



Branson Code of Conduct for Faculty and Staff

As of January 1, 2018, CA Law AB500 requires schools to share their student/employee interaction policy in their employee handbooks, on their school websites, and in writing to all parents at the beginning of the school year.

The school encourages close but appropriate relationships between students and school faculty and staff. At the same time, it is important that each employee's conduct is at all times professional. In order to best serve the well-being of the school's students and to avoid confusing communications and to prevent sexual misconduct, the school requires all employees and other adults in the school's community to maintain appropriate boundaries between themselves and students to ensure that they avoid even the perception of inappropriate conduct or favoritism. Some activities may seem innocent from an employee's perspective but can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from the perspective of a student or parent. Note, this code of conduct applies to conduct toward current students, applicants for admission, and any former students under the age of 21.

All employees are expected to adhere to the following guidelines and practices:

- When using a social media site, employees may not include current students or former students under the age of 21 as "friends," "followers," or any other similar terminology used by various sites. Also be aware of inappropriate use of social media about students.
- Avoid telephone calls or text conversations with individual students rather than using school's email and communication systems. Only use group text if it is necessary for student safety while off campus for a class or other school-sponsored activity. If texting an individual student is necessary make sure to include another adult in the messaging.
- Avoid communications with others containing inappropriate information if there is the likelihood that the receiving party will share it with a student, for example, sending content to a former student who is likely to share it with a current student.
- Avoid sending communications to students of a personal nature or not about school activities.
- Avoid giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal or intimate nature.
- Avoid sharing or inquiring about overly personal details of a student's private relationships.
- Do not have unnecessary physical contact with a student in either a public or private situation. This includes touching students in areas that would normally be covered by a bathing suit and always defer to a side shoulder hug if a hug is appropriate.
- Respect a student's right not to be touched or looked at in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.

- One-on-one meetings with students on campus should happen in public or visible places. If you find yourself alone in a space with a student, make sure that the space is visible to the public or that the door is open. Otherwise, move to a more public location. If a space with adequate visibility is not available, find another adult to be present. When a student's privacy needs to be preserved and no appropriate location is available, consider delaying the meeting.
- Intentionally being alone with a student off campus without parent and supervisor knowledge or permission is prohibited. This includes meeting with individual students at your home, over coffee, socially or otherwise.
- Advisory activities are only to take place during the school day. Advisors may take students off campus for an advisory lunch but must notify supervisor and parents in advance.
- Avoid contact with a student away from school for activities not related to school without parent and supervisor knowledge and permission, this includes babysitting.
- As with anyone in the school community, do not share or participate in sexually inappropriate or culturally insensitive comments, stories, or jokes with students.
- Do not seek emotional involvement with a student for an employee's benefit.
- Do not discuss an employee's own personal troubles or intimate issues with a student.
- Do not become involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior.
- Avoid excessive attention toward a particular student or group of students.
- Do not drive alone with a student except in emergency situations. The employee must inform the student's parents and the employee's supervisor within a reasonable time of such a circumstance.
- Keep parents and supervisor informed when a significant issue develops about a student.
- School employees have an obligation to report to the Head of School any behavior they deem inappropriate between an adult employee and a student.
- The school has the right and responsibility to investigate adult compliance with this code of conduct even if no report has been made.

Duty to Report

If an employee finds themselves in a difficult situation related to boundaries, the employee should ask for advice from a supervisor or the Head of School. When an employee becomes aware of another employee crossing appropriate boundaries with a student, the employee must report the matter to the Head of School as soon as possible. If the Head of School is not available, contact the counselor or the appropriate dean. In some circumstances, employees will also have the duty to report such conduct in accordance with mandated reporter requirements.

Students and parents who have concerns about boundaries between Branson employees and students should contact the Head of School or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The school will not retaliate against anyone who reports conduct that may violate this boundary policy. An employee who retaliates against an individual who makes a report under this policy will be subject to discipline.