



PACE has developed these best practices to empower staff to protect themselves from risky situations. This is not an all-inclusive list, but it offers a starting point to help build boundaries in the professional environment.

1. **Electronic communications** with students should be through school-approved methods (district email, Remind 101, ParentSquare, etc.). This allows your school access to historical records and can help defend you against allegations.
2. Communicating with students using your **personal cell phone** means your cell phone may be discoverable in potential future legal proceedings. Protect yourself by never giving your personal cell phone number to students.
3. It is best to **communicate with students only at reasonable hours** and about school-related topics. After-hours and off-topic communication can appear inappropriate.
4. Make sure your building administrator/supervisor has admin rights and access to all school-related social media accounts. Protect yourself by not using your **personal social media account** to follow or friend students.
5. Make sure all **recordings or photos** of students follow district policy, are on a school-owned device, and are not revealing or inappropriate.
6. When meeting with students, **avoid one-on-one interactions** and opt for areas with more visibility (e.g., corner of the library, main office). It can be difficult to defend private interactions, such as meetings when windows are covered or doors are closed.
7. Keeping **windows to the hallway uncovered** helps protect you if allegations arise. Creating **open line-of-sight** within the classroom also protects students from bullying and harassment by ensuring they are visible to the teacher.
8. It is best to replace hugs with high fives and fist bumps. **Avoid close physical interactions with students** and avoid “personal bubbles.” Make sure physical contact with students is professional.
9. **Comments about appearance** should be appropriate and professional. A good rule of thumb is if you would not say it in front of a student’s parents, you should not be saying it at all.
10. **Oversharing with students** can be risky. Avoid topics such as romantic relationships, relationship struggles or other intimate topics.
11. When **conversations about student relationships** arise, consider adding a second adult to the conversation, use caution and limit your involvement to that which is professional.
12. **Transporting student(s)** in your personal vehicle can open you up to personal liability and may be against board policy. It also creates the risk of student interactions in a private environment. Using school-approved transportation methods is always best. Check out the Student Transportation in Private Vehicles QRG for more information.





When something occurs outside these best practices, you have a duty to report it to your supervisor and/or your designated licensed administrator, whether it is something you were directly involved in or something you witnessed or were told.

For example:

- A student in crisis calls/emails outside normal business hours.
- A student gains access to your personal cell phone number.
- A student is suspected of having romantic feelings for you.

If you come across a situation where child sexual abuse images/materials are present, do not view them and do not delete them (this includes on students' phones). Believe the student when they say the image(s) exist and contact law enforcement immediately. Notify your supervisor and designated licensed administrator.

For additional resources, or to access in-person training, contact riskmanagement@sdao.com.