



#### **IV.C. Professional Boundaries: Staff/Student Interaction Policy**

Green Dot 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 Green Dot 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 raise concerns with parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. One viable standard that can be quickly applied is for the individual to ask themselves, "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, a breach of the professional boundaries that Green Dot employees are obligated to maintain. 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**

*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.
- Giving students a ride to/from school or 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 Green Dot 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, unless the student shows indications that it is not.
- 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, they 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 the situation thoroughly. 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 or other abuse.

## **Use of Electronic Media by Staff to Communicate with Students**

Although Green Dot employees enjoy free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, certain types of communication, typically by virtue of their subject-matter connection to campus, may relate enough to school to have ramifications for the author or subject at Green Dot. Knowing participation by Green Dot employees with students in social media (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, video games) or other similar means can lead to violations of the following that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment from Green Dot:

- Use of personal technology for non-Green Dot business should be limited to off-duty time and designated breaks.
- Any participation by any Green Dot employee with students, including through the use of electronic media or technology, should always be limited to school business.
- Green Dot employees must maintain a clear distinction between their personal social media use and any Green Dot-related social media sites.
- Green Dot employees' social networking profiles, personal blogs, or other personal online platforms should not be linked to Green Dot students' online profiles.
- Green Dot employees shall not invite students to join social networks unless authorized by Green Dot.
- When in doubt about contacting a Green Dot student during off-duty hours using either Green Dot-owned communication devices, network services, and Internet access route or those of the employee, employees must begin by contacting the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) through their phone number registered with Green Dot.

Green Dot employees must be mindful that any Internet information is ultimately accessible to the world. To avoid jeopardizing their professional effectiveness, employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the privacy policies, settings, and protections on any social networking websites to which they choose to subscribe and be aware that information posted online, despite privacy protections, is easily and often reported to administrators or exposed to Green Dot students. Before employees create or join an online social network, they should ask themselves whether they would be comfortable if a 'friend' decided to send the information to their students, the students' parents, or their supervisor.