

VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

SUPERINTENDENT POLICY NO. 4119.24 and 4219.24

ADOPTED: 05/16/22

CLASSIFICATION: Personnel

SUBJECT: Appropriate Adult-Student Interactions

The County Superintendent desires to provide a positive school environment that protects the safety and well-being of county students. The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) expects all adults with whom students may interact at VCOE schools or in VCOE-related activities, including employees, independent contractors, and volunteers, to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in their interactions with students both within and outside the educational setting. Such adults shall not engage in unlawful or inappropriate interactions with students and shall avoid boundary-blurring behaviors that undermine trust in the adult-student relationship and lead to the appearance of impropriety.

Employees are prohibited from entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any student or engaging in sexual harassment of a student, including sexual advances, flirtations, requests for sexual favors, inappropriate comments about a student's body or appearance, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Adults shall not intrude on a student's physical or emotional boundaries unless necessary in an emergency or to serve a legitimate purpose related to instruction, counseling, student health, or student or staff safety.

Any employee who observes or has knowledge of another employee's violation of this policy shall report the information to the County Superintendent or designee or appropriate agency for investigation pursuant to the applicable complaint procedures. Other adults with knowledge of any violation of this policy are encouraged to report the violation to the County Superintendent or designee. The County Superintendent or designee shall protect anyone who reports a violation from retaliation. Immediate intervention shall be implemented when necessary to protect student safety or the integrity of the investigation.

Employees who engage in any conduct in violation of this policy, including retaliation against a person who reports the violation or participates in the complaint process, shall be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal. Any other adult who violates this policy may be barred from VCOE grounds and activities in accordance with law. The County Superintendent or designee may also notify law enforcement as appropriate.

The VCOE's employee code of conduct addressing interactions with students shall be provided to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year and shall be posted on school and/or VCOE web sites. (Education Code 44050)

Inappropriate Conduct

Employees shall remain vigilant of their position of authority and not abuse it when relating with students. Examples of employee conduct that can undermine professional adult-student interactions or create the appearance of impropriety include, but are not limited to:

Initiating inappropriate physical contact.

1. Being alone with a student outside of the view of others.
2. Visiting a student's home or inviting a student to visit the employee's home without parent/guardian consent.
3. Maintaining personal contact with a student that has no legitimate educational purpose, by phone, letter, electronic communications, or other means, without including the student's parent/guardian or the principal.

When communicating electronically with students, employees shall use VCOE equipment or technological resources when available. Employees shall not communicate with students through any medium that is designed to eliminate records of the communications. The County Superintendent or designee may monitor employee usage of county technology at any time without advance notice or consent.

4. Creating or participating in social networking sites for communication with students, other than those created by the VCOE, without the prior written approval of the principal or designee.
5. Inviting or accepting requests from students, or former students who are minors, to connect on personal social networking sites (e.g., "friending" or "following" on social media), unless the site is dedicated to school business.
6. Singling out a particular student for personal attention and friendship, including giving gifts and/or nicknames to individual students.
7. Addressing a student in an overly familiar manner, such as by using a term of endearment.
8. Socializing or spending time with students outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in community activities.
9. Sending or accompanying students on personal errands unrelated to any legitimate educational purpose.
10. Transporting a student in a personal vehicle without prior authorization.
11. Encouraging students to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships.
12. Disclosing personal, family, or other private matters to students or sharing personal secrets with students.

Legal References:

<u>State</u>	<u>Description</u>
5 CCR 80303	Reports of change in employment status, alleged misconduct
5 CCR 80304	Notice of sexual misconduct
Ed. Code 44030.5	Reporting change in employment status due to alleged misconduct
Ed. Code 44050	Employee code of conduct; interaction with students
Ed. Code 44242.5	Reports and review of alleged misconduct
Ed. Code 44940	Compulsory leave of absence for certificated persons
Ed. Code 48980	Parent/Guardian notifications
Pen. Code 11164-11174.3	Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act