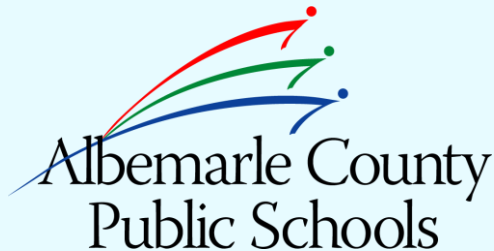


Professional Boundaries & Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse

Dr. Chandra Hayes, Acting Superintendent

Dr. Russell Carlock, Research and Data Scientist



Strategic Plan: Learning for All

VISION

Our learners are engaged in authentic, challenging, and relevant learning experiences, becoming lifelong contributors and leaders in our dynamic and diverse society.

MISSION

Working together as a team, we will end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and special capacities for our children's success through high-quality teaching and learning for all. We seek to build relationships with families and communities to ensure that every student succeeds.

We will know every student.

VALUES

Equity
Excellence
Family and Community
Wellness

GOALS



Thriving Students



Affirming and Empowering Communities



Equitable, Transformative Resources

Background

- **June 11** - School Board informed the public that it would be addressing issues identified in the wake of alleged sexual abuse of students by an ACPS SEL Coach
- **June 17** - School Board directed me to review and recommend actions, policies, and procedures to
 - codify adult-student interactions,
 - prevent sexual misconduct and abuse
 - strengthen public trust

Our Commitment

Protecting Students Through Prevention, Professionalism, and Partnership

Every student deserves:

- A safe and supportive learning environment
- Trusted adults who model professional relationships
- Clear systems that protect their well-being

Every employee deserves:

- Clear expectations
- Consistent guidance
- Support in maintaining professional boundaries

Every family deserves:

- Confidence that ACPS has strong systems in place to protect students

Public Feedback

Specific areas of concern:

- Thoroughness of background checks
- One-on-One meetings between adults and students
- Professional and appropriate communication between adults and students
- Parental notification of meetings between adults and students
- Reporting violations

Background Checks

Our required background screening is thorough and comprehensive

- Applicants are fingerprinted for criminal background search,
- Applicant is checked against the Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect
- When police arrest and charge an ACPS employee, they notify ACPS of the charges.
- When DSS makes a finding of child abuse and neglect of a license holder or school employee, they notify ACPS and the Virginia Department of Education to take action.

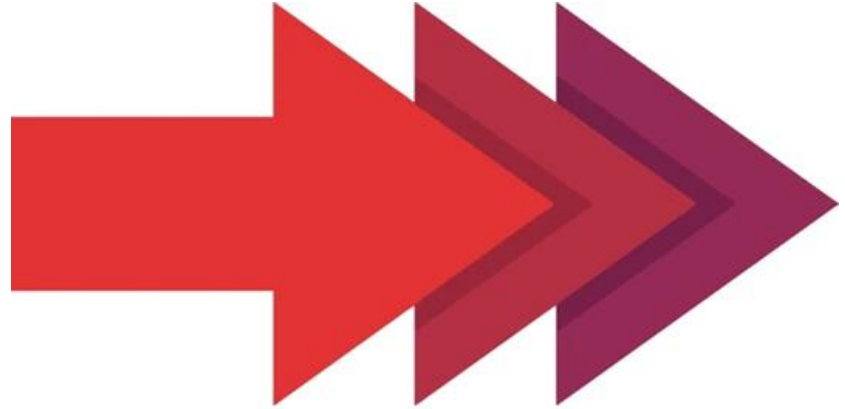
Policy AG - Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct & Abuse

Policy Adoption Process

- Dr. Russell “Rusty” Carlock – policy overview
- Board Questions
- Recommended edits today
- July 16
 - Public Hearing on final draft policy
 - School Board markup of policy following public hearing
 - Vote to adopt a final policy for implementation

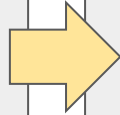
AGENDA

- ❑ Process
- ❑ Literature Review
- ❑ Policy Analysis
- ❑ Key Components
of the New Policy

