

Employee/Student Boundaries (AB 500)

WSOC employees are expected and required to maintain professional relationships with students whether on campus or away from campus. This policy is also equally applicable to volunteers and interns that work with students at the School.

Some activities may seem innocent from an employee's perspective, but may be perceived as flirtatious, sexually suggestive, or otherwise inappropriate, from a student's or parent's perspective. In maintaining professional relationships, employees must be diligent to avoid any conduct that is not a professional or appropriate employee-student interaction or could be perceived as not professional or not appropriate.

This policy is not intended to restrict warm, positive and supportive relationships between employees and students, which are appropriate in an educational environment. This policy is intended to restrict and prevent employee-student interactions that could lead to, or may be perceived as, flirtatious, sexually suggestive, or otherwise inappropriate.

The below are protocols and requirements employees must follow. These protocols and requirements are not an exhaustive list of prohibited employee conduct, but rather a general framework for describing inappropriate employee conduct that is prohibited.

INTERACTIONS AND PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

Employees are expected to treat students, parents and colleagues with respect, care and professional behavior. Employees are required to comply with the following:

- Working one-on-one with any student must be done in an open space or with doors open. Employees must balance potential privacy concerns with professionalism and must avoid meeting in locations that are closed off or not visible or accessible to others.
- With recognition that certain appropriate and limited physical contact may sometimes be appropriate, employees must use sensible judgement regarding any physical contact with a student and consider who the student is, the student's age and where and how they interact with the student. Physical contact must be limited in time and scope to that which is necessary to perform the educational activity and no employee should ever touch any student on or near any intimate body part. Some examples of when physical contact with a student may be necessary to perform an educational activity include assisting a student with a craft or knitting project, comforting an injured child, and teaching skills related to athletics.
- Physical contact in response to injuries or illness should be carried out using the techniques taught in the School's first aide training. Following the incident, documentation and notification to the parent plus the school receptionist, department, school Administrative Director or Faculty Chair are required.
- Physical contact reasonably needed to stop or try to stop a child from injuring himself or herself, other individuals, School property, and/or individual property needs to be carried out with conscious consideration for size, age and state of the child. Following the incident, documentation and notification to the parent plus the school receptionist, department, School Administrator or Faculty Chair are required.

- Physical punishment involving physical contact with the student is not allowed.
- If a student shares confidential information that could pose a threat to the student or others, employees have an obligation to and must notify his/her supervisor, or make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect in keeping with the School's child abuse reporting policy and mandated reporting laws.
- Employees may not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or consume alcohol or drugs at any School-sponsored activities where students are present. Employees are also prohibited from discussing any personal alcohol or drug use, whether past or current, with students
- Employees must act with transparency; any interaction with a student should be something an employee would feel comfortable saying or doing in front of that student's parents and the employee's supervisor.
- Employees are prohibited from buying or giving personal gifts to individual students.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Teacher-student relationships are a core element of the Waldorf pedagogy. These relationships are developed, nurtured, and maintained through morning handshakes, attentive conversations, occasional hugs, individual accommodations in the curriculum, academic support and other modalities of the curriculum.

As relationships evolve over years, employees must be careful to keep the relationships within the realm of the school work. Employees need to be mindful about and conscious about letting interactions become more personal than professional, take care to redirect infatuation or inclinations on the part of a student, and avoid letting the relationship serve the teacher's or employee's needs rather than the needs of the student.

Employees are required to comply with the following:

- While nurturing warm, positive, and supportive relationships, employees avoid creating excessive emotional attachments beyond the healthy employee-student relationship. Employees must use sound judgment as to how much information they share with students about their own personal life, not share information for their own personal emotional gratification, and must avoid sharing any information about romantic, sexual, or other types of private or sensitive information or other information that is inappropriate to share.
- Employee communications with students (e.g., notes, email, texts or other electronic exchanges, or phone calls) must be for School-related reasons only and must be professional in all respects.
- Employees are prohibited from meeting with students off campus unless it is a pre-approved School activity with other individuals present or if employees are meeting with students to plan school events or gatherings, the employee must first obtain the permission of the School administration and the student's parent or guardian.
- Avoid inviting students to teacher's home unless it is part of the curriculum (such as class social events) and with parental consent.

- Appropriate language should be used. Profanity is not allowed. Derogatory remarks and offensive comments do not fit in the WSOC community. Employees are prohibited from making jokes, using slang, or suggestive comments or innuendo of a sexual or discriminatory nature in communicating with students (or at any other time at work). Faculty should not invite students to join social media networking channels other than the school-owned systems set up for curriculum and grades.

- Faculty should not accept invitations from students to join social media networking channels.

- Employees must avoid any sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with students. You must never have a romantic or sexual relationship with a student. It is irrelevant of the nature of the relationship, consensual or nonconsensual, or condoned by the parents or guardians. Dating and any other type of one-on-one social interaction between an employee and student are prohibited.

- Employees should consult their supervisor if a student is or seems to be pushing the employee's personal boundaries, attempting to establish an inappropriate relationship, or it appears another type of problem is beginning to emerge.

REPORTABLE BEHAVIOR

Employees must understand their own responsibility for ensuring they do not cross the protocols and requirements established in this policy. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established protocols and requirements does not alleviate employees from strictly complying with this policy and will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes. If an employee finds him or herself in a difficult situation related to boundaries or has questions related to these protocols and requirements, he or she should consult his or her supervisor, the College Chair, or the School Administrator.

Employees must report any concerns they have about other employees, contractors, and/or volunteers engaging in behavior that is in violation of this policy. This includes self-disclosure if the behavior involves a personal violation. In addition to policies included in the Employee Handbook and/or this Policy, inappropriate behavior also includes:

- Any sexual offense, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with, or in the presence of, a child (including a child pornography offense);

- Any physical abuse, assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of a child; and

- Any behavior that causes emotional abuse or psychological harm to a child, whether or not the child consents.

