

# Maintaining Boundaries With Students



## What Are Boundaries?

Boundaries are limits...lines that should not be crossed. When teachers and staff observe appropriate boundaries with minors, it helps to create a safe school environment where students can focus on learning and experience healthy social, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Displaying appropriate boundaries means:

- ✓ Interacting with students as a professional rather than a peer or a friend
- ✓ Respecting others' personal space: not being intrusive or domineering
- ✓ Recognizing the limits of one's role (e.g., a teacher is not a counselor)
- ✓ Recognizing that parents are the most important adults in students' lives

When an adult violates boundaries with a minor, this may indicate that an unhealthy relationship is being formed. Boundary violations are also part of the process known as "grooming," whereby offenders seek to gain a young person's trust (and often the trust of other adults) in order to satisfy their personal needs. Grooming can lead to sexual abuse.

## Why is it Important for Adults to Maintain Appropriate Staff/Student Boundaries?

- ✓ Promotes healthy relationships
- ✓ The focus remains on education
- ✓ Helps to clarify roles (a teacher's role is not to be a parent or counselor to students)
- ✓ Models for students the appropriate and healthy ways to interact with others
- ✓ Helps staff avoid the appearance of impropriety
- ✓ Provides an emotionally safe environment for students
- ✓ Respects parental roles and authority



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## Ways To Maintain Healthy Boundaries With Students

- ✓ Make sure that students address you as Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc.
- ✓ If it is necessary to meet with a student alone in a classroom, keep the door open and sit in a visible location
- ✓ Do not discuss your personal life with students, and do not ask students personal questions (e.g., about their relationships with their parents, other students, etc.)
- ✓ Do not keep secrets from parents; promptly inform them if any concerns arise that involve their children
- ✓ Notify the principal or guidance counselor if you have concerns about a student that you are hesitant to report to a parent
- ✓ Copy parents on student communications
- ✓ Never “friend” students on social media
- ✓ Do not send private messages to students other than on school approved platforms and for education-related purposes
- ✓ Use restroom facilities that are separate from student facilities
- ✓ Do not drive students in your vehicle or meet with them outside of school
- ✓ Avoid showing favoritism to particular students
- ✓ Limit physical contact to high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, etc.
- ✓ Do not attempt to act as a counselor unless it is your stated role
- ✓ Be aware of your own vulnerabilities and seek help, if needed

## Our Policy

The Diocesan Code of Conduct requires adults to maintain appropriate boundaries. Allegations of boundary violations will be taken seriously and addressed accordingly. Minor infractions will be addressed in a manner designed to correct the adult’s behavior and prevent further boundary crossings. Serious infractions will result in appropriate discipline, up to and including termination.

It is expected that when an adult is presented with evidence that he or she has violated boundaries and remedial or corrective action is recommended, the individual’s response will be one of thoughtful consideration, willingness to examine one’s own behavior, and sincere commitment to change.

Parents will be informed of any and all allegations of boundary violations that involve their children.