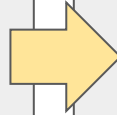


Policy Review Process

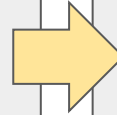
June 22nd - 26th
**Literature
Review & Policy
Analysis**



June 29th - July 3rd
**Draft Policy and
Staff Feedback**



July 9th
**Board
Revisions**



July 16th
**Public
Comment**



Literature Review

Preventing Educator Sexual Misconduct

KEY REFERENCES

- ❑ Arnold, S. & Jeglic, E. (2024). Stereotypes and unconscious bias in institutional child sexual abuse: Barriers to identification, reporting and prevention. *Child Abuse Review*, 33(2).
- ❑ Grant, et al. (2019). Sexual abuse and exploitation of PreK-12 students by school personnel. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(1), 2-6.
- ❑ Grant, et al. (2019). Title IX and school employee sexual misconduct: How K-12 schools respond in the wake of an incident. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(5), 841-866.
- ❑ Jeglic, E., & Winters, G. (2025). An analysis of sexual grooming in cases of child sexual abuse by educators. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 170.
- ❑ Kent, C. (2006). Protecting a district from educator sexual misconduct. *Catalyst for Change*, 34(2).
- ❑ Martinello, E. (2014). Reviewing strategies for risk reduction of sexual abuse of children with intellectual disabilities: A focus on early intervention. *Sex and Disability*, 32, 167-174.
- ❑ Shakeshaft, C. (2004). Educator sexual misconduct: A synthesis of the literature. *U.S. Department of Education*.
- ❑ Shakeshaft, C. (2013). Know the warning signs of educator sexual misconduct. *Kappan*.
- ❑ Wilson, D. (2018). Prevention and response: How to protect our students from educator sexual misconduct. *Independent School Matters*.
- ❑ Wurtele, et al. (2019). Keeping students out of harm's way: Reducing risks of educator sexual misconduct. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(2), 160-186.
- ❑ Virginia Department of Education. (2011). Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse in Virginia Public Schools.

Definition and Prevalence - Underreporting

“Educator sexual misconduct covers a **range of behaviors both criminal and unethical**, including sexual harassment, sexual invitations, text messaging, email, or social media contact of a sexual nature, showing or producing sexually explicit images, sexual touching, and sexual assault and rape” in interactions between school staff and PreK-12 students (Wurtele et al., 2019).

As many as **9.6% of U.S. students** are victims of educator sexual misconduct at some point in their K-12 education; however only **.02% of these result in criminal or civil charges** (Jeglic & Winters, 2025).

Impact on Victims and the Community

“Victims of child sexual abuse can suffer from **behavioral** and **psychological** effects” as well as “decreased achievement and engagement in school, increased absences, depression, and vulnerability to drug and alcohol addiction” (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2019).

“Harm does not stop with the victim. **The school community is shaken**...increased distrust...confusion...anger ...civil suits...trials” (Grant, et al. 2019).

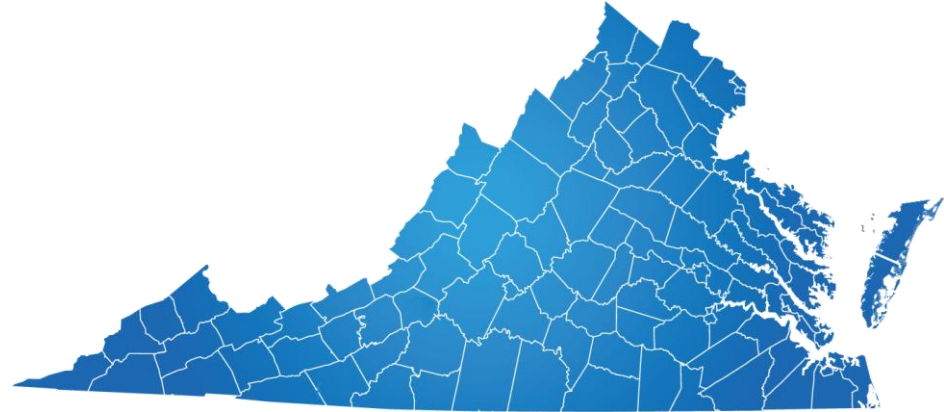
Key Components (Literature)

Effective school division policies to prevent and respond to educator sexual misconduct incorporate each of the following components (Grant, et al., 2019).



