



Board Policy on Professional Boundaries and Safe Learning Environments (SB 848)

Purpose and Scope

This policy establishes clear expectations for maintaining professional boundaries and promoting safe environments for pupils, in compliance with California Senate Bill 848 (SB 848, Chapter 460, Statutes of 2025), which amends various sections of the Education Code and Penal Code. The policy aims to prevent child abuse, neglect, and sex offenses, clarify professional boundaries, and ensure that all adults interacting with scholars understand their responsibilities.

This policy applies to all employees, governing board members, volunteers, contractors/vendors, and other adults who have contact with or supervise pupils at the Academy.

Definitions

Professional Boundaries: Appropriate limits on interactions between adults (employees, volunteers, contractors, board members) and pupils, including limits on physical contact, communication outside Academy hours, and personal relationships.

Egregious Misconduct: Conduct involving sexual abuse, assault, or other serious violations against a minor, as defined under relevant Education Code provisions.

Mandated Reporter: All Academy employees, volunteers, governing board members, and contractors whose duties require contact with or supervision of pupils (per amendments to Penal Code § 11165.7).

Professional Boundaries Standards

The Academy prohibits any behavior that could reasonably be interpreted as grooming, boundary violations, or misconduct. All adults must:

1. Maintain Appropriate Interactions:
 - Limit physical contact to educationally necessary and professionally appropriate actions (e.g., high-fives, shoulder pats with consent/context).

- Avoid being alone with a scholar in non-public areas without another adult present when possible.
- Do not transport scholars in personal vehicles unless authorized in writing by the administration and with parent/guardian consent.

2. Communication Guidelines:

- Use only Academy-approved communication methods (e.g., Academy email, Academy-provided apps) for scholar contact.
- Do not engage in private social media connections, texting, or personal messaging with scholars unless it includes the parent/guardian or is for legitimate Academy business with prior approval.
- Avoid discussing personal matters, sharing personal contact information, or engaging in non-educational conversations.

3. Gifts and Favoritism:

- Do not give or accept personal gifts from scholars or families outside of Academy-approved programs.
- Avoid showing favoritism or developing personal relationships with scholars.

4. Boundaries Among Scholars and Adults:

- Promote respectful peer interactions and intervene in bullying, harassment, or inappropriate scholar-to-scholar conduct.
- Maintain professional conduct among staff, volunteers, and contractors.

Violations of professional boundaries may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may be reported as required by law.

Categorical Specifics

Boundaries Between Scholars and Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors

Adults must:

- Limit physical contact to educationally necessary and appropriate actions (e.g., high-fives, fist bumps, or brief shoulder pats in public view with developmental appropriateness). Avoid hugs, prolonged contact, or touching sensitive areas.
- Never be alone with a scholar in isolated or non-public areas unless unavoidable and with immediate notification to another adult.

- Use only Academy-approved communication platforms (Academy email, Google Workspace/ Academy, or parent-included group texts) for all scholar contact. Private texting, personal social media messaging, phone calls, or direct messaging is prohibited unless it includes the scholar's parent/ guardian and has prior administrative approval.
- Avoid discussing personal topics, sharing personal contact information, giving personal gifts, or forming outside-of-Academy relationships with scholars.
- Never transport a scholar in a personal vehicle unless pre-approved in writing by the administration and with documented parent/ guardian consent.
- Report any scholar-initiated boundary-crossing behavior (e.g., flirtation, requests for personal contact) to the administration immediately.

Boundaries Among and Between Scholars

The Academy promotes respectful, safe, and age-appropriate peer interactions:

- Scholars must treat each other with respect and refrain from bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, hazing, or any form of physical, verbal, or digital aggression.
- Inappropriate scholar-to-scholar conduct (e.g., unwanted touching, sharing of explicit images, or discriminatory language) is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action per the scholar code of conduct.
- Staff will actively supervise and intervene in any observed or reported peer boundary violations.
- Age-appropriate instruction on healthy relationships, consent, and abuse prevention will be provided to scholars annually.

Boundaries Among Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors

All adults must model professionalism:

- Maintain respectful and appropriate interactions with colleagues, volunteers, and contractors always.
- Avoid gossip, harassment, discrimination, or unprofessional conduct that could create a hostile environment or undermine scholars' trust.
- Personal relationships among adults must not interfere with Academy duties or create conflicts of interest involving scholars.

- Per the JAA Employee Handbook, Acceptable and Unacceptable Scholar/Staff Behavior section, romantic or intimate relationships between adults in positions of differing authority should be disclosed to the administration if they could create a perceived conflict.

Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting

- **Mandated Reporting:** All mandated reporters must immediately report known or suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services, law enforcement, or both, as required by Penal Code § 11164 et seq. Failure to report is a crime.
- **Internal Procedures:** Reports must also be made to the Academy administrator or designated compliance officer. The Academy will not retaliate against any reporter acting in good faith.
- **Supervision and Protection:** The Academy implements procedures for adequate supervision in classrooms, playgrounds, restrooms, and during after-Academy activities to minimize risks of abuse or sex offenses. This includes background checks, visibility in common areas, and monitoring of high-risk situations.

Training Requirements

The Academy will provide annual training (and track completion) for all employees, volunteers, contractors, and board members on:

- Mandated reporter duties and penalties for failure to report.
- Prevention of child abuse, including sexual abuse and assault.
- Professional boundaries and safe environments.
- Recognition of grooming behaviors and boundary violations.

Training will use resources from the California Department of Social Services or equivalent approved programs. New staff/volunteers must complete training within 30 days of starting.

Hiring and Vetting Procedures

- Applicants for all positions must disclose prior employment at California Schools (districts, charters, private schools, etc.).
- The Academy will contact previous employers to inquire about substantiated misconduct or complaints.
- The Academy will check the statewide system for tracking egregious misconduct (when operational).

Comprehensive Academy Safety Plan Integration

This policy is integrated into the Academy's Comprehensive Academy Safety Plan. The plan will be reviewed and updated as needed, but no later than July 1, 2026, to include specific procedures for supervision, protection from child abuse/neglect/sex offenses, and related training.

Scholar Instruction

The Academy will provide age-appropriate instruction to pupils on abuse prevention, including sexual abuse and assault, using guidance from the California Department of Education.

Compliance and Enforcement

- The Superintendent is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.
- All adults must acknowledge receipt and understanding of this policy annually.
- Violations will be investigated promptly and reported to the appropriate authorities.
- The Academy encourages collaboration with its insurance provider or joint powers authority for best practices.
- This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by law.