
PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY

Pathways Academy Adult Education (“PAAE” or “Charter School”) adopts this Professional Boundaries Policy under California Education Code 32100 to recognize its responsibility to ensure a safe, respectful, and learning-conducive environment for all students. The expectation of the Governing Board is that all staff conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the high standards of professionalism required of school employees and maintain appropriate boundaries between staff and students at all times, including in digital and virtual environments.

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 and supportive interactions with students fosters learning, staff-student interactions must always be appropriate in scope, location, method, and intent. .

This policy also prohibits conduct associated with grooming behaviors, including actions intended to build trust with a student for the purpose of exploitation or boundary violation, such as developing inappropriate emotional dependence, isolating a student, or increasing personal or private interactions outside appropriate school channels. It is each employee’s obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion and concern by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. Disagreement with the wording or intent of the established boundaries shall not excuse violations of this policy..

PAAE operates as a fully virtual charter school and all staff-student interactions are expected to occur through school-authorized platforms. Additional safeguards apply to ensure transparency and accountability in digital communications.

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 in a manner that is not observable or documented.
5. Communicating with students through personal email, personal phone numbers, or unauthorized applications.
6. Initiating or accepting contact with students on personal social media accounts.
7. Making or participating in sexually inappropriate comments or jokes.
8. Engaging in discussions of a sexual, romantic, or overly personal nature.
9. Discussing personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their support or emotional connection.

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10. Encouraging a student to keep secrets from parents, guardians, or school personnel.
11. Communicating with students outside of school-related purposes or outside of appropriate hours without legitimate academic need.
12. Circumventing school-approved communication or monitoring systems.
13. Developing exclusive relationships with students or creating dependency.
14. Engaging in any conduct that a reasonable person would interpret as grooming or boundary violation.
15. Allowing students in the employee's home or private residence.
16. Transporting or arranging transportation for a student outside approved school activities.
17. Becoming involved with a student in a manner that a reasonable person may suspect to be inappropriate.

Acceptable and Recommended Staff/Student Behaviors

1. Maintaining professionalism in all communications with students, (e.g. emails, text, and phone calls to students) ensuring content remains school-related. All forms of communication must be professional and brief.
2. Using only school-authorized platforms (e.g. LMS, school email, approved video conferencing tools).
3. Ensuring communications are transparent, appropriate, and capable of being reviewed if necessary.
4. Keeping parents/guardians informed when significant issues arise involving a minor student.
5. Taking precautions when interacting one-on-one with a student, including using observable, recorded, or otherwise documented communication methods.
6. Maintaining appropriate personal and professional boundaries at all times.
7. Stopping and correcting student behavior when personal boundaries are crossed.
8. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops with a student.
9. Seeking guidance from supervisors or administrators when uncertain about appropriate conduct.
10. Reporting concerns promptly and appropriately.
11. Recognizing the responsibility to intervene to stop unacceptable behavior.
12. Giving students praise and recognition in a professional manner.
13. Maintaining professional conduct as a priority in all interactions.

Additional Safeguards for Minor Students

When interacting with students under the age of 18:

1. One-on-one electronic communications should occur only through authorized platforms and, where appropriate, include or notify a parent or guardian.
2. One-on-one virtual meetings should be avoided when possible; when necessary, they must be conducted through authorized platforms and documented or recorded when feasible.

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3. Communication outside of normal school hours should be limited to legitimate academic purposes and appropriately documented.
4. Staff must not engage in private or unmonitored communication with minor students.

Duty to Report Suspected Misconduct

ny employee who reasonably suspects or believes that another staff member has violated this policy must immediately report the matter to the Executive Director. If the concern involves the Executive Director, the report should be made to the Governing Board Chair.

Employees must also report any awareness or concern that a student may be at risk of abuse, exploitation, or harm, including concerns involving another student.

Students and their parents/guardians may report concerns regarding staff conduct through designated school reporting channels, including anonymous reporting options where available.

All employees who are mandated reporters must comply with applicable reporting requirements under California law. Reporting under this policy does not replace mandated reporting obligations.

Retaliation against any individual who makes a good-faith report is strictly prohibited.

Investigation and Interim Measures

The Executive Director or designee shall promptly investigate all reports of suspected misconduct in a fair and impartial manner.

Where appropriate, the School may implement interim measures to protect student safety during the course of an investigation, including but not limited to reassignment of duties, increased supervision, or temporary removal from student contact.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, and referral to law enforcement where applicable.

Training

PAAE shall provide training to all employees, contractors, and volunteers who interact with students, including:

- Training on this Professional Boundaries Policy prior to working with students
- Ongoing training on professional boundaries, grooming awareness, and child abuse prevention
- Training on mandated reporting obligations

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Training shall be provided upon hire and annually thereafter in accordance with applicable law. The School shall maintain records of training completion.