



AIMS Professional Boundaries

Student & Staff Interaction Policy

AIMS recognizes its responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing student and employee behavior to bring about the safest learning environment possible.

Professional Boundaries

This policy is intended to guide all AIMS employees in conducting themselves in a way that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of employees who interact with students and to specify the boundaries between students and staff. Trespassing the boundaries of a student/staff relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Although this policy gives specific, clear direction, it is each employee's obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. One viable standard that can be quickly applied, when you are unsure if certain conduct is acceptable, is to ask yourself, "Would I be engaged in this conduct if my family or colleagues were standing next to me?" Some activities may seem innocent from an employee's perspective, but can be perceived as inappropriate from a student or parent point of view. The objective of providing the examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors listed below is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between employees and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, sexual or other misconduct. 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.

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviors (Violations of This Policy) Absent Extraordinary Circumstances (e.g., a familial relationship)

- 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, including hugging a student.
- Intentionally being alone with a student away from the school.
- Cursing or making or participating in inappropriate comments related to sex, sexual orientation, race, or other characteristic protected by law.
- Failing to intervene when students curse or make inappropriate comments related to sex, sexual orientation, race, or other characteristic protected by law.
- Seeking emotional involvement with a student for your benefit, including involving students in adult issues.
- 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
- Allowing students in your home.
- Sending emails, text messages, posts, or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.
- Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed.
- Remarks about the physical attributes or development of anyone.
- Excessive attention toward a particular student.

Examples of Acceptable and Recommended Behaviors

- Getting school and parental written consent for any after-school activity.
- Obtaining formal approval (using the AIMS Transportation Policy and Guidelines) to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions.
- E-mails, text, phone and instant messages to students must be very professional and pertaining to school activities or classes (Communication should be limited to school technology).
- 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 fellow staff or administrators if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries.
- Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with the student.
- Informing your principal 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 or coworkers.
- Asking another staff member to be present when you must be alone with a student.
- Giving students praise and recognition without touching them.
- Pats on the back, high fives and handshakes are acceptable.
- Keeping your professional conduct a high priority.

Duty to Report Suspected Misconduct

When any employee reasonably suspects or believes that another staff member may have crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, he or she must immediately report the matter to the school administrator. All reports shall be as confidential as possible under the circumstances. It is the duty of the administrator to investigate and report thoroughly the situation. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness or concern of student behavior that crosses boundaries or where a student appears to be at risk for sexual abuse.

Use of Electronic Media by Staff to Communicate with Students

Any participation by any AIMS employee with students, including through the use of electronic media or technology, should always be limited to school business. Participation by AIMS employees with students in social media (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, video games), or other similar means, is highly discouraged and can lead to violations of this policy.

Specifically, AIMS employees are highly discouraged from inviting students to join social networks and insofar as such behavior occurs, employees will be responsible for any exposure/access by students to inappropriate or unprofessional content, including words or pictures.