Key Policy Components (VDOE 2011)

- Statement of **purpose**
- Clear rules governing staff and student **communications** and **interactions**
- Procedures for **reporting** and **discipline**
- **Training** for staff and volunteers and **distribution** to parents
- Application to **vendors**





Policy Analysis

Preventing Educator Sexual Misconduct

Comparative Policy Analysis

- **Searched policy databases** for the following school divisions, using keywords “sexual misconduct”, “professional boundaries,” “standards of conduct,” and “abuse.”
- Performed one round of **open-coding**, and one round of **deductive coding**, using categories from literature and community concerns communicated to ACPS.

Divisions	
Arlington Augusta Charlottesville Chesterfield Fairfax Fluvanna Harrisonburg Henrico	Loudoun Penn Manor (PA) Portland (OR) Roanoke City Stafford West Fargo (ND) Virginia Beach York

Comparative Policy Analysis

Policy Location	Limited and/or Diffuse	Preventing Sexual Misconduct	Standards of Conduct - Staff
School Divisions	Albemarle, Charlottesville, Chesterfield, Fluvanna, Virginia Beach, York	Arlington, Fairfax, Harrisonburg, Penn Manor (PA) , Portland (OR), Stafford, West Fargo (ND)	Augusta, Henrico, Loudoun, Roanoke City

Statement of Purpose

Albemarle County Public Schools (“ACPS”) prioritizes the safety and well-being of its students. To that end, ACPS shall provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment and make every effort to protect them from unwelcome behavior, inappropriate activity, sexual misconduct, and abuse. This policy applies to all ACPS employees, practicum/student teachers, school volunteers, community partners, and vendors providing instructional, health, and school-related services to students. This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the Division or to interfere with participation in civic, religious, social, or other outside organizations that include ACPS students.

Prioritizing student safety.

Base language for scope from Arlington.

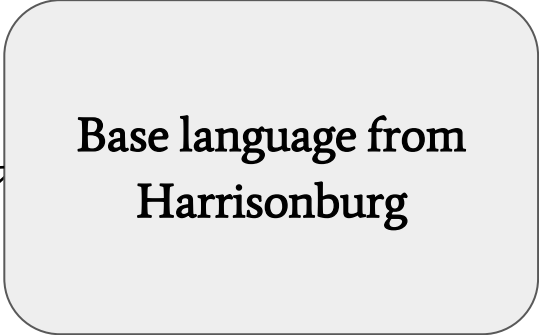
Dual relationship acknowledgement.

Healthy Relationships

Section II

ACPS supports healthy relationships between students and adults that promote student achievement and success. Adults must always maintain educational-focused relationships with all students, both in and out of school. Clear and reasonable boundaries for interactions between students and adults are necessary to protect students from boundary violations from adults, inappropriate activity, sexual misconduct and abuse, and to protect adults from misunderstandings and false accusations.

The Division understands that adults may have dual relationships with students and their families. Adults are expected to exercise appropriate personal and professional judgment in these circumstances with the understanding that professional boundaries exist within the school environment that may differ from contexts when not on duty or performing essential functions of their role(s).



**Base language from
Harrisonburg**

Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Prohibited

Section III

As described in Policy GBC, Standards of Conduct, adults are prohibited from engaging in sexual misconduct and abuse of students, regardless of the age of the student or the proximity in age of the employee to the student. Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to, dating, making sexual advances, seeking romantic or sexual relationships, having conversations of a sexual nature not related to the adult's professional responsibilities, unwanted touching/contact, grooming behavior, and sexual contact.

