

## **Guidelines for Staff/Student Interactions**

Kehillah encourages a close, warm, and considerate relationship between employees and students. Our employees serve as the students' role models, guides, and mentors in learning as well as living. The employee-student relationship should always help the student grow academically, socially, and emotionally. When employees consider roles, boundaries, power, and accountability they are better able to set limits and maintain healthy relationships with students.

The purpose of these guidelines is to give clear direction regarding appropriate conduct and boundaries between employees and students, and to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, sexual misconduct. The expectations for conduct set forth in this document are not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of requirements, limitations, or prohibitions on employees' conduct and activities established by Kehillah. Rather, they are intended to:

- Alert staff to some of the more sensitive and often problematic matters involved in faculty/staff-student relationships;
- Specify boundaries related to potentially sexual situations and conduct that is contrary to accepted norms of behavior and in conflict with duties and responsibilities of staff; and
- Provide staff with clear guidance in conducting themselves in a manner that reflects high standards of professionalism.

Kehillah prohibits any interaction between an employee and a student that could lead to a romantic or sexual relationship, whether of a consenting or non-consenting nature. These types of personal relationships are clearly prohibited by law and are contrary to the best interest of the persons involved and that of Kehillah. Employees who are found to be involved with a student in a romantic or sexual relationship, whether of a consenting or non-consenting nature, or in a relationship that could appear to be inappropriate, flirtatious, or overly friendly, are subject to immediate termination, and we also may advise legal authorities in accordance with our obligations. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes.

It is important for Kehillah to maintain a school-wide culture in which employees and students understand their responsibility to report misconduct without fearing retaliation. In order to prevent abuse and/or exploitation, students and employees must know that the Administration will support them when they report possible misconduct. Although this policy gives clear direction regarding appropriate conduct between employees and students, each employee is obligated to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders.

One helpful standard that can be quickly applied when assessing whether your conduct is appropriate is to ask yourself, "Would I be doing this if the student's family or my colleagues or family were standing next to me?"

### **Boundaries**

For the purpose of this policy, the term "boundaries" is defined as acceptable professional behavior by employees while interacting with a student. Trespassing the boundaries of a

student/employee relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust. Some activities may seem innocent from an employee's perspective, but can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from the perspective of a student or parent. Employees must understand their own responsibility 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 disciplinary purposes.

### **Definitions of Acceptable and Unacceptable Boundaries**

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member's perspective, but can be perceived as a flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parent point of view. The objective of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behavior is not to restrain positive relationships between staff and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, sexual misconduct.

While adolescents will inevitably challenge these boundaries, it is the adult's responsibility to educate the student as to what the boundary is and why it is important. It is also the adult's responsibility to maintain and correct if a student crosses a personal boundary. Employees must be particularly aware of conduct that can be mistaken as romantic or sexual in nature. There is a power imbalance between adults and children that will sometimes lead young people to idealize adults.

Thus, it is crucial that all employees learn this policy thoroughly and apply the lists of acceptable and unacceptable behavior to their daily activities. Although good-natured, heartfelt interaction with students certainly fosters learning, student/staff interactions must always be guided by appropriate boundaries regarding activities, locations, and intentions.

### **Unacceptable Behaviors**

The following non-exhaustive list of behaviors shall be considered a violation of this policy:

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature;
- Kissing of any kind; any intimate physical contact, including touching, pinching, massaging, rubbing, brushing against the body, or full-frontal hugs;
- Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments, jokes, stories, conversations, or sexual innuendos;
- Discussing an employee's own personal troubles or intimate issues with a student;
- Seeking emotional involvement or becoming involved with a student for your benefit in such a way that a reasonable person may suspect any inappropriate behavior;
- Inappropriate use of social media with or about students (see section on social media below);
- Excessive attention toward a particular student;
- Sending emails, text messages, or letters to students of a personal nature if the content is not regarding school activities;
- Being alone in a room with a student at the school with the door closed out of sight of the window;
- Remarks about the physical attributes and/or development of any student to the student or another person;

### **Unacceptable Behaviors without written Parental Permission**

The following behavior should only be exercised when a staff member has parent permission and has informed their direct supervisor:

- Giving students a ride to/from Kehillah or school activities without another person in the car;
- Babysitting Kehillah students or their siblings;
- Allowing students in your home;
- Communicating with students other than by using school-sanctioned technology (i.e. communicating via personal email, cell phone, or social media) other than during a field trip or other school activity after receiving parent permission;
- Intentionally being alone with a student on campus or away from Kehillah without obtaining prior parental permission;

Employees are encouraged to refrain from socializing outside of school hours with students or student families to avoid any appearance of favoritism or impropriety. Employees should use their good judgment in maintaining family or student friendships which predate the student's enrollment at Kehillah to avoid any appearance of favoritism.

### **Meeting with Students**

Employees can only meet alone with students when either the door to the classroom or office is open. If, for confidentiality purposes, the door needs to be closed, then the window must be uncovered and the student and employee visible. Employees should use their best judgement when meeting with students before and/or after school.