Staff/Student Interaction

The purpose of this policy to provide additional specificity to the standards of conduct embodied in current Epic California Academy ethics-related rules and regulations so that staff members clearly understand the prohibitions and behavior boundaries which must govern their conduct. (For purposes of this policy, staff includes all school employees certificated or classified; full-time or part-time; and volunteers). The rules of conduct set forth in this policy are not intended to serveas a comprehensive delineation of requirements, limitations, or prohibitions on staff conduct and activities established by this school. Rather, the components of this policy serve:

- To alert staff about some of the more sensitive and often problematic matters involved in staff student relationships.
- To specify boundaries related to potentially sexual situations and conduct - the crossing of which is contrary to accepted norms of behavior and in conflict with the duties and responsibilities of staff.
- To provide staff members with clear guidance in conducting themselves in a manner that reflects high standards of professionalism. (It is important for Epic California Academy to maintain a school-wide culture in which students and staff understand their responsibilities to report sexual misconduct without fearing that school leaders will betray them if they do. In order to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation, students and staff must know that the administration will investigate reports about possible misconduct.)
- To clarify that improper action may have significant consequences.
- To provide an environment that empowers staff and students to identify actions that appear to have crossed Boundaries.
- To define the process that Epic California Academy will use for addressing potential improper conduct.
- To preserve student and staff privacy rights during any pending investigation as much as possible.

General Policy Provisions

Actions by staff members that are inconsistent or in conflict with the values established by Epic California Academy can harm students, staff members, and the school's operation; therefore, such actions areunacceptable. It is the policy of this school that all employees conduct themselves at all times in a manner that reflects the ethical standards consistent with the rules contained in this policy and otherwise proclaimed by this school. The provisions set forth herein are intended to guide all Epic California Academy staff members toward conduct that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of school employees while defining interaction boundaries between students and staff members.

While all Boundaries and/or situations cannot be addressed in a single policy, the issues delineated herein are among those that can be most problematic for staff members and that can have the greatest potential for a negative impact on this school and its community. Staff members should seek guidance in their daily conduct from established policies, procedures, and directives as well as through the guidance and recommendations of school leadership. Although this policy gives specific, clear direction, it is each staff member's obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders.

Boundaries

For the purposes of this policy, the term "Boundaries" is defined as: "acceptable professional behavior by a staff member while interacting with a student." Further, a staff member who trespasses beyond the parameters of a trustworthy adult/student relationship is deemed to have abused power and betrayed public trust.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member's perspective, but some of these can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parental point of view. The purpose of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable 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, sexual misconduct.

Staff members must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring that 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. Although sincere, professional interaction with students fosters the charter mission of "Academic Excellence," student/staff interaction has Boundaries regarding the activities, locations and intentions.

Unacceptable Behaviors

This list, and any subsequent lists, is not meant to be all-inclusive, but, rather illustrative of the types of behavior addressed by this policy:

- Giving gifts to an individual student 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 the school.
- Making or participating in sexually inappropriate comments.
- Sexual jokes or jokes and/or comments with sexual double-entendre.
- Seeking emotional involvement (which can include intimate attachment) with a student beyondthe normative care and concern required of an educator.
- Listening to or telling sexually oriented stories.
- Discussing personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their supportand understanding.
- Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriatebehavior.
- Remarks about the physical attributes or physiological development of anyone.
- Excessive attention toward a particular student.

- Sending e-mails, text messages, social media responses, or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.
- Being alone in a room with a student at school and with the door closed.
- Involving students in non-educational or non-school related issues, including, but not limitedto, the employee's employment issues.
- Using profanity with or to a student.
- Being "friends" with a student on any personal or non-School social media website.
- Allowing students in your home without signed parent permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or other responsible adult.
- Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities without parent permission

Acceptable Behaviors

- Obtaining parents' written consent for any after-school activity on or off campus.
- Obtaining formal written approval (from school site and parents) to take students off of school property for activities such as field trips or competitions.
- E-mails, text-messages, phone conversations and other communications to and with students 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 space between you and your students.
- 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.
- Asking for advice from senior staff or administrators if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to Boundaries.
- Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with a student.
- Informing your supervisor about situations that have the potential to become more severe.
- Making detailed notes about an incident that 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 if you will be alone with any student.
- Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when youmust be alone with a student after regular school hours.
- Giving students praise and recognition without touching them.
- Keeping your professional conduct a high priority during all moments of student contact.
- Asking yourself if any of your actions, which go contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career

Reporting

When any staff member, parent or student becomes aware of a staff member having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, he or she must report the suspicion to their supervisor immediately. All reports shall be confidential. Prompt reporting is essential to protect students, the suspected staff member, any witnesses, and the school as a whole. Employees must also report to their supervisor any awareness of, or concern about, student behavior that crosses the boundaries, or any situation in which a student appears to be at risk for sexual abuse.

Investigating

An administrator will promptly investigate and document the investigation of any allegation of violation of the Employee-Student Relations Policy, favoritism, or coercion, using such support staff or outside assistance, as he or she deems necessary and appropriate under the circumstances. If the allegation constitutes a reportable allegation under California Penal Code 11166, the administrator shall comply with the legal requirements of immediately reporting the allegation to a child protective agency and shall follow up with a written report within thirty-six (36) hours. Throughout this fact-finding process, the investigating administrator, and all others privy to the investigation, shall protect the privacy interests of any affected student(s) and/or staffmember(s), including any potential witnesses, as much as possible. The investigating administrator, if not the school principal, shall promptly notify the Principal that an investigation is in progress; the Principal, in turn, shall notify the Human Resources Department and the Superintendent who will notify the Board of Directors in closed session of the existence and statusof any investigations.

Consequences

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

Training

This document shall be discussed with and acknowledged by all Epic California Academy employees as part of their initial employment and again, on an annual basis, as part of ongoing training for all Epic California Academy employees.