**Arlington and Fairfax
language**

Maintenance of Professional Boundaries

Section IV

Professional adult/student boundaries must be consistent with the legal and ethical duty of care that adults performing services for ACPS have for all students. Adults are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning by consistently maintaining professional boundaries within and outside of the educational setting. Any action that abuses or compromises the adult/student professional relationship, physically or emotionally, is prohibited. Adults must ensure their communication and behavior is unambiguous in professionalism and appropriateness for students, taking into account children's different levels of development in understanding language and behavior.

**Arlington and
Harrisonburg provide
base language**

**Section IV. A. goes on
to describe boundary
violations / grooming
in detail**

In-Person Contact and Communication

Section IV.B

Prohibited behaviors that can create an appearance of impropriety include, but are not limited to:

1. Conducting ongoing, private conversations with individual students that are unrelated to the adult's role with ACPS in supporting academics, school activities, or the well-being of students.
2. Meeting with a student outside of regular school events and activities for any reason (e.g., tutoring, coaching, counseling, mentoring, having conversation) without consent of the parent/legal guardian.
3. Transporting students in personal vehicles without the knowledge and consent of parents/guardians and supervisors. On a case-by-case basis, administrators may make exceptions to the requirement of parent/guardian permission in the event of an emergency.
4. Taking a student out of class without a legitimate educational or health-related reason approved by administration. Parent/guardian consent must be granted if occurring on a consistent, regular schedule.
5. Going to a student's home, seeking out, or arranging a meeting with a student outside of the school setting without a legitimate educational reason.
6. Any behavior that would lead a student to believe that the adult is interested in them romantically and/or sexually.

**Arlington and
Harrisonburg provide
base language**

Limits on One-on-One Interactions

Section IV.C

One-on-one meetings with students shall be limited to employees with a legitimate educational or health reason to do so. When meeting one-on-one with students for educational purposes, adults shall ensure they are in a space accessible and visible to other adults. Meetings must occur in a space designated by the school administration as an appropriate area for adult/student meetings, and this must be a space with an open door or uncovered windows that allow the student to be visible by other adult staff.

Licensed School Counselors, Special Educators, and other staff whose job duties include regular one-on-one meetings with students will set forth the parameters by which these meetings will take place with parents/guardians prior to meeting with students and allow parents/guardians to opt-out of these services except in cases of collaboration with the local department of social services and law enforcement per School Board Policy GAE/JHG Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting and the Code of Virginia §63.2-1509 et seq. For all other adults, except for time-sensitive and emergency situations, adults shall notify parents in writing prior to one-on-one meetings for educational reasons. In the case of time-sensitive, emergency, and crisis situations, the adult shall notify school administration and the student's parent or guardian in writing afterwards that same day, except in cases of collaboration with the local department of social services

Adults shall not be alone with an individual student out of view or in an inaccessible location unless necessary to serve a legitimate health-related reason (e.g. school nurse, special education preschool/health-related teaching assistant) and in a space designated for such purposes (e.g. nurse's office; changing/diapering student).

**Few peer divisions
in VA offer
examples, however
out-of-state
divisions and
independent schools
do (Heed-Royce;
Penn Manor, PA;
Portland, OR).**

Electronic Communication

Section IV.D

Any electronic communication between adults and students must be transparent, accessible to supervisors and parents/guardians, non-sexual in nature, professional in content and tone, and unambiguous in meaning. Per ACPS Social Media Policy [GDB](#), staff members are prohibited from communicating with students through personal social media platforms.

Adults may not “friend” or “follow” students or accept “friend” or “follow” requests from students on private/personal social media accounts. Additionally, adults shall not post photos of students to their private/personal social media accounts. If a staff member wishes to maintain a social media presence for professional/instructional purposes, they shall create a separate account that is fully viewable by the public and strictly professional in nature. Per ACPS Policy JO Student Records, no personally identifiable information of students, including photos, shall be posted to professional social media accounts unless the adult has attained parent/guardian permission.

