



Empower Charter School Employee-Student Relations Policy

1.1.1 Boundaries Defined

For the purposes of this policy, the term “Boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by employees while interacting with a student. Trespassing beyond the Boundaries of a student/teacher or student/educator relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

1.1.2 Unacceptable and Acceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from an employee’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 behaviors is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between employees and students but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, misconduct.

Employees must understand their own responsibilities 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 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 charter mission of academic excellence, employee-student interaction has Boundaries regarding the activities, locations, and intentions.

The following is an illustrative list of unacceptable behavior, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature
- Kissing of ANY kind
- Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation
- Intentionally being alone with a student away from the School
- Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments
- Sexual jokes or jokes/comments with sexual 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 inappropriate personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their support and understanding
- 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 parental permission
- Being alone in a room with a student at the School with the door closed and windows covered.
- Allowing students in your home without signed parent permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity that must include the presence of another educator, parent, or other responsible adult
- Remarks about the physical attributes or physiological development of anyone
- Excessive attention toward a particular student
- Sending e-mails, text messages, instant messages, social media messages, or letters to students if the content is not about School activities and not in accordance with applicable School policies or in violation of the School's Social Media Policy
- Being "friends" with a student on any personal or non-School social media website
- Communicating with students or parents/guardians in violation of the School's Social Media Policy
- Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communications with students on School social media
- Using profanity with or to a student
- Involving students in non-educational or non-school related issues, including, but not limited to, the employee's employment issues

The following is an illustrative list of acceptable and recommended behavior, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining parents' written consent for any after-school activity on or off campus (exclusive of tutorials)
- Obtaining formal approval (School and parental) to take students off School property for activities such as field trips or competitions
- E-mails, text messages, phone conversations, and other communications to and with students must be professional and pertain to School activities or classes, and communication should be initiated via School-based technology and equipment
- Keeping the door open and/or window shades up when alone with a student
- Keeping reasonable space between you and students
- Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries
- Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops about a student
- Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief
- Asking for advice from senior staff or administrators (such as the Executive Director) if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to Boundaries
- Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with a student
- Informing the Executive Director about situations that have the potential to become more severe
- Making detailed notes about an incident that could evolve into a more serious situation later
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students and/or coworkers
- Asking another employee to be present if you will be alone with any student who may have severe social or emotional challenges
- Asking another employee 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; giving appropriate pats on the back, high five's, and handshakes
- Keeping your professional conduct a high priority during all moments of student contact

- Asking yourself if any of your actions that go contrary to these provisions are worth sacrificing your job, your career, and the reputation of the School

1.1.3 Reporting Violations

When any employee, parent, or student becomes aware of an employee having crossed the Boundaries specified in this policy, he or she must promptly report the suspicion to the Executive Director. All reports shall be kept as confidential as possible. Prompt reporting is essential to protect students, the suspected employee, 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.