



Boundaries Policy

Disciplinary Physical Contact With Students

It is the policy of Gompers Preparatory Academy that no teacher or other staff member 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

While the use of appropriate touching is part of daily life and is important for student development, teachers and other staff members must ensure that they do not exceed appropriate behavior. If a child or other staff member specifically requests that he or she not be touched, then that request must be honored without question.

Boundaries Defined

For the purposes of this policy the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff members 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.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviors

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective but may 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 staff and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to or may be perceived as inappropriate, or sexual misconduct, or “grooming.” 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.

Staff members must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. Violations could subject the teacher or staff member to discipline up to and including termination. *Disagreeing with the wording or intent of these 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.

Unacceptable Behaviors

These lists (and any subsequent lists) are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather, illustrative of the types of behavior we intend to address 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 Director/Superintendent or designee. It is recommended that any such gifts be filtered through the Chief Human Resources Officer along with the rationale therefor.
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.)



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4. Full frontal or rear hugs and lengthy embraces. Side hugs only.
5. Sitting students on one's lap
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 tell 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 Director/Superintendent or their desinee and the student's parent or legal guardian
26. Transporting students in a GPA vehicle (or personal vehicle) unless you are an approved driver and all GPA permission slips/field trip forms and itinerary are submitted to the Director/Superintendent and Cabinet supervisor prior to departing for the event
27. Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed and/or windows blocked from view
28. Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms within your home or any other private dwelling place without signed parental permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent or designated school volunteer
29. Staff mirroring the immature behavior of minors
30. 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
31. Allowing students to follow/friend you on personal social media sites

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.



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Acceptable Behaviors

1. Pats on the shoulder or back
2. Handshakes
3. “High-fives” and hand slapping
4. Touching face to check temperature, wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact
5. Holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities
6. Assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member
7. Touch required under an IEP or 504 Plan
8. Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property
9. Obtaining formal written pre-approval from the Director/Superintendent or designee 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
10. 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)
11. Keeping the door wide open when alone with a student
12. Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student
13. Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries, including touching legs, or buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing, or caressing
14. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops about a student, such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior
15. Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief
16. Immediately asking for advice from leadership if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries
17. Involving your direct supervisor in 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)
18. Making detailed notes about an incident that in your best judgement could evolve into a more serious situation later
19. Recognizing the responsibility to stop “Unacceptable Behaviors” of students and/or co-workers
20. Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours
21. Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact
22. *Asking yourself if any of your actions, which are contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career.*

Boundaries Reporting

When any staff member, parent, or student becomes aware of a staff member (or volunteer, guest, vendor) having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a strong suspicion of “grooming behavior,” they must report the suspicion to the Chief Human Resources Officer promptly. “Grooming behavior” is an attempt to build an emotional and/or physical connection with a minor to gain their trust for the purpose of sexual abuse. “Suspicion” means something perceived in spite of inconclusive or slight evidence. It is based on facts that



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would lead a reasonable person to believe that a violation of the boundaries policy occurred. Prompt reporting of “unacceptable behaviors” observed in adult interactions with minors is essential to protect students, staff, any witnesses, and the school as a whole. When observant staff members 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, and a subsequent written report must be sent within 36 hours of your knowledge or suspicion of the abuse.

If you need assistance with making a report, please immediately contact the Chief Student Affairs Officer and they will assist you through the process. Although permission is not needed to make a report, your supervisor or leadership team member can assist you through the process. No supervisor or leadership member 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 another 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 Chief Student Affairs Officer occurs after the phone-in report is made to the police/sherrif or CPS.

Investigating

The Director/Superintendent or designee will promptly communicate with the investigating enforcement agency to determine whether an investigation will be conducted by that agency. The leadership member will confirm with law enforcement as to 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 receive information from the mandated reporter, the designated responsible leadership member must take immediate action to stop the alleged inappropriate conduct - 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 Director/Superintendent or designee shall consult with legal counsel as appropriate, prior to, during, and after conducting any investigation.

Consequences

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