

Guidelines for Staff/Student Interactions

We encourage a close, warm, and considerate relationship between students and teachers. Our teachers serve as the students' role models, guides and mentors in learning as well as living. The purpose of these guidelines is to give clear direction regarding appropriate conduct and boundaries between staff and students. The expectations for conduct set forth in this document are not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of requirements, limitations, or prohibitions on staff conduct and activities established by school. Rather, they are intended to:

- Alert staff to some of the more sensitive and often problematic matters involved in faculty/staff-student relationships;
- Specify boundaries related to potentially sexual situations and conduct that is contrary to accepted norms of behavior and in conflict with duties and responsibilities of staff; and
- Provide staff with clear guidance in conducting themselves in a manner that reflects high standards of professionalism.

It is important for the school to maintain a school-wide culture in which students and staff members understand their responsibility to report misconduct without fearing retaliation from students, staff, or administration. In order to prevent abuse and/or exploitation, students and staff must know that the Administration will support them when they report possible misconduct.

Although this policy gives clear direction regarding appropriate conduct between staff and students, each staff member is obligated to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. One helpful standard that can be quickly applied when assessing whether your conduct is appropriate is to ask yourself, "Would I be doing this if the student's family or my colleagues or family were standing next to me?"

1. Boundaries

For the purpose of this policy, the term "boundaries" is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff members while interacting with a student. Trespassing the boundaries of a student/teacher relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

2. Definitions of Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member's perspective, but can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parent point of view. The objective of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behavior is not to restrain positive relationships between staff and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, sexual misconduct.

Staff must understand their own responsibility for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes. Thus, it is crucial that all employees learn this policy thoroughly and apply the lists of acceptable and unacceptable behavior to their daily activities. Although good-natured, heartfelt interaction with students certainly fosters learning, student/staff interactions must always be guided by appropriate boundaries regarding activities, locations, and intentions.

3. Unacceptable Behaviors

The following non-exhaustive list of behavior shall be considered violation of this policy:

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature;
- Kissing of any kind; any intimate physical contact, including touching, pinching, massaging, rubbing or brushing against the body;
- Making, or participating in sexually inappropriate comments or conversations;
- Making sexual jokes, stories, or jokes/comments with sexual innuendo;
- Seeking emotional involvement with a student for your benefit;
- Discussing inappropriate personal troubles or intimate issues with a student; or
- Intentionally being alone with a student on campus or away from the school without obtaining prior parental permission.

4. Unacceptable Behaviors without Parent Permission

The following behavior should only be exercised when a staff member has parent permission and has informed their direct supervisor:

- Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities;
- Being alone in a room with a student at the school with the door closed;
- Allowing students in your home;
- Communicating with students other than by using School technology (i.e. communicating via personal email, cell phone or social media) other than during a field trip or other school activity after receiving parent permission;
- Communicating with students outside of regular school hours; or
- Sending emails, text messages, or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.