



Code of Conduct for Employees at Bellarmine College Preparatory

Boundaries on Interactions with Students

The Catholic, Jesuit concept of *Cura Personalis*, which translates as care of the whole person, suggests conscious attention to the needs of others, distinct respect for unique circumstances and concerns, and an appropriate appreciation for singular gifts and insights. When our employees live out *Cura Personalis* in their interactions with students, they are also expected to establish and maintain clear and consistent boundaries.

It is also important to keep in mind, in any discussion of boundaries with students, that common sense should always dictate one's actions. No discussion of boundaries will be all-encompassing. As a school, we will always encourage teachers to err on the side of caution. The Jesuit Secondary Network's Document, "Go Forth and Teach" states:

"Growth in the responsible use of freedom is facilitated by the personal relationship between student and teacher. Teachers and administrators are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student, helping each one to develop a sense of self-worth and to become a responsible individual within the community."

When an applicant intends to join our Bellarmine College Preparatory community we require a thorough review and training on code of conduct expectations.

In order to be employed by Bellarmine College Preparatory, an employee must complete the following:

- Background check
- Shield the Vulnerable Training and/or Mandated Reporter Training
- Agreement by signature to all state-mandated and school policies, including child abuse reporting, harassment policy, safety policy and driver safety rules.

Once an employee is hired, policies are provided that guide the employee on the use of email and social media in regard to communication with students.

The following recommendations guide teachers and staff in the appropriate use of email, social media and text messaging:

1. Use your school email account when communicating with students or parents.
2. Communicate only about school matters or matters that are appropriate to be discussed in school.

3. Write as though you are certain that others will read what you write. There is no such thing as private email.
4. In the interest of maintaining an appropriate, professional relationship with students, employees should not communicate with currently-enrolled students via personal social media sites. This includes following a student's social media presence. Exceptions include communication with relatives and emergency situations. In the latter case, employees should notify his/her supervisor of the contact as soon as possible.
5. If you are communicating school-related information (change of time or location for an event) that must be communicated in a timely way, communicating by cell phone is permissible. Parents of students in the school-sponsored activity should be informed that you may be communicating via text and/or cell phone with their children. You should also inform their direct supervisor that this is sometimes their practice. Calling a student on his cell phone to discuss non-school related topics is never permissible.
6. Keep in mind that you are communicating with students and that the same boundaries must be respected in written correspondence as in oral communication.

Furthermore, employees are not only trained on but required by law to act in the best interest of the student in suspicious situations.

All school employees are mandated reporters who are required, by law, to report all known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters must not attempt to investigate whether the allegations are valid. If child abuse or neglect is reasonably suspected or if a student shares information with a mandated reporter leading him/her to believe abuse or neglect has taken place, the report must be made. No supervisor or administrator can impede or inhibit a report or subject the reporting person to any sanction. To make a report, an employee must contact an appropriate local law enforcement or county child welfare agency. This legal obligation is not satisfied by making a report of the incident to a supervisor or to the school. An appropriate law enforcement agency may be a Police or Sheriff's Department or County Child Protective Services.

The report should be made immediately over the telephone and should be followed up in writing. The law enforcement agency has special forms for this purpose that they will ask you to complete. If a report cannot be made immediately over the telephone, then an initial report may be made via email or fax.

The following are expectations for Bellarmine employees to establish boundaries and avoid the appearance of impropriety:

It is imperative that all educators – administrators, teachers, coaches, moderators, and staff members – protect themselves and the students they teach by practicing appropriate behavior with students.

1. Staying alone in a room with a student unless there is a window permitting others to see in or the door is open. When possible, leave the door open when meeting with a student.
2. Allowing students to become overly friendly or familiar with you. Students should not call employees by their first names/nicknames.

3. Engaging in private correspondence with students, including by personal email, text message, or social media. If you receive personal communication from a student and the communication is not appropriate, keep a copy of the communication and do not respond unless you have received permission from a supervisor.
4. Visiting students in their homes unless their parents are present.
5. Inviting minors or vulnerable adults (who are not family members) with whom there is a ministerial/work relationship, to be a visitor in one's home or residence without another employee present.
6. Transporting students in your vehicle and you must not drive just one student, regardless of whose vehicle it is.
7. Giving students your home or mobile telephone number without the permission and knowledge of your supervisor.
8. Hiring students to work in your home without the express knowledge and consent of your supervisor.
9. Engage in an intimate personal or sexual relationship with any BCP student or a student in any BCP program, even if the student is over the age of 18.
10. Engaging in unwarranted and/or unnecessary personal self-disclosure. This creates a situation where young people or vulnerable adults are drawn to personalities rather than to the community at large.

As a member of the Diocese of San Jose, Bellarmine College Preparatory adheres to the Standards for all School Workers Regarding Interaction with Youth. Students and their families can also find these standards along with other policies designed to protect our children in our Parent Student Handbook.

If you suspect child abuse, please contact Principal Kristina Luscher, the Diocese of San Jose, and the San Jose Police Department.