Employee Interactions with Students

The following are portions of the school’s policies which include language relating to interactions between employees (faculty and staff) and students. Assembly Bill 500, California Education Code, requires inclusion of these policies on the school’s website.

From the Employee Handbook

Acceptable Use Policy, Social networking and online communications (pg. 28)

The school encourages all members of the Poly community to use good judgment when communicating online with others. While the school recognizes that behavior off campus is not under its purview, members should understand that inappropriate messages sent to another member of the school community could adversely affect the social and academic life of the school. In such cases, the school will intervene in whatever manner it deems necessary and appropriate to restore a safe learning environment for all students.

[...]

Media Posting Policy (pg. 29-30)

Employees should refrain from using names or any other personally identifiable information associated with students or their work that will be shared, posted, or published by the employees.

Employees should refrain from sharing, posting, or publishing student images or work on personal websites, social media, or other accounts.

Guidelines for use of electronic and social media

[...]

Professional behavior and personal life (pg. 30)

Because Polytechnic School is a close-knit community, many employees have roles and relationships with parents, students, and community members that extend beyond the walls of the school. Employees are entitled to a private life but should also keep in mind that in any formal or informal interaction with a member of the community they represent the school. Employees are expected to act professionally in the course of carrying out their duties at school as well as when interacting with others via websites, email, social networks, text messages, and various other forms of telecommunication. Employees should model appropriate behavior that respects the school community and its members, especially where those interactions may involve current or former colleagues, Poly families, or students.

Responsible interactions with students (pg. 30)

The school community is built around the relationships that teachers and other employees develop with students. Coaches, counselors, faculty, and staff all have the privilege of and responsibility for developing open, healthy, nurturing relationships with students.
It is important that all employees maintain a professional decorum and an appropriate adult-student "distance" in their interactions with students, whether in face-to-face or electronic exchanges. Some interactions between employees and students — sending text messages by phone or videochatting, for example — are acceptable and appropriate in some contexts, but should be avoided in others. Keep in mind that the use of some media may give a false sense of intimacy or connectedness to the participants. Employees should use caution in deciding whether or not to use these forms of communication and give care to maintaining a sense of professionalism in order to avoid potential misunderstandings.

Use of email (pg. 30)

Email correspondence with colleagues, students, and parents should only be conducted using school provided email accounts. Students should be strongly encouraged to use their polytechnic.org emails when corresponding with teachers and other employees.

[...]

Use of social media (pg. 31)

Polytechnic School employees use a wide variety of social media to share and communicate with others. Although the community benefits when students and adults have positive, even friendly, relationships, a distinction should be maintained between using social networks with students in a professional capacity (generally encouraged where appropriate) and using them to be social with students (discouraged). To assist employees in making responsible decisions about their use of social media, the following recommendations should be followed:

- Employees should limit their social network connections with students to contexts that are educational in nature.
- Employees should favor interactions with a group over interactions with individuals.
- Employees may establish a class-related network or group but should not initiate individual connections (friending, etc.) of students.
- Employees should not accept connection requests from students unless there is a clear, unambiguous, school-related reason for doing so.
- Employees should be careful to avoid oversharing with students.
- Employees on a social network with students should be prepared to report inappropriate, illegal, or otherwise reportable events as required by school policy and/or the law.
- Employees who choose to participate in a school-related social network should consider carefully the option of maintaining separate accounts for personal interactions and for professional / school-related interactions. In either case, employees should always be aware of the reach of their posts.
Harassment policy (pg. 34)

Polytechnic is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and disrespectful or other unprofessional conduct based on:

- Race;
- Religion (including religious dress and grooming practices);
- Color;
- Sex/gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding or related medical conditions), sex stereotype, gender identity/gender expression/transgender (including whether or not you are transitioning or have transitioned) and sexual orientation;
- National origin (including language use restrictions and possession of a driver’s license issued to persons unable to prove their presence in the United States is authorized under federal law [Vehicle Code section 12801.9]);
- Ancestry;
- Physical or mental disability;
- Medical condition;
- Genetic information/characteristics;
- Marital status/registered domestic partner status;
- Age (40 and over);
- Sexual orientation;
- Military or veteran status;
- Any other basis protected by federal, state or local law or ordinance or regulation.

Polytechnic also prohibits discrimination, harassment, disrespectful or unprofessional conduct based on the perception that anyone has any of those characteristics, or is associated with a person who has or is perceived as having any of those characteristics.

In addition, Polytechnic prohibits retaliation against individuals who raise complaints of discrimination or harassment or who participate in workplace investigations.

