
PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY

Sage Oak Charter Schools (“School”) adopts this Professional Boundaries Policy to recognize its responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing employee behavior to ensure a safe, learning-conducive environment. The expectation of the Board is for all staff to conduct themselves in a way that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of school employees and to adhere to appropriate boundaries between staff and students.

For the purpose of this policy, the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff while interacting with a student. Trespassing the boundaries of a staff/student relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust. Although sincere, competent interaction with students certainly fosters learning, staff/student interactions must have boundaries surrounding activities, locations, and intentions. It is each employee’s obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion and concern by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes.

Examples of Specific Behaviors

The following are examples of unacceptable behavior and are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Unacceptable Staff/Student Behaviors

1. Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature.
2. Kissing of any kind.
3. Any type of unnecessary or excessive physical contact.
4. Intentionally being alone with a student.
5. Making or participating in sexually inappropriate comments or jokes.
6. Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented.
7. Discussing personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their support and understanding.
8. Allowing students in the employee’s home.
9. Having a student in an employee’s vehicle or transporting a student.
10. Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable and Recommended Staff/Student Behaviors

1. Exhibiting professionalism in all communications with students, (e.g. emails, text, and phone calls to students) keeping discussion related to school content. All forms of communication must be professional and brief.
2. Obtaining parental written consent for any school activity such as field days, field trips, or competitions.

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3. Taking precautions when alone with a student such as: maintaining appropriate physical distance, keeping the door of a room open, being near to another individual, or if possible asking another staff member to be present.
4. Keeping reasonable personal distance from students.
5. Stopping and correcting students if they cross personal boundaries.
6. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops with a student.
7. Asking for advice from fellow staff or administrators in a difficult situation related to boundaries.
8. Involving a supervisor if a conflict arises with the student or if situations occur that have the potential to become more severe.
9. Making detailed notes about an incident that could evolve into a more serious situation later.
10. Recognizing the responsibility to intervene to stop unacceptable behavior of students or coworkers.
11. Giving students praise and recognition without touching them, or limiting physical contact to pats on the student's upper back or shoulder, high fives, or handshakes.
12. Keeping professional conduct a high priority.

Duty to Report Suspected Misconduct

When any employee reasonably suspects or believes that another staff member may have crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, the employee must immediately report the matter to the Human Resources manager. All reports shall be as confidential as possible under the circumstances. It is the duty of the administrator to investigate and thoroughly report the situation. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness or concern of student behavior that crosses boundaries or where a student appears to be at risk for abuse.