



Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources

BOARD POLICY 4550
EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

PURPOSE

The Board of Trustees (Board) is committed to ensuring that all relationships and communications between Washoe County School District (District) employees and students are appropriate and enhance the educational environment

DEFINITIONS

1. "Employees" refers to all District employees and volunteers, which may include but is not limited to, unpaid coaches, chaperones and advisors, student teachers, members of District committees, and 3rd party consultants or vendors, unless otherwise indicated.
2. "Student" includes students as members of District-sponsored athletic teams and/or extra- or co-curricular activities.

POLICY

1. Appropriate Communications. These guidelines are intended to support employees by ensuring a clear understanding of the many factors and possible ramifications to be considered when employees communicate with students, both inside and outside of the classroom.
 - a. Employees are permitted to communicate with students regarding education or District/school related matters.
 - b. Employees are permitted to communicate with students where a relationship exists between the employee and the student and his/her family.
 - c. All forms of communication with students must be professional, age-appropriate and be limited to education or District/school-related matters.
 - d. Electronic Communication and Social Media

- i. Online or electronic behavior of employees shall reflect the same standards of professionalism, respect, and integrity as face-to-face communications with students.
 - ii. Employees are responsible for using electronic communication, online applications, and social media in a manner that is legal, ethical, and in accordance with all District board policies and administrative regulations.
 - iii. All District employees shall have access to a District-provided and monitored email account. District assigned email is the official and approved means of email communication for District employees with students on education or District/school related matters.
 - iv. The appropriate use of texting, email, social media, or other communication methods between a teacher/coach/advisor and his/her students is permitted when such communication is:
 - 1) Directed at a class/team or group of students from that class/team;
 - 2) Limited to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (education or District/school-related matters); or
 - 3) Related to a demonstrable emergency or urgent circumstance.
- e. Personal Use of Social Media
- i. Personal use of social media, blogs, etc., by an employee shall:
 - 1) Remain under the discretion of the employee; and
 - 2) Utilize appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites by students.
 - ii. Employees may not "friend", "follow" or otherwise interact with students on personal social media accounts unless employee has a relationship that exists unrelated to the District with the student and his/her family.
 - iii. Employees may "friend," "follow" or otherwise interact with students through District sponsored and/or professional social media accounts for education purposes and District or school related communications.

- f. Parent/Guardian Notification
 - i. Parents/guardians shall receive information during the annual online student registration process regarding the District's protocols related to electronic communications between employees and students. These protocols include but are not limited to:
 - 1) District-assigned student email;
 - 2) District/school use of electronic communication (e.g. telephone, email);
 - 3) Third party internet applications;
 - 4) Social media and online educational services; and
 - 5) Guidelines related to appropriate use of communication tools outside the regular school day.
2. Student Records Confidentiality. District employees shall comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in all communications, to include electronic, and may not share any personally identifiable information about students, share any information from any student's educational records, or use a student's photo without the approval of an administrator. Current parental consents apply only to District-sanctioned sites.
3. Prohibited Conduct and Disciplinary Action
 - a. Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination Prohibited
 - i. District employees shall not engage in any form of communication, to include electronic, that can reasonably be construed as bullying, harassing, discriminatory or retaliatory towards a student or other District employee.
 - ii. District employees are prohibited from engaging in or soliciting a relationship with, or form communication with, a student that is sexual, romantic, suggestive, or intimate in nature.
4. Discipline. Employees found in violation of this Board Policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or non-renewal.
 - a. Volunteers, consultants, and other District representatives may be subject to revocation or termination of his/her ability to have access to students.

5. Reporting. Any actual or suspected inappropriate relationship or communication between a District employee and a student shall be reported immediately to a District administrator or school police officer.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

1. This Board Policy reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
 - a. Board Policy 4500, District Employee Speech;
 - b. Board Policy 4505, Standards of Professional Conduct;
 - c. Board Policy 7200, 21st Century and Digital Learning;
 - d. Board Policy 9200, Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited; and
 - e. Board Policy 9205, Safe and Respectful Learning Environment.
2. This Board Policy aligns/complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), to include:
 - a. Chapter 200, Crimes Against the Person;
 - b. Chapter 201, Crimes Against Public Decency and Good Morals, to include:
 - i. NRS 201.540, Sexual conduct between certain employees of school or volunteers at school and pupil: Penalty; exception;
 - c. Chapter 207, Miscellaneous Crimes, and specifically:
 - i. NRS 207.260, Unlawful contact with child or person with mental illness;
 - d. Chapter 391, Personnel;
 - e. Chapter 388, System of Public Instruction; and specifically:
 - i. NRS 388.121 – 388.1459, Provision of a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment; and
 - f. Chapter 432B, Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect.
3. This Board Policy aligns/complies with federal laws and regulations, to include:
 - a. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; and
 - b. Title IX of the Education Amendments

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Modification
3/13/2018	1.0	Adopted
11/23/2021	2.0	Revised: clarify language and update definitions