All such conduct violates school policy.

Harassment prevention (pg. 35)

Polytechnic School’s policy prohibiting harassment applies to all persons involved in the operation of the school. The school prohibits harassment, disrespectful or unprofessional conduct by any employee of the school, including supervisors, managers and co-workers. The school’s anti-harassment policy also applies to vendors, customers, independent contractors, unpaid interns, volunteers, persons providing services pursuant to a contract and other persons with whom you come into contact while working.

Prohibited harassment, disrespectful or unprofessional conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations, comments, posts or messages;
• Visual displays such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
• Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other protected basis;
• Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests or sexual advances as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors;
• Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment; and
• Communication via electronic media of any type that includes any conduct that is prohibited by state and/or federal law or by school policy.

Sexual harassment does not need to be motivated by sexual desire to be unlawful or to violate this policy. For example, hostile acts toward an employee because of his or her gender can amount to sexual harassment, regardless of whether the treatment is motivated by sexual desire.

Prohibited harassment is not just sexual harassment but harassment based on any protected category.

[...]

Sexual violence (pg. 37)

Sexual violence is physical acts against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to the victim’s use of drugs or alcohol. An individual may also be unable to consent due to an intellectual or other disability. A number of different acts fall into the category of sexual violence including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion.

Poly prohibits sexual violence of any kind. Employees who engage in sexual violence are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Any employee who believes that she or he has been a victim of sexual violence is urged to bring the problem to the attention of his or her supervisor, division head, human resources director, or the head of school so that appropriate action may be taken.

Allegations of serious misconduct (pg. 37)

An allegation of serious misconduct (such as harassment, assault, etc.) involving one or more employees may involve an investigation and possible action by Poly, including mandatory reporting to authorities where students are involved.

Employees are encouraged to report misconduct to a supervisor, division head, director of human resources, or the head of school. While the school cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in all cases, it will endeavor to maintain the privacy of those involved.
Corporal punishment (pg. 43)

Polytechnic School does not allow nor tolerate the use of corporal punishment with students. California Education Code Section 49001 defines corporal punishment as “the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of, physical pain on a pupil.” The Code also states that “physical pain or discomfort caused by athletic competition or other such recreational activity, voluntarily engaged in by the pupil, is not and shall not be construed to be corporal punishment...” Any Poly employee using corporal punishment on students will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

From the Faculty Manual

Tutoring (pg. 12)

Faculty may not tutor for payment any students who are currently in their classes.

Teachers are available for extra help during the school day; teachers may not tutor for pay during the school day.

With the approval of the student's school director, faculty may tutor Poly students not presently enrolled in the courses they teach on the Poly campus after school hours. Any member of the faculty or staff who tutors needs to advise the school director of the time and place of these appointments and the name of the student(s). In addition, Poly faculty need to connect directly with the student's teacher before working with them.

Faculty may not tutor students from other schools on the Poly campus.

Upper school student disciplinary and academic procedures, Personal respect (pg. 45)

Polytechnic School embraces diversity, values the integrity of individuals, and strives to maintain a community that is free of all forms of disrespect. The working and learning environment, requisite to the educational program fostered by the school, must be one in which all individuals are free to develop relationships, work, and learn without fear of intimidation, humiliation, degradation, and harassment from the unwanted and unacceptable behavior of another (or others). To provide an environment in which sensitivity, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, and genuine learning can occur, it is important that each member of the community recognize, understand, and display appropriate and sensitive behavior.

Examples of unacceptable behavior include:
- Threatening actions or language;
- Use of sexually explicit language or materials;
- Any comment that is derogatory relative to race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, national origin, socioeconomic status, personal appearance, or the like.
- An incident with malicious intent will establish grounds for disciplinary action.
From the Community Handbook

Sexual harassment (pg. 16)

Poly prohibits sexual harassment of or by any student by anyone in or from the school. Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment of students impairs the ability of students to make full and effective use of the school’s instructional programs. Sexual harassment can cause embarrassment, feelings of powerlessness, reduced ability to perform schoolwork, and increased absenteeism and tardiness. California Education Code section 212.5 defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or a condition of an individual's community status, academic status, or progress.
2. Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of community status, academic status, or progress.
3. The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's efforts or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.
4. Submission to, or rejection of the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the school.

[...]

Any student of Poly who believes that she or he has been the subject of sexual harassment is urged to bring the problem to the attention of the division director or the head of school so that appropriate action may be taken to resolve the problem.