



STAFF-STUDENT BOUNDARIES POLICY
(Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 14, 2022)

PURPOSE

Golden Valley Charter Schools is a close-knit community, we encourage friendly, heartfelt relationships between students and their teachers. These relationships are at the heart of Waldorf Education. A Waldorf teacher aims to not only teach the whole class, but to reach each child as an individual. At the same time, the school requires employees to follow professional standards of conduct and to maintain appropriate boundaries between themselves and students.

SCOPE

This policy is intended to apply only to Employee - Student interactions. It does not apply to Employee - Employee or Employee - Adult interactions. This policy reasonably excludes Employee - Student interactions that take place within a Parental, Legal Guardian, or Familial relationship

DISCIPLINARY PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

It is the policy of Golden Valley Charter Schools that no employee will use corporal punishment against a student. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, tying, taping, or the use of any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior.

STAFF-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

GVCS expects that its employees maintain appropriate professional relationships with students and be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety in their conduct with students. Employees are encouraged to discuss issues with their Principal or Executive Director when unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of the policy.

Employees must understand that even an appearance of inappropriate relationships will adversely impact their effectiveness in the school environment. Therefore, employees must be diligent in maintaining the highest ethical standards when interacting with students both inside and outside the school environment and should practice the utmost professionalism with forming any social relationships with students and families outside the classroom.

While the use of appropriate touching is part of daily life and is important for student development, employees must ensure that they do not exceed appropriate behavior. If a child or employee specifically requests that he or she not be touched, then that request must be honored.

DEFINITIONS

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 relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

“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.

“Suspicion” means something perceived in spite of inconclusive or slight evidence. It is based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to believe that a violation of the boundaries policy occurred.

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s employees point-of-view but could be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from the perspective of students or parents. There is no single reasonable person standard. The purpose of the following lists of unacceptable and acceptable 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 inappropriate, or sexual misconduct, or “grooming.”

Employees must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. Violations could subject the employee discipline up to and including termination. 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 intended to be addressed by this policy.

1. Giving gifts of a personal and intimate nature (including photographs) to a student; 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 School Principal along with the rationale, therefore.
2. Kissing of ANY kind
3. 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.]
4. Full frontal or rear hugs and lengthy embraces
5. Sitting students on one’s lap (grades 3 and above)
6. Touching buttocks, thighs, chest or genital area
7. Wrestling with students or other staff member except in the context of a formal wrestling program
8. Tickling or piggyback rides
9. Any form of sexual contact
10. Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation
11. Intentionally being alone with a student away from school
12. Furnishing alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs - or failing to report knowledge of such
13. “Dating” or “going out with” a student
14. Remarks about physical attributes or physiological development of anyone. This includes comments such as “Looking fine!” or “Check out that [body part].”
15. Taking or requesting photographs or videos of students for personal use or posting online
16. Either partially or fully undressing in front of a student or asking a student to undress, with the intent to view/expose private body parts
17. Leaving campus alone with a student for lunch
18. Sharing a bed, mat, or sleeping bag with a student

19. Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments
20. Sexual jokes, or jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double-entendres
21. Seeking emotional involvement (which can include intimate attachment) with a student beyond the normative care and concern required of an educator.
22. Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented
23. Discussing your personal troubles or intimate issues with a student
24. Becoming too involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior
25. Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities without the express, advance written permission of the School Principal and the student's parent or legal guardian
26. Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed and/~~or~~ windows blocked from view
27. Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms within your home without signed parental or legal guardian permission
28. Staff mirroring the immature behavior of minors
29. Sending emails, text messages, social media responses, making phone calls, or sending notes or letters to students if the content is not about school activities. Communication via private social media accounts is not acceptable.
30. A visit to the student's home without parental or legal guardian approval or administrative notification.

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.

Acceptable Behaviors

1. Pats on the shoulder or back
2. Handshakes
3. "High-fives" and hand slapping
4. Touching face to check temperature or other first aid procedures
5. Consoling an upset student by example: wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact
6. Placing TK through second grade students on one's lap for purposes of comforting the child for a short duration only
7. Holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities
8. Assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member
9. Touch required under an IEP, behavioral contract or 504 Plan

10. Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property
11. Obtaining formal written pre-approval from the School Principal 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
12. 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), see Staff Electronic Media Policy and Employee Electronic Media Acceptable Use Agreement
13. Keeping the door wide open when alone with a student
14. Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student
15. Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries, including touching legs, ~~or~~ buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing, or caressing
16. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops about a student, such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior
17. Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief
18. Socializing (attending outings) with class or group gatherings with students outside of approved functions with parent or legal guardian approval
19. Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact

BOUNDARIES REPORTING

1. Immediately asking for advice from senior staff or administration if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries
2. Making detailed notes about an incident that in your best judgement could evolve into a more serious situation later
3. Recognizing the responsibility to report "Unacceptable Behaviors" of students and/or co-workers; see something, say something
4. Involving your direct supervisor in a 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)
5. Asking another employee to be present or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours

When any employee, parent or student becomes aware of an employee (or volunteer, guest, vendor) having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a strong suspicion of "grooming behavior," he or she must report the suspicion to the School Principal promptly. The School Principal shall notify the Executive Director. Prompt reporting of "unacceptable behaviors" observed in adult interactions with minors is essential to protect students, employees, any witnesses, and the school as a whole. When observant employees call attention to a boundaries violation(s), the likelihood of harm is greatly reduced.

Child Abuse / Sexual Abuse Reporting (Mandatory Reporting)

If, within your professional capacity or within the scope of your employment, you observe or gain possession of knowledge that a child has been a victim of child abuse or sexual abuse (or you reasonably suspect it), **California Penal Code Section 11166 requires YOU to immediately report this information or suspicion directly to your county child protective agency (CPS) or local police/sheriff.** The report

shall be made by phone immediately (employees will be provided a break from their duties to file the report), and a subsequent written report must be sent within 36 hours of your knowledge or suspicion of the abuse.

You do not need permission to report. No supervisor or administrator can impede or inhibit a report or sanction you for making the report. Your report is confidential, and you are protected from liability as long as you do not discuss the matter with anyone other than law enforcement, CPS and your school's designated responsible administrative person. Failure to meet your reporting obligation can result in a monetary fine and/or jail.

Internal reporting to the School Principal occurs after the phone-in report is made to the police/sheriff or CPS.

Internal Investigations

The School Principal will promptly communicate with the investigating enforcement agency to determine whether an investigation will be conducted by that agency. The administrator will confirm with law enforcement whether the initiation of an internal school investigation would interfere with any criminal investigation. Only law enforcement has the authority to grant clearance to investigate the matter administratively.

Upon receiving information from the mandated reporter, the designated responsible administrator must take immediate action to stop the alleged inappropriate conduct—~~¾~~—by removing the employee (or volunteer/vendor/guest) from the classroom or worksite when there is a potential risk to student or school safety. The Executive Director shall consult with legal counsel as appropriate, prior to, during, and after conducting any investigation.

Consequences

Employees who have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, and where appropriate, will be reported to the authorities for potential legal action.

1. California Ed Code of Regulations, Section 80303 requires Schools/Districts to report Credential holders change in employment status due to allegations of misconduct