

EKA Professional Boundaries Policy

An employee is in a Position of Trust, regardless of the age of the student. This means that as an employee, your actions will be measured against a higher standard than that of other individuals. In order to receive the respect you deserve, you must treat students with respect and care, and you must take great care to avoid any situation which might be deemed as crossing professional boundaries.

Explore Knowledge Academy (EKA) is committed to ensuring that all relationships, interactions, and communications between EKA employees or representatives/volunteers and students, regardless of age, are appropriate by establishing clear procedures for all employees and representatives, defining appropriate and inappropriate conduct, mandating the reporting of inappropriate conduct, cooperating with law enforcement, and ensuring compliance with applicable laws.

It is inappropriate for any EKA employee or representative/volunteer to have a relationship, interaction, or communication with a student that is sexual, romantic, or intimate in nature, or is otherwise overly affectionate, friendly, or personal. EKA employees, representatives, or volunteers should be sensitive to and supportive of students, but should not be friends with students. A professional boundary must be maintained.

Avoiding False Allegations

Most allegations arise from a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the employee's intent. Knowing and understanding the consequences of high-risk behavior is the best prevention to becoming a target of a malicious allegation or fabrication.

Maintain Professional Boundaries

- What may be acceptable for non-employees may not be acceptable for employees. This is true 12 months of the year, seven days of the week. A school employee is always a school employee. An employee's after school behavior can also be scrutinized.
- Maintain professional boundaries and avoid relationships that become personal. Close relationships with students often lead to misunderstandings.
- An employee's duty is to be a role model, not a best friend.
- All relationships, interactions and communications with students must be honest, professional, respectful, and restricted to education-related matters or other developmentally appropriate topics.
- Avoid meeting students outside of school.
- Avoid driving students alone in your personal vehicle.
- Avoid touching students.
- Avoid mixing socially with students, especially if alcohol or drugs are involved.
- Ensure there is adequate adult supervision of both genders on field trips or other activities outside of school.
- Never date students, even adult students.

- Do not play favorites. Many employees know students who need extra care and attention. Be careful when dealing with these students. Show your concern and care in a steady professional manner that does not make exceptions.
- Be careful when giving students gifts. The best gift for a student is professional attention.
- Reflect on your actions. Avoid conduct you would be embarrassed to report.
- Avoid situations where you are alone with a student.
- Avoid physical demonstrations of concern. Students are often needy. Show your concern by listening to them attentively.
- Avoid writing cards or letters to a particular student. Ask yourself how other people could misinterpret the comment. Once written your comment cannot be deleted or retracted.
- If a student approaches you with a question or problem relating to, or to discuss, a personal matter or issue, you should be sensitive, and if the employee feels the student needs assistance, must redirect the student to a school administrator or counselor.

Using Electronic Communications

Electronic communication includes the communication of any written, verbal or pictorial information through the use of an electronic device, including, without limitation, a telephone, a cellular phone, a computer, or any similar means of communication.

There are countless examples of educational employees who have been disciplined or dismissed for inappropriate behavior related to the Internet, ranging from comments about their employer to videos of themselves posted on YouTube or other Social Media. The moment you post personal information to the Internet, you have lost control over who will see it and how it will be used. Pictures can be easily copied, altered and displayed in a completely different context. If you do not want the information published on the front page of a newspaper, do not post it on the Internet.

- As a digital citizen, model the behavior you expect to see online from your students.
- Alert students to appropriate online behavior and the proper use of comments and images.
- Maintain your professional persona by communicating with students electronically at appropriate times of the day and through established educational platforms (for example, a web page dedicated to a school program, project or class rather than a personal profile.)
- Maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with students to ensure that professional boundaries with students are maintained.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone, numbers, person email addresses or photos of a personal nature with students.
- Decline student-initiated "friend" requests and do not issue "friend" requests to students.
- Notify parents/guardians before using social networks for classroom activities. Let them know about the platforms you use in your classroom to connect with students and consider giving them access to group pages.
- Avoid exchanging personal notes, comments or emails with students.
- Avoid making telephone calls of a personal nature to students.
- Avoid engaging in sexualized dialog through the Internet with students.
- Make sure your online accounts are secure.
- Use caution when joining and using networking websites.

