



STAFF MEMBER-STUDENT RELATIONS POLICY

Boundaries Defined

For the purposes of this policy, the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff members while interacting with a student. Trespassing beyond the boundaries of a student-staff relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective, but some of these can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parental point of view. The purpose of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behavior is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between staff and students but to prevent relationships that could lead to or may be perceived as inappropriate, sexual misconduct, or “grooming.”

Grooming is defined as an act or series of acts by a sexual predator to gain physical and/or emotional control by gaining trust (of staff and/or family and a minor) and desensitizing the minor to various forms of touching and other intimate interaction.

Staff members must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring that they do not cross the Boundaries as written in this policy. If a student specifically requests that he or she not be touched, then that request must be honored. Violations could subject the staff member to discipline up to and including termination. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for any required disciplinary purposes.

Thus, it is critical that all employees study this policy thoroughly and apply its spirit and intent in their daily activities. Although sincere, professional interaction with students fosters the School’s mission of academic excellence, student/staff interaction has boundaries regarding the activities, locations and intentions.

Unacceptable Behaviors

These lists, and any subsequent lists, are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather illustrative of the types of behavior addressed by this policy.

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature (including photographs); or items such as money, food, outings, electronics, etc. without the written pre-approval of the Executive Director. It is recommended that any such gifts be filtered through the Executive Director along with the reason for the gift.
- Kissing of any kind.
- Massage (Note: Prohibited in athletics unless provided by massage therapist or other certified professional in an open public location. Coaches may not give massages. Massage is permitted in special education only as instructed under an IEP or 504 plan).
- Full frontal or rear hugs and lengthy embraces.
- Sitting students on one's lap with their consent (grades 3 and above).
- Touching a student's buttocks, thighs, chest, or genital area.
- Wrestling with students or other staff members except in the context of a recognized CCDS wrestling program.
- Tickling or piggyback rides.
- Any form of sexual contact.
- Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student, including but not limited to in a private situation.
- Intentionally being alone with a student away from the school.
- Furnishing alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs to a student or failing to report knowledge of such.
- "Dating" or "going out with" a student.
- Taking photographs or videos of students for personal use or posting online.
- Undressing in front of a student.
- Leaving campus alone with a student.
- Sharing a bed, mat, or sleeping bag with a student.
- Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments.
- Sexual jokes, or jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double-entendre.
- Seeking emotional involvement (which can include intimate attachment) with a student beyond the normative care and concern required of an educator.
- Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented.
- Discussing your personal life or intimate issues with a student.
- Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior.
- Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities without the express, advance written permission of the parent or legal guardian and the Executive Director.
- Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed and/or windows blocked from view.
- Allowing students in your home without signed parent permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or other responsible adult designated by the School.
- Remarks about the physical attributes or physiological development of anyone. This includes comments such as "Looking fine!" or "Check out that [body part]."
- Excessive attention toward a particular student.
- Staff mirroring the immature behavior of minors.

- Sending emails, text messages, social media (e.g., Facebook) messages, instant messages, or letters to students or chatting electronically with students if the content is not about school activities; communication via private social media or other personal accounts is not acceptable.
- Using profanity with or to a student.

Acceptable and Recommended Behaviors

- Placing TK through second grade students on one's lap for purposes of comforting the child for a short duration only.
- Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property.
- Obtaining prior written approval (School and parental) to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions, including parent's written permission and waiver form for any sponsored after-school activity whether on or off campus.
- Sending emails or text-messages and/or initiating phone conversations and other communications to and with students that are professional and pertain to school activities or classes using transparent, school-based technology and equipment.
- Keeping the door wide open when alone with a student.
- Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student.
- Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries, including touching your legs, or buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing, or caressing.
- Keeping administration informed when a significant issue develops about a student, such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior.
- Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief.
- Immediately asking for advice from senior staff or administrators if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries.
- Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with a student.
- Informing your supervisor about situations that have the potential to become more severe, including but not limited to, grooming or other red flag behaviors observed in colleagues, written material that is disturbing, or a student's fixation on an adult.
- Making detailed notes about an incident that, in your best judgment, could evolve into a more serious situation later.
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students and/or co-workers.
- Asking another staff member to be present if you will be alone with any student who may have severe social or emotional challenges (and you are not the assigned case educator).
- Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours.
- Giving students praise and recognition without touching them in questionable areas, e.g., giving appropriate pats on the back, high-five's, side hugs, and handshakes are appropriate.

- Giving students comfort without touching them in questionable areas, e.g., touching face to check temperature, wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact when age appropriate.
- Giving students necessary assistance without touching them in questionable areas, e.g., holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities, helping a student up after a fall, performing CPR or other emergency first aid, or assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member.
- Touch required under an IEP or 504 Plan.
- Keeping your professional conduct a high priority during all moments of student contact.
- Asking yourself if any of your actions which go contrary to these provisions are worth sacrificing your job and career.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of, physical pain on a student.

For purposes of this policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to property.

For clarification purposes, the following examples are offered for direction and guidance of School personnel:

A. Examples of acceptable actions (i.e., not corporal punishment)

- Stopping a student from fighting with another student;
- Preventing a pupil from committing an act of vandalism;
- Defending yourself from physical injury or assault by a student;
- Forcing a pupil to give up a weapon or dangerous object;
- Requiring an athletic team to participate in strenuous physical training activities designed to strengthen or condition team members or improve their coordination, agility, or physical skills;
- Engaging in group calisthenics, team drills, or other physical education or voluntary recreational activities.

B. Examples of prohibited actions (i.e., corporal punishment)

- Hitting, shoving, pushing, or physically restraining a student as a means of control;
- Making unruly students do push-ups, run laps, or perform other physical acts that cause pain or discomfort as a form of punishment;
- Paddling, swatting, slapping, grabbing, pinching, kicking, or otherwise causing physical pain.

This policy does not prevent the use of reasonable force and touching in self-defense or in the defense of another. Restraining a child who is trying to engage in violent or inappropriate behavior is also

allowed. Only such force as necessary to defend one's self, another person, or the child or to protect property is legally permitted. Excessive force is prohibited.

Reporting

Violations of Staff Member-Student Relations Policy

When any staff member becomes aware of a staff member (or volunteer, guest or vendor) having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a reasonable suspicion of misconduct, he or she must promptly report the suspicion to the Director of Education or designee or the Executive Director. Prompt reporting is essential to protect students, the suspected staff member, any witnesses, and the school as a whole. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness of, or concern about, student behavior that crosses Boundaries, or any situation in which a student appears to be at risk for sexual abuse. If the allegation also constitutes a reportable event under California Penal Code section 11666, the employee shall comply with the requirements under California Penal Code section 11166.

Investigating

The Director of Education or designee or Executive Director will promptly investigate and document the investigation of any allegation of a violation of the Staff Member-Student Relations Policy, using such support staff or outside assistance as is deemed necessary and appropriate under the circumstances. Throughout this fact-finding process, the investigating administrator, and all others privy to the investigation, shall do their best to protect the privacy interests of any affected student(s) and/or staff member(s), including any potential witnesses, as much as possible.

As appropriate, the investigating administrator shall promptly notify the Governing Board in closed session of the existence and status of any investigations. Upon completion of any such investigations, the Executive Director shall report to the Governing Board any conclusions reached. The investigating administrator shall consult with legal counsel, as appropriate, prior to, during, and after conducting any investigation.

Consequences

Staff members who have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including and up to termination, and, where appropriate, will be reported to authorities for potential legal action.