



Staff & Student Interaction Policy

Yosemite Valley Charter School (“School”) recognizes its responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing student and employee behavior to bring about the safest and most learning-conducive environment possible.

The purpose of the Yosemite Valley Charter School Governing Board approving the Staff & Student Interaction policy is to ensure that the School is ensure the safety of staff and students and to establish the following policy components:

1. Define the Term “Boundaries”
2. Outline Acceptable & Unacceptable Behavior
3. List Unacceptable Behaviors as an Illustration, Not Exhaustive List
4. List Acceptable Behaviors as an Illustration, Not Exhaustive List
5. Establish Expectations for Reporting
6. Establish Expectations & Process for Investigations
7. Establish Social Media Guidelines & Expectations
8. Establish Consequences for not Following this Policy

1. 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.

2. Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective, but some of these activities can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parental point of view. 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.

Staff members must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring 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.

3. Unacceptable Behaviors

These lists, and any subsequent lists, are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather illustrative of the types of behavior addressed by this policy.

- 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 school
- Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments
- Sexual jokes, or jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double-entendres
- 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 school with the door closed
- Allowing students in your home without signed parental permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or other responsible adult
- Remarks about the physical attributes or physiological development of anyone
- Excessive attention toward a particular student
- Sending emails, text messages, Facebook responses, or letters to students if the content is not about school activities

4. Acceptable and Recommended Behaviors

- Obtaining parent's written consent for any school activity (exclusive of tutorials)
- Obtaining formal approval (site and parental) to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions
- 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 school-based technology and equipment)
- Keeping the door open when alone with a student
- Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student
- 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
- Immediately asking for advice from senior-staff or administration if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries
- Involving your supervisor in discussion about boundaries 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)
- Making detailed notes about an incident that in your best judgment could evolve into a more serious situation later
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students and/or co-workers
- Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours
- Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact
- Asking yourself if any of your actions, which are contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career

5. Reporting

When any staff member becomes aware of another staff member, volunteer, guest or vendor having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a reasonable suspicion of misconduct, he or she must report the suspicion to their immediate supervisor or the Principal promptly. Reasonable suspicion means it is based on facts which would lead a reasonable person to believe the conduct occurred. Prompt reporting is essential to protect students, the suspected staff member, 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.

6. Investigating

The School will promptly investigate and document the investigation of any allegation of sexual misconduct or inappropriate behavior, using such support staff or outside assistance, as it deems necessary and appropriate under the circumstances. Throughout this fact-finding process, the investigating administrator, and all other privy to the investigation, shall protect the privacy interests of any affected student(s) and/or staff member(s) including any potential witnesses, as much as possible.

8. Social Media

Employees shall not accept students as friends on any personal social networking sites and are to decline any student-initiated friend requests. Teachers are not to initiate “friendships” with students or parents. Employees must delete any students already on their “friends” list immediately.

7. 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.