Adults must restrict one-on-one, electronic communications with individual students to accounts, systems, and platforms that are provided by and accessible to Albemarle County Public Schools. These systems must provide access to parents/guardians to observe all communication with their child. In the case of a communication system that does not automatically allow access to parents/guardians (e.g., email), the parent/guardian must be included in the communication.

**Harrisonburg and
Arlington provide base
language.**

**This provision is not
found in peer
divisions; however is
state policy in KY and
OK.**

Reporting Violations

Section V

Albemarle County Public Schools employees are required to report any case of suspected sexual misconduct or abuse to the building principal or department head, who shall report such information to the Title IX Coordinator, per School Board Policy [GBA](#), Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation. This requirement is in addition to the requirements for reporting cases of suspected child abuse or neglect under School Board Policy [JHG/GAE](#), Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting. Additionally, ACPS employees are required to report suspected incidents of violations of this policy regarding professional boundaries, in-person, one-on-one, and electronic communications with students to the building principal. Albemarle County Public Schools employees who are not based in a school are to immediately report suspected incidents of violations of this policy to their department head or designee. Retaliation against anyone reporting or thought to have made a report is prohibited. Any employee found to have committed an act of retaliation shall be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

Arlington provides base language linking to Title IX policy.

Distinguishes between reporting sexual misconduct and violations of professional boundaries.

Whistleblower protection.

Investigation

Section VI

The Title IX Coordinator shall be consulted about all suspected acts of sexual misconduct or abuse and will coordinate the appropriate ACPS response. The principal or department head shall partner with Human Resources to investigate suspected violations of the professional boundaries, in-person, one-on-one, and electronic communications portions of this policy.

Albemarle County Public Schools employees are subject to disciplinary action per Policy [GBCA](#), Employee Discipline, for founded violation of this policy.

**Arlington provides
base language linking
to Title IX
investigations.**

**Next paragraph
specifies pertinent VA
code for reporting
founded cases and
disclosure of
employee violations to
other divisions.**

Responsibilities for Training, Awareness, and Prevention

Section VII

A. Community Partners and Contractors. Organizations providing instructional, mentoring, counseling, health, or other direct services to students shall certify compliance with this policy, verify that personnel have received appropriate training with all applicable background check and reporting requirements, and designate a supervisory contact. The Albemarle County Public Schools employee responsible for the partnership or contract will be responsible for attaining the certification.

B. Employees. All employees shall complete annual training regarding professional boundaries, prevention of sexual misconduct and abuse, grooming behaviors, appropriate one-on-one interactions, electronic communications, mandatory reporting requirements, and reporting procedures established by the Division.

C. Parents and Guardians. Each school year, the Division shall provide parents and guardians with information regarding this policy, expected professional boundaries between adults and students, available reporting procedures, and resources to support conversations about student safety.

**Fairfax and Arlington
provide some guidance;
however there are few
divisions with extensive
provisions.**

Responsibilities for Training, Awareness, and Prevention

Section VII

D. Student Teachers, Interns, and Practicum Students. Individuals placed in ACPS through institutions of higher education shall acknowledge receipt of this policy and comply with all Division expectations regarding professional boundaries and student safety.

E. Students. Students shall receive age-appropriate instruction regarding personal safety, healthy boundaries, trusted adults, recognizing concerning behaviors, and how to seek help or report concerns.

F. Superintendent. The Superintendent shall direct training and communication programs to ensure all employees, volunteers, community partners, and organizations/individuals engaging with students are aware of this policy and trained on establishing professional boundaries and preventing sexual misconduct and abuse.

G. Volunteers. Prior to working with students, volunteers shall receive orientation regarding professional boundaries, expected standards of conduct, reporting responsibilities, and procedures for reporting concerns.

**Each group's role is
defined**

Questions/Discussion

