Voices Academies recognizes its responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing student and employee behavior to bring about the most safe and learning conducive environment possible.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of, physical pain on a student.

For purposes of this policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee’s use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to property.

For clarification purposes, the following examples are offered for direction and guidance of School personnel:

A. Examples of PERMITTED actions (NOT corporal punishment)

1. Stopping a student from fighting with another student;
2. Preventing a pupil from committing an act of vandalism;
3. Defending yourself from physical injury or assault by a student;
4. Forcing a pupil to give up a weapon or dangerous object;
5. Requiring an athletic team to participate in strenuous physical training activities designed to strengthen or condition team members or improve their coordination, agility, or physical skills;
6. Engaging in group calisthenics, team drills, or other physical education or voluntary recreational activities.

B. Examples of PROHIBITED actions (corporal punishment)

1. Hitting, shoving, pushing, tying, or physically restraining a student as a means of control;
2. Making unruly students do push-ups, run laps, or perform other physical acts that cause pain or discomfort as a form of punishment;
3. Paddling, spanking, swatting slapping, grabbing, pinching, kicking, or otherwise causing physical pain.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Staff/Student Behavior

This policy is intended to guide all School faculty and staff in conducting themselves in a way that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of school employees and to specify the boundaries between students and staff.

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. 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?”

For the purposes of this policy, the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior
by staff members while interacting with a student. Trespassing the boundaries of a student/teacher
relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective, but can be perceived as
flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parent point of view. The objective 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 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. Thus, it is crucial that all employees learn this policy
thoroughly and apply the lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors to their daily activities.
Although sincere, competent interaction with students certainly fosters learning, student/staff
interactions must have boundaries surrounding potential activities, locations and intentions.

**Duty to Report Suspected Misconduct**

When any employee becomes aware of another staff member having crossed the boundaries specified
in this policy, he or she must speak to this staff member if the violation appears minor, or report the
matter to school administrators. If the observed behavior appears significant, it is the duty of every
staff member to immediately report it to an administrator. All reports shall be confidential. It is the
duty of the administrator to investigate and thoroughly report 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.

The purpose of the following lists of unacceptable and acceptable behavior is not to retrain innocent,
positive relationships between staff and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to or
may be perceived as inappropriate, or sexual misconduct, or “grooming.” Grooming is defined as an
act or series of acts by a sexual predator to gain physical and/or emotional control by gaining trust (of
staff and/or family and minor) and desensitizing the minor to various forms of touching and other
intimate interactions.

**Unacceptable Staff/Student Behaviors (Violations of this Policy)**

These lists (and any subsequent lists) are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather, illustrative of the
types of behaviors intended to be addressed by this policy.

1. Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature.
2. Kissing of any kind.
3. Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation.
Personnel

4. Intentionally being alone with a student away from the school.

5. Making or participating in sexually inappropriate comments.

6. Sexual jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double-entendres.

7. Seeking emotional involvement with a student for your benefit.

8. Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented.

9. Discussing inappropriate personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their support and understanding.

10. Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior.

11. Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed.

12. Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities without the express, advance written permission of the Executive Director or Designee and the student's parent or legal guardian.

13. Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms within your home without signed parental permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or designated school volunteer.

14. Sending emails, text messages or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.

15. 

This policy does not prevent: 1) touching a student for the purpose of guiding them along a physical path; 2) helping them up after a fall; or 3) engaging in a rescue or the application of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or other emergency first-aid. Nor does it prohibit the use of reasonable force and touching in self-defense or in the defense of another. Retraining a child who is trying to engage in violent or inappropriate behavior is allowed. Only such forces as necessary to defend one’s self, another person, or the child or to protect property is legally permitted. Excessive force is prohibited.

Acceptable and Recommended Staff/Student Behaviors

1. Getting parents’ written consent for any after-school activity.

2. Obtaining formal written pre-approval from the Executive Director or Designee to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions, including parent’s written permission and waiver form for any sponsored after-school activity whether on or off-campus.
3. E-mails, text-messages, phone conversations, instant messages and other communications to and with students if permitted must be very professional and pertaining to school activities or classes (communication should be initiated via transparent [non-private] school-based technology and equipment). Keeping the door wide-open when alone with a student.

4. Keeping reasonable space between you and your students.

5. Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries including touching legs, or buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing, or caressing.

6. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops about a student such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior.

7. Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief.

8. Immediately asking for advice from fellow staff or administrators if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries.

9. Involving your supervisor in discussion about boundaries situations that have the potential to become more severe (including but not limited to grooming or other red flag behaviors observed in colleagues, written material that is disturbing, or a student’s fixation on an adult).

10. Informing your Supervisor about situations that have the potential to become more severe.

11. Making detailed notes about an incident that in your best judgement could evolve into a more serious situation later. Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students or coworkers.

12. Asking another staff member to be present or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours or if you will be alone with any type of special needs student.

13. Asking another staff member to be present when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours.

14. Giving students praise and recognition without touching them.

15. Pats on the back, high fives (hands slapping) and handshakes are acceptable.

16. Keeping your professional conduct a high priority.

17. Asking yourself if any of your actions, which could be contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career
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