



Professional Boundaries and the PTPC

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission's intent is to serve as a preventative and positive force in helping to enhance the professional performance of all educators so that the public's right to the best education possible for all of Alaska's students is adequately protected.

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission supports School Board Policy 5141.52

Which in essence states the following:

District staff will not intrude on a student's physical and/or emotional boundaries unless the intrusion is necessary to serve a *bona fide health, safety, or educational purpose*. An educational purpose is one that relates to the staff member's duties as an educator. Additionally, staff members are expected to avoid any appearance of impropriety in their conduct when interacting with students.

Report violations of professional boundaries: Whenever a staff member observes another staff member engaging in inappropriate boundary invasions with a student, they must report what they have observed to administration. **When in doubt, report it out.**

The Code of Ethics for Educators supports SB Policy 5141.52 specifically the sections listed below:

Members of the teaching profession (as defined in AS 14.20.370) are obligated to abide by the code of ethics and professional teaching standards adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

20 AAC 10.020. CODE OF ETHICS AND TEACHING STANDARDS.

(a) The following code of ethical standards governs an individual holding a teaching, administrative, or special services certificate issued under 4 AAC 12, an individual authorized as a student teacher under 4 AAC 30.020, and all other members of the teaching profession. A violation of this section is grounds

(b) In fulfilling obligations to students, an educator

(4) may not engage in

(A) physical abuse of a student or sexual conduct with a student and *shall* report to the commission knowledge of such an act by an educator; or

(B) sexual conduct with a former student whom the educator taught, supervised, or exercised authority over, including in coaching or other school-sponsored activity; the restrictions against sexual conduct in this subparagraph apply to an educator for one year after the student has graduated from or ceased to attend high school, and an educator *shall* report to the commission knowledge of such an act by an educator;

- Educators *must* report violations of sections (b) (4) (A and B) or may become the subject of an investigation for failure to report. See also 4 AAC 12.200, 4 AAC 12.210, 4 AAC 12.220

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines “sexual conduct” as:

20 AAC 10.900. DEFINITIONS.

In this chapter,

(1) “sexual conduct” includes

(A) explicit sexual jokes and stories;

(B) flirtatious or sexually related comments;

(C) sexual kidding or teasing;

(D) sexual innuendos or comments with double entendre;

(E) inappropriate physical touching;

(F) soliciting, encouraging, participating in, or initiating inappropriate written, verbal, or electronic communication of a sexual nature with a student;

(G) a physical or romantic relationship with a student, whether consensual or nonconsensual;

(H) discussion of the educator’s sexual feelings or activities;

(I) discussion, outside of a professional teaching or counseling context, of a student’s sexual feelings or activities; and

(J) “sexual penetration” and “sexual contact” as those terms are defined in AS 11.81.900(j);

- Definitions (A) through (F), (H) and (I) may not be criminal sexual conduct but are Professional Boundary violations and may be subject to sanctions should evidence be found to warrant sanctions.
- Do not wait until someone is known to violate (G) or (J) to report an educator for inappropriate sexual misconduct. Do not wait for criminal charges.

See the entire Code of Ethics at the link:

<https://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/pdf/Code-of-ethics-fullpage.pdf>

Additional Resources may be found at <https://education.alaska.gov/ptpc>

While the Professional Teaching Practices Commission is empowered to enforce the Alaska Code of Ethics for Educators, the Model Code of Ethics For Educators (MCEE) encourages responsible professionalism including:

- **DEMONSTRATES RESPONSIBILITY TO ONESELF AS AN ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL BY:**
 - Refraining from professional or personal activity that may lead to reducing one’s effectiveness within the school community.
 - Avoiding the use of one’s position for personal gain and avoiding the appearance of impropriety.

The ethos of professional ethics goes well beyond merely adhering to established professional norms when making decisions. It also entails a higher threshold of responsibility – our professional commitment to the welfare and betterment of the community in which we live.

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