

POLICY 4153 & RULE 4153.1 MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fall 2018

Professional Boundaries and Staff Relationships with Students



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

ACCESS TO STUDENTS

In today's digital world, boundary invasions between teachers and students happen more frequently because lines can be blurred because of texting or social media access to students

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

• What is an “Inappropriate Boundary Invasion?”

• When an adult allows for the lines to blur between an appropriate professional teacher/student relationships into an inappropriate personal relationship with the student.

• This also applies to any employee or representative of the District who allows himself or herself to cross over into inappropriate personal relationships with a student.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

• WHY THE NEED FOR A POLICY?

• This is an issue we deal with every year in some varying degree



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

What is an Inappropriate Boundary Invasion?

Includes, but are not limited to, invasions by the adult into the child's personal space and personal life such as the following:

- ➡ Gift to student for no reason
- ➡ Being overly touchy with students
- ➡ Engaging in peer-like behavior with students (being cool by being one of the kids)
- ➡ Meeting social needs by interacting with students



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

Inappropriate Boundary Invasions . . .

Continued...

- ➡ Inviting students to come to the classroom at non-class times
- ➡ Telling students secrets or having secrets with student(s)
- ➡ Establishing "Rights of Passages" with students when they finish your class or graduate such as agreeing to interact with them as a friend after graduation.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

Inappropriate Boundary Invasions . . .

Continued...

- ➡ Using email, text messages, websites, or social media sites to discuss personal topics with students
- ➡ Invasion of child's privacy & discussion of sensitive topics
 - bathroom
 - romantic experiences



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

Inappropriate Boundary Invasions . . .

Continued...

- ➡ Giving a student a ride home
- ➡ Going to students home for non-educational reasons
- ➡ Telling sexual or other inappropriate jokes to students
- ➡ Hugging or kissing students



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

THE POLICY

- Employees are prohibited from establishing or attempting to establish an inappropriate personal relationship with students. An inappropriate personal relationship between an employee and a student is defined as including, but is not limited to: dating; any touching of an intimate or sexual nature, sexual contact or sexual relations, any touching otherwise prohibited by law or objected to by the student; giving a gift having a sexual overtone, making comments of a sexual nature or reflecting sexual innuendo to or about a student; conduct considered to be "grooming" of such student, or any similar activity.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

SEXUAL GROOMING DEFINED

- Befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

SEXUAL GROOMING DEFINED

- Identifying and targeting victim
- Gaining trust and access
- Playing a role in the child's life
- Isolating the child
- Creating secrecy around the relationship
- Initiating sexual contact
- Controlling the relationship



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES?

- ▶ Not all boundary invasions constitute "**sexual grooming.**"
- ▶ However, all boundary invasions (even well meaning invasions) place the staff member and the District at risk for allegations of inappropriate behaviors.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RULE

- Texting with students is prohibited, unless they are your child or a family friend
- Private Social Networking communication with students is prohibited
- Material that staff members post on social media that is publicly available, must not impair the employees capacity to maintain respect from students and parents
- Staff are required to notify the principal (or other administrator) or the Associate Superintendent of HR, if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this Rule
- If students reach out to staff via text or direct messaging, staff are required to report to building administration and to redirect the student to use District approved communication options

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

OTHER ITEMS IN THE RULE

Any communication with students in an inappropriate, immoral or unethical manner is a violation of this Rule.

Engaging in sexual activity, a romantic relationship, or dating a student or a former student within one year of the student graduating or otherwise leaving the District is a violation of this Rule.

All electronic communication with students will only occur through the District e-mail system or District approved communication systems. (IC, District e-mail, Blackboard Messaging, Google Classroom, Remind App)

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the principal (or other administrator) if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this Rule.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the principal (or other administrator) or the Associate Superintendent of Human Resources, if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this Rule.

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



PROTECTION FOR STAFF

If a student contacts a staff member and they do not use the District e-mail system or designated communication system, the staff member must notify their immediate supervisor of the communication within 24 hours, unless circumstances warrant and immediate contact. The staff member is also responsible to ensure student is aware of and utilizes District approved communication systems.

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



SCENARIO – A

A teacher gets a direct message on Twitter asking about a homework assignment. The teacher responds and gives the information requested. Is this okay?

No. Direct messaging with students on social media is prohibited. With this scenario the student was not indicating self harm or a dangerous situation. More information on this scenario in later slides.

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



SCENARIO – B

- ▶ A student texts you at home because they had a fight with their Dad and they are very upset. You are their favorite teacher and somebody they trust. You text with the student and everything appears to be okay. *Is this okay?*
- ▶ It depends. If this is redirected through the correct school processes and professionals (e.g. administrators / counselors / social workers / etc.) it may be a legitimate opportunity to help the student. If the teacher goes alone without involving other professionals or reporting to administration, it is likely an inappropriate boundary invasion and a violation of Board Rule.

Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



Teaching **Students** Appropriate Boundaries

How can we, as a school, teacher, etc. teach appropriate boundaries to students so they are not invading them:

Proactive Strategies: Prevention

- Pre-teach expectations regarding boundaries (phone calls at home, staying after school for help, email, etc.)
- Let students know when they are overstepping your personal boundaries
- Seek input from colleagues or other professionals if unsure of the appropriateness of your actions or plans
- Remember ... the caring professional relationship always has boundaries of time, place, purpose, and activity
- Educators are responsible for recognizing in themselves whether they are "at risk" of crossing boundaries and, if they are, addressing the issue.



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE

Teaching **Students** Appropriate Boundaries

How do you as an employee, report student and adult inappropriate boundary invasions?

- Educators have a responsibility to address this issue when they witness a colleague who may be crossing boundaries
- Administrators may need to be notified to assist
- Administrators and colleagues should recognize danger signals in other teachers' interactions, and intervene
- In serious situations, reporting suspicion of child abuse may be required (Board Rule 5620.1 & 4153.1)



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE



Millard Public Schools - Omaha, NE