- Operate in all circumstances online as a professional.
- Always keep professional accounts tied to your EKA email. Personal accounts must not be tied to EKA e-mail addresses.
- Do not use personal accounts such as personal e-mail or social media to communicate with students whether or not you have direct contact, impact or control.
- However, you may use personal accounts to communicate with students regarding non-school matters including, but not limited to family business, church events, community athletic events, and other such items, only upon receiving parent/guardian permission.
- Group text messages to students may be used to communicate education-related matters, which includes athletic and extracurricular matters. Text messaging between EKA employees and individual students is prohibited, unless exigent circumstances exist, in which case the employee or representative/volunteer shall notify his/her supervisor, or a school administrator of the contact as soon as possible, but no later than the next school day.
- Electronic communication, including text messages, with students shall not take place between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., unless exigent circumstances exist. However, a notification of a grade or assignment generated in Infinite Campus, is not a violation of this regulation even if it is outside of the approved hours.
- No electronic communication can be reasonably construed as harassing, threatening, or bullying to a student or other EKA employee or representative/volunteer.
- All EKA employees and representatives/volunteers are obligated to adhere to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in all electronic communications and shall not share any personally identifiable information about students, share any information from any student's educational records, or use a student's photo without the approval of an administrator.
- EKA employees and representatives/volunteers who use personal social media should use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. If an EKA employee's or representative's/volunteers off-duty conduct interferes with EKA's operations or a student's education, or is otherwise sufficiently connected to EKA, such conduct may be addressed by EKA, which may result in discipline and/or removal.
- EKA employees and representatives/volunteers who violate these electronic communication rules, even if not sexual or inappropriate in nature, may be subject to discipline or revocation or termination of their ability to have access to students.

Inappropriate Conduct

- Asking questions about a student's, supervisee's, advisee's, or other employee's personal sex life.
- Refusing to stop sexual remarks when asked.
- Overusing sexualized content in teaching, such as frequent sexual examples to illustrate more general points in class.
- Making personal sexual comments to students, supervisees, advisees, or other employees.
- Unwanted touching of students, supervisees, advisees, or other employees.
- Making comments about a student's, supervisee's, advisee's, or other employee's body parts.
- Sharing stories about an adult's own sex life, sharing inappropriate text or visual images including video, inappropriate touching, or any sexualized conversation designed to gauge a student's vulnerability or willingness to engage in inappropriate behavior.

- Encouraging a student to go to a location and/or taking a student to a location, other than school property, without the verified permission of the student's parents or guardian, or causing a student to go and/or taking a student to any location with the intent to commit inappropriate acts.
- Unlawful contact with a student, which includes engaging in a course of conduct that reasonably causes a student to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, or harassed.

Reporting Inappropriate Conduct

- All EKA employees and volunteers are required to immediately, within twenty-four (24) hours, report to local law enforcement and Child Protective Services (CPS) once they know or have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, sexual conduct, or luring by another employee or volunteer for a public school or private school. All EKA employees and volunteers are also required to immediately report any actual, suspected, possible, or potential inappropriate relationship, interaction, or communication, which includes grooming, between EKA employees or volunteers and students to a law enforcement agency. Abuse and neglect of a child by to other persons responsible for the welfare of the child must be reported.
- When a report is made to a law enforcement agency and/or Child Protectives Services (CPS), EKA employees and volunteers should not conduct any type of investigation, including interviewing the student. The police must be allowed to be the first responders and conduct the investigation. EKA employees and volunteers are protected as mandatory reporters for reports that are made in good faith.
- If a student discloses to any EKA employee, representative or volunteer any potential abuse or neglect, sexual conduct, luring, or inappropriate relationship, interaction, or communication (inside or outside of the school setting), the student should not be questioned further, as this might hinder a proper investigation. The EKA employee, representative, of volunteer should report the concern as required and should not have additional conversations with the student, or notify the victim's family or the alleged perpetrator. The police must be allowed to be the first responders and conduct the investigation.
- EKA employees and representatives/volunteers in violation of the acts above shall be investigated by law enforcement for criminal prosecution. EKA will cooperate with the law enforcement investigation to the extent permitted by law. EKA employees, whether prosecuted or not, shall be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal or non-renewal. Other representatives, including volunteers, may be subject to revocation or termination of their ability to have access to students.

Disciplinary Offences

The following actions, including those listed above, may lead to disciplinary action, including termination:

- Accessing inappropriate website on a school computer.
- Sending offensive jokes
- Violating copyright by downloading audio, video or text-based materials.
- Using employer equipment for another occupation.
- Posting inappropriate pictures of yourself or others on the Internet.
- Posting criticism of staff, colleagues, trustees, students or parents on social media sites.



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- Sexual harassment of staff, colleagues, trustees, students or parents.

Any inappropriate communication, even if made on your own time, using your own resources, may be grounds for discipline up to and including immediate termination.

Reflect on your practices and examine your style of student interaction. You must be careful and professional, but do not let fear undermine your effectiveness as an educational employee.

I, _____, have read and acknowledge that I will follow the above Professional Boundaries Policy for Explore Knowledge Academy, dated this _____ date of _____, 20____.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____