

Staff members who are closely involved with students must understand the difference between appropriate and 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. Inappropriate interactions cross the boundaries separating student from adult needs and 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 very popular with students and are often recognized for contributions. Staff members who have frequent one-to-one contact with students or who work in extracurricular activities can be at risk for inappropriate interactions or student allegations of inappropriate interactions.

The examples shown may help you to determine when appropriate interactions begin to cross the line to inappropriate.

Appropriate Interactions	Inappropriate Interactions
Maintain appropriate personal space	Invades personal space; physical proximity that is too close
Maintain reasonable eye contact	Maintain intense eye contact
Appropriate comments regarding academic environment and social activities	Comments that are personal or physical in nature, <i>i.e.</i> “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
Student aides assigned duties appropriate to the academic environment	Student aides assigned duties to meet personal needs of staff members
Student-staff communication appropriate and understood by general population	Student-staff communication has implied messages and inside understanding not commonly understood by general population; hidden communication
Conversations with students support learning and growth for student; student’s perspective is focus of conversation	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
Appropriate use of student conferences in a manner consistent with educational purpose	Pattern of spending time alone with student in conferences beyond educational expectations
Student-staff relationship centered on academics, school events and activities	Student-staff relationship maintained outside school events, manifested by taking student(s) to lunch, gift giving, outside social activities, frequent rides home or receiving or writing personal notes
Maintain fair and equal treatment of all students with occasional exceptions	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 maintain clear standards around gender issues and harassment	Leaders of extracurricular and co-curricular activities encourage atmosphere of loose and inappropriate boundaries around gender and harassment issues
A pat on the back, shoulder or arm	Shoulder massage, lingering touches, squeezes, requesting affection; hugs, kisses or invitations to “give me a hug,” “give me a kiss;” touches on private parts of bodies
Exercising good judgment on whether to touch students and/or under what circumstances; sensitive to individual preferences and cultural norms	Touching students who may misinterpret the touch due to individual circumstances, cultural standards or developmental stage
Referring serious student problems to the appropriately trained professional	Staff members acting as helpers for serious student problems in circumstances where appropriate training in effective advising or counseling is warranted
Parent approves of the interaction	Parent questions the appropriateness of the interaction



STAYING WITHIN APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES OF THE STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

❖ Helpful Hints for Staff Members ❖

1. *Establish the parameters of the relationship*
2. *Reaffirm the helping nature of the relationship*
3. *Be prepared to develop a specific plan for addressing the students' needs and to involve other adults in implementing the plan.*

❖ Effective Advisors ❖

1. *Understand their own emotional needs*
 - Staff members/advisors who are in emotional need are the most vulnerable to the seductive dependency of an unprofessional relationship.
2. *Understand propriety issues related to helping relationships*
 - Professional and personal boundaries become blurred when staff members/advisors take students to lunch, write and receive personal notes or make physical contact
3. *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/advisor

REPORTING ABUSE

School teachers, administrative staff members, practitioners of healing arts, child care providers, and others are *required by law* (A.S. 47.17.020) to report suspected child abuse or neglect when they have *reasonable cause to suspect* it has resulted in harm to a child. This obligation is an individual's legal duty.

Reports must be made to:
Office of Children Services
751 Old Richardson Highway, Ste. 300
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Telephone: (907) 451-2650
Fax: (907) 451-2616

School Board Policy 1065 directs all school district personnel to strictly adhere to the state law mandating report of suspected child abuse or neglect. Any employee who suspects that a child has experienced physical or sexual abuse or physical or emotional neglect, shall make a report to the Division of Family and Youth Services. (1065.1)

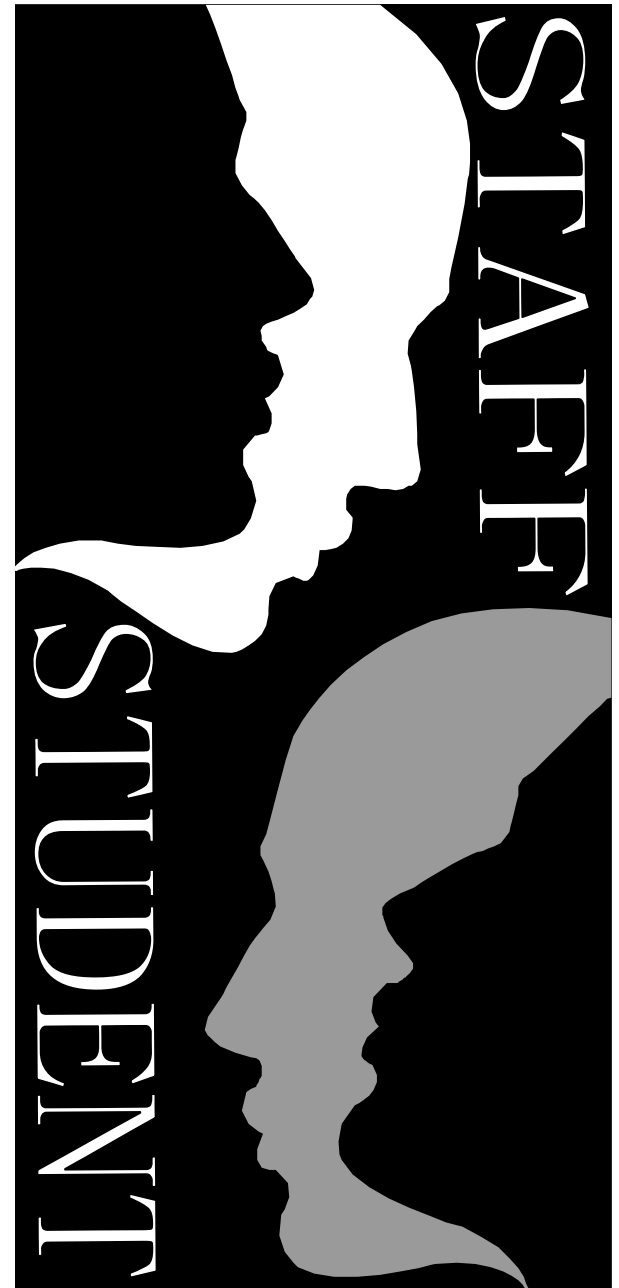
FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
520 Fifth Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99701-4756
Phone: (907) 452-2000
Fax: (907) 451-6160
www.northstar.k12.ak.us



FAIRBANKS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
(FEA)

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DEFINING



BOUNDARIES