



Policy Number: 2220

Dated: 03/29/2022

## **POLICY STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT/APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

### **PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

American Leadership Academy's Board of Trustees is committed to establishing and maintaining appropriate standards of conduct between staff members and students. These standards of conduct are also known as professional boundaries. Staff are role models for students, whether on or off school property. Staff members shall maintain professional and appropriate demeanor and relationships with students, both during and outside of school hours, as well as both on and off campus, that foster an effective, non-disruptive and safe learning environment.

All ALA staff members are expected to accept responsibility for their conduct, and to understand that their conduct may have legal consequences to themselves and to the school. Staff is expected to abide by a professional standard of conduct and model good citizenship for students, parents and the community.

The interactions and relationships between staff members and students should be based upon mutual respect and trust, an understanding of the appropriate boundaries between adults and students in an educational setting, and consistent with the mission of ALA. Even if a student participates willingly in an activity, prohibited interactions between staff and students (regardless of the student's age) are a violation of this policy.

Specifically, ALA expects that its staff maintain appropriate professional relationships with students and be sensitive to the appearance of impropriety, as defined in this policy, in their conduct with students. Staff members are encouraged to discuss issues with their administrator whenever they are unsure whether particular conduct may constitute a violation of this policy.

Staff members must understand that even an appearance of inappropriate relationships will adversely impact their effectiveness in the school environment, and may trigger a licensing investigation. Therefore, employees must be diligent in maintaining the highest ethical standards when interacting with students, both inside and outside the school environment. All social and/or personal relationships with students should be professional, appropriate and maintain the boundaries defined in this policy.

Staff members are not allowed to give their phones to students for them to use for any reason. Staff members should have their phones password protected at all times to prevent students from taking their phone and using it.

## DEFINITIONS

1. "Boundary violation" means crossing verbal, physical, emotional, or social lines that staff must maintain in order to ensure structure, security, and predictability in an educational environment and may include the following, depending on the circumstances:
  - a. Isolated, one-on-one interactions with a student out of the line of sight of others;
  - b. Meeting with a student in rooms with covered or blocked windows;
  - c. Telling risqué jokes to, or in the presence of a student;
  - d. Employing favoritism to a student;
  - e. Giving gifts to individual students;
  - f. Staff member initiated frontal hugging or other inappropriate touching;
  - g. Fostering, encouraging, or participating in emotionally or socially intimate relationships with students.
  - h. Photographing an individual student for a non-educational purpose or use;
  - i. Initiating or continuing communications with students for reasons unrelated to any direct educational purpose, including oral or written communication, telephone calls, electronic communication such as texting, instant messaging, email, chat rooms, Facebook, or other social networking sites, webcams, or photographs;
  - j. Exchanging personal email or phone numbers with a student for a non-educational purpose or use;
  - k. Interacting privately with a student through social media, computer, or handheld devices that is not specifically school related;
  - l. Sharing verbally or by electronic communication any inappropriate, lewd or sexual in nature, image or photograph with a student;
  - m. Engaging in any romantic or sexual relationships with students, including dating, flirting, sexual contact, inappropriate physical displays of affection, or sexually suggestive comments between staff and students; and
  - n. Discussing your own or another staff member's personal life or personal issues with a student.
2. "Boundary violation" does not include;
  - a. Offering praise, encouragement, or acknowledgement;
  - b. Offering rewards available to all who achieve;
  - c. Giving a pat on the back or a shoulder;
  - d. Giving a side hug;
  - e. Giving a handshake or high five;
  - f. Offering words of kindness;
  - g. Utilizing public social media alerts to groups of students and parents; or
  - h. Contact permitted by an IEP or 504 plan.
3. "Grooming" means befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child or a child's family to lower the child's inhibitions for emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.
4. "Sexual conduct" includes any sexual contact or communication between a staff member and a student.

5. "Staff member" means any individual employed by American Leadership Academy, including any certified or classified employee, along with any coach, substitute, contractor, chaperone or volunteer with unsupervised access to students.
6. "Student" means a child enrolled at the school.

## **POLICY**

1. Staff members shall recognize and maintain appropriate personal boundaries in teaching, supervising and interacting with students and shall avoid boundary violations including behavior that could reasonably be considered grooming or lead to even an appearance of impropriety.
2. A staff member may not subject a student to any form of abuse including, but not limited to:
  - a. Physical abuse;
  - b. Verbal abuse;
  - c. Sexual abuse; or
  - d. Mental abuse.
3. A staff member shall not touch a student in a way that makes a reasonable objective student feel uncomfortable.
4. A staff member shall not engage in any sexual conduct toward or sexual relations with a student including, but not limited to viewing with a student, or allowing a student to view, pornography or any other sexually explicit or inappropriate images or content, whether video, audio, print, text, or other format.
5. Staff member communications with students, whether verbal or electronic, shall be professional and avoid boundary violations.
6. A staff member may not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior towards students, parents/guardians, or other staff members or use profane, obscene, or abusive language against them or in front of them.
7. Staff members may not cause damage to or engage in theft of property belonging to students, staff or the school.
8. A staff member shall not provide gifts, special favors, or preferential treatment to a student or group of students.
9. A staff member shall not discriminate against a student on the basis of sex, religion, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other prohibited class.
10. Staff member use of electronic devices and social media to communicate with students must be professional, pertain to school activities or classes, and comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
11. A staff member may not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances during work hours on school property or at school sponsored events while acting as a staff member. Additionally, a staff member may not use any form of tobacco or electronic cigarettes on school property or at school sponsored activities.
12. Staff members may not provide alcohol or drugs (regardless of age) to students.
13. A staff member shall cooperate in any investigation concerning allegations of actions, conduct, or communications that if proven, would violate this policy.
14. ALA recognizes that familial relationships between a staff member and a student may provide for exceptions to certain provisions of this policy.

15. Conduct prohibited by this policy is considered a violation of this policy regardless of whether the student may have consented.

## **REPORTING**

1. Any staff member who has knowledge or reason to believe there has been a violation of this policy shall immediately report such conduct to an appropriate school administrator. If a staff member has a reason to believe a school administrator has violated this policy, the staff member shall immediately report the conduct to the Executive Director or the Board of Trustees.
2. Allegations of inappropriate staff-student relations shall be investigated immediately following school policy which may include putting the staff member on administrative leave. All obtained information from the investigation shall be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.
3. In addition to the obligation to report suspected child abuse or neglect to law enforcement or the Division of child and Family Services under Utah Code Ann. 62A-4a-403:
  - a. A staff member who has reasonable cause to believe that a student may have been physically or sexually abused by a school staff member shall immediately report the belief and all other relevant information to school administration.
  - b. If the staff member suspected to have abused a student holds a professional educator license issued by the Utah State board of Education, the administration shall immediately report that information to the Utah Professional Practices Advisory commission.
4. A person who makes a report in good faith shall be immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise arise by reason of that report.
5. Failing to report suspected misconduct as required herein is a violation of this policy, and the Utah Educator Standards.
6. Any staff member who is found to have engaged in inappropriate conduct with a student in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **TRAINING**

ALA will provide training to staff regarding this policy, including the staff member's responsibility to report and how to report. Staff members shall annually sign a statement acknowledging that the staff member has read and understands ALA's Code of Conduct/Appropriate Behavior Policy. This policy will be posted on ALA's website.

## **REFERENCES**

Title 62A, Chapter 4a, Part 4, Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting Requirements  
Utah Admin. Code R277-401, Child Abuse-Neglect Reporting by Education Personnel  
Utah Admin. Code R277-515, Utah Educator Professional Standards  
Utah Admin. Code R277-322, LEA Codes of Conduct