohibited behavior.</p> <p><u>Prohibited Conduct</u></p> <p><i>Romantic or Sexual Relationships –</i></p> <p>Adults shall be prohibited from dating, courting, or entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any student enrolled in the district, regardless of the student’s age. Students of any age are not legally capable of consenting to romantic or sexual interactions with adults.</p> <p>Prohibited romantic or sexual interaction involving students includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sexual physical contact.</li> <li>2. Romantic flirtation, propositions, or sexual remarks.</li> <li>3. Sexual slurs, leering, epithets, sexual or derogatory comments.</li> <li>4. Personal comments about a student’s body.</li> <li>5. Sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures.</li> <li>6. Spreading sexual or romantic rumors.</li> <li>7. Touching a student’s body or clothes in a sexual or intimate way.</li> <li>8. Accepting massages, or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care administered by an athletic trainer, coach, or health care provider.</li> <li>9. Restricting a student’s freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner.</li> <li>10. Displaying or transmitting sexual objects, pictures, or depictions.</li> </ol> <p><i>Social Interactions –</i></p> <p>In order to maintain professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with students are appropriate. All communications and interactions with students shall meet expectations set forth in the Professional Code of Ethics.</p> <p><i>Electronic Communications –</i></p> <p>For purposes of this policy, <b>electronic communication</b> shall mean a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, emails, instant messages, photos and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and other networking websites.</p>
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<p>Pol. 815</p>	<p>As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with students.</p> <p>This policy is not to interfere with electronic communication between teachers, coaches or advisors and students but to provide guidance.</p> <p>Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational reasons only. All communications shall meet expectations set forth in the Professional Code of Ethics.</p> <p>When available, district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices may be used when communicating electronically with students. The use of district-provided email or other district-provided communication devices shall be in accordance with district policies and procedures.</p> <p>All electronic communications from coaches and advisors concerning an individual student's medical or academic privacy matters are to be kept confidential.</p> <p>Adults shall follow the District's Social Media Policy in regards to connections on personal social networking sites.</p> <p><u>Exceptions</u></p> <p>An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason 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.</p> <p>Under no circumstance will an educational or other reason justify deviation from the "Romantic and Sexual Relationships" section of this policy.</p> <p>There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a student's family, e.g., when their children become 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.</p> <p>It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through nondistrict-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include district students. Such community involvement is commendable, and 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.</p>
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<p>Pol. 248</p> <p>23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6311 Pol. 806</p> <p>24 P.S. Sec. 2070.9a Pol. 317.1</p> <p>SC 1302.1-A, 1303-A Title 22 Sec. 10.2, 10.21, 10.22 23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6311 24 P.S. Sec. 2070.9a Pol. 317.1, 805.1, 806</p>	<p><u>Reporting Inappropriate or Suspicious Conduct</u></p> <p>Any person, including a student, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and a student, shall immediately notify the Superintendent, principal or other administrator. The person making the complaint shall do so in writing and must meet with the designated administrator.</p> <p>All district employees, independent contractors and volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, shall immediately report the suspected abuse, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p> <p>An educator who knows of any action, inaction or conduct which constitutes sexual abuse or exploitation or sexual misconduct under the Educator Discipline Act shall report such misconduct to local/state law enforcement, Children and Youth Services, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the required form, and shall report such misconduct to the Superintendent and his/her immediate supervisor, within fifteen (15) days of discovery of such misconduct.</p> <p>If the Superintendent or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act or the Safe Schools Act, the Superintendent or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p> <p>It is a violation of this policy to retaliate against any person for reporting any action pursuant to this policy or for participating as a witness in any related investigation or hearing.</p>
<p>Pol. 248, 348</p>	<p><u>Investigation</u></p> <p>Allegations of inappropriate conduct shall be promptly investigated in accordance with the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment.</p> <p>It is understood that some reports made pursuant to this policy will be based on rumors or misunderstandings; the mere fact that the reported adult is cleared of any wrongdoing shall not result in disciplinary action against the reporter or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the reporter, or a witness is found to have intentionally provided false information in making the report or during the investigation or hearings related to the report, or if any individual intentionally obstructs the investigation or hearings, this may be addressed as a violation of this policy and other applicable laws, regulations and district policies. <b>Obstruction</b> includes, but is not limited to, violation of “no contact” orders given to the reported adult, attempting to alter or influence witness testimony, and destruction of or hiding evidence.</p>

<p>Pol. 317</p>	<p><u>Disciplinary Action</u></p> <p>A district employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable district disciplinary policies and procedures.</p> <p>A volunteer, student teacher, or independent contractor or an employee of an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in district schools for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the Superintendent or designee.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <p>The district shall provide training with respect to the provisions of this policy to current and new district employees, volunteers and student teachers subject to this policy.</p> <p>The district, at its sole discretion, may require independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds to receive training on this policy and related procedures.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1302.1-A, 1303-A</p> <p>State Board of Education Regulations – 22 PA Code Sec. 10.2, 10.21, 10.22</p> <p>Pennsylvania Crimes Code, Definition of Offenses – 18 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 3124.2</p> <p>Educator Discipline Act – 24 P.S. Sec. 2070.1a et seq.</p> <p>Pennsylvania’s Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators – 22 PA Code Sec. 235.1 et seq.</p> <p>Child Protective Services Law – 23 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 6301 et seq.</p> <p>Board Policy – 103, 103.1, 248, 317, 317.1, 348, 805.1, 806, 815, 818</p>
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