

## STAFF-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

### 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-teacher relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust. Boundary violations may lead to discipline up to and including termination.

### Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviors

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective but may be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parental point of view. The purpose of the following lists of unacceptable and acceptable behaviors 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, or 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 they not be touched, then that request must be honored. Violations could subject the teacher or staff member to discipline up to and including termination. *Disagreeing with the wording or intent of these 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.

### Unacceptable Behaviors

These lists (and any subsequent lists) are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather, illustrative of the types of behavior we intend to address 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 Principal or School Leader. It is recommended that any such gifts be filtered through the Executive Director along with the rationale therefor.
- Staff are not permitted to contact students through any of the following methods unless the communication is school-related, uses approved platforms, and includes a parent/guardian or staff member (not sure if staff member should be removed):
  - Personal emails or text messages
  - Comments on students' social media accounts
  - Phone calls
  - Notes or letters
  - Any communication through private or unapproved platforms
- Private social media accounts may not be used to communicate with students under any circumstances.
- Any communication with students that could be perceived as “flirting”
- 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 perform massage or rub-down. 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 (grades 3 and above)
- Touching buttocks, thighs, chest or genital area
- Wrestling with students or other staff member except in the context of a formal wrestling program
- Tickling or piggyback rides
- Any form of sexual contact
- Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation
- Intentionally being alone with a student away from school
- Furnishing alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs or failing to report knowledge of such
- "Dating" or "going out with" a student
- Remarks about physical attributes or physiological development of anyone. This includes comments such as "Looking fine!" or "Check out that [body part]."
- Taking photographs or videos of students for personal use or posting online
- Undressing in front of a student
- Leaving campus alone with a student for lunch
- 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-entendres
- 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 troubles 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 Executive Director and the student's parent or legal guardian
- Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed and/or windows blocked from view

- Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms within your home without signed parental permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or designated school volunteer
- Staff mirroring the immature behavior of minors

#### Acceptable Behaviors

- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- When age appropriate, touching face to check temperature, wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact
- Placing TK through second grade students on one’s lap for purposes of comforting the child for a short duration only
- Holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities
- Assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member
- Touch required under an IEP or 504 Plan
- Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property
- Obtaining formal written pre-approval from the Executive Director 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
- Emails, text-messages, phone conversations, and other communications to and with students, if permitted, must be professional and pertain to school activities or classes (communication should be initiated via transparent [non-private] 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 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 administration if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries
- Involving your supervisor in discussion about boundaries 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 judgement could evolve into a more serious situation later
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop Unacceptable Behaviors of students and/or co-workers
- Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours
- Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact
- *Asking yourself if any of your actions, which are contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career.*

This policy does not prevent: 1) touching a student for the purpose of guiding them along a physical path; 2) helping them up after a fall; or 3) engaging in a rescue or the application of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or other emergency first-aid. Nor does it prohibit 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.

### Boundaries Reporting

When any staff member, parent, or student becomes aware of a staff member (or volunteer, guest, vendor) having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a strong suspicion of misconduct, they must report the suspicion to the Executive Director promptly. Reasonable suspicion means something perceived in spite of inconclusive or slight evidence. It is based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to believe the conduct occurred. 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.

### Investigating

The Executive Director will promptly investigate and document the investigation of any allegation of sexual misconduct or inappropriate behavior by a staff member, using such support staff or outside assistance, as they deem necessary and appropriate under the circumstances. Throughout this fact-finding process, the investigating administrator, and all others privy to the investigation, shall protect the privacy interests of any affected student(s) and/or staff member(s) including any potential witnesses, as much as possible. 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, and where appropriate, will be reported to authorities for potential legal action.