



Catlin Gabel

**PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND  
APPROPRIATE ADULT-STUDENT  
BOUNDARIES HANDBOOK  
2019-2020**

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## Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide all Catlin Gabel community members with information about how they can protect children from inappropriate conduct by adults and to set guidelines for all adult-student relationships in the school community.

This handbook governs all misconduct and inappropriate boundaries involving students that occur on or off school property or with any school-sponsored program or event. The policies apply to *all* adults interacting with Catlin students in conjunction with the school's programs, including employees (faculty, staff, coaches, etc.), contractors, volunteers, and any other third parties acting in any school-related capacity. The protections in our policies apply to *all* of our students.

This resource is designed to raise awareness of issues and situations that may arise, prompt reflective behavior, and provide some guidance. It cannot, however, possibly address all circumstances and situations. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of unacceptable or "at-risk" behaviors which may breach the boundaries associated with adult-student relationships. Likewise, this resource is not exhaustive of the policies that apply to our employees. Additional misconduct-related policies may be found in the *Employee Handbook*.

## Anonymous Reporting Tip Line

Catlin Gabel is now using **SafeSchools Alert**, a tip reporting service that allows students, staff, and parents to submit safety concerns to our administration five different ways:

1. **APP:** Search for "SafeSchools Alert" in the App Store to download for free
2. **PHONE:** (971) 351-1754
3. **TEXT:** Text your tip to (971) 351-1754
4. **EMAIL:** 1832@alert1.us
5. **WEB:** <http://1832.alert1.us>

Community members can easily report tips on boundary violations, misconduct, bullying, harassment, drugs, threats of violence, abuse or any safety issue of concern through SafeSchools Alert. When you submit a tip, be sure to use our school's identification code: **1832** in your communication. The tip line alerts the assistant head of school, director of human resources, and audit committee chair of the board of trustees. All anonymous tips will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

## Our Commitment to the Community

Catlin Gabel School is committed to providing a campus environment that is safe and healthy. We encourage supportive relationships between students and adults that promote student achievement and success. To that end, clear boundaries for interactions between students and adults in the community are paramount.

We require all adults affiliated in any way with Catlin Gabel School to maintain appropriate adult-student relationships at all times, both on and off campus. All interactions between members of the Catlin Gabel community should be based on mutual respect and trust, and should be consistent with the mission and values of the school. Every member of our community should expect an environment free of abuse, misconduct, and harassment, where appropriate adult-student boundaries are respected and maintained.

***Catlin Gabel prohibits and will not tolerate child abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or boundary violations.*** Any reasonable belief a violation of our policies, including a reasonable belief of inappropriate adult-student boundaries, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and/or child abuse, will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Those authorities may include law enforcement, Child Protective Services (“CPS,” also known as “DHS”), and/or the Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (“TSPC”), as appropriate.

No retaliation against individuals for working in good faith to report adult-student boundary violations, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or child abuse will be tolerated. Individuals who demonstrate retaliatory behavior towards a reporting adult or student shall be subject to discipline or, in the case of non-employees, other consequences as appropriate.

## Safe and Healthy Boundaries: T A P

The strong and supportive relationships between adults and students are a core value of a Catlin Gabel education. Catlin Gabel adults provide invaluable mentorship and support to our students, and these relationships foster a strong foundation for our students as they grow into young adults and go out and contribute to our larger community.

At the same time, it is never acceptable for these relationships to cross a boundary into one of an overly familiar, personal, romantic, or sexual nature. Employees and other adults in our community are required to exercise sound professional judgment with regards to adult-student boundaries at all times. Faculty and staff are in a unique position of trust, care, authority, and influence with students. This means there is always an inherent power imbalance such that if that trust is ever abused, the student’s welfare is compromised.

Some conduct will clearly breach appropriate boundaries with students. At other times, it will not be as clear. While there may be some “gray areas,” adults must take the responsibility for knowing, establishing, and maintaining professional boundaries and should always err on the side of protecting students.

All interactions with students should follow the acronym **TAP**.

## **T = Transparent**

### **EXAMPLES:**

- Avoid engaging in any type of behavior that might have the appearance of impropriety if observed by others.
- Send communications only from school accounts, not from personal email accounts.
- Consider the subject matter, content, purpose, timing and frequency of electronic communication. Any email, text, or other communication that is sent to a student should be one that can also be viewed by the student's parent.
- Keep student and adult interactions readily interruptible or within hearing or sight range of another adult.

## **A = Accessible to Parents and Supervisors**

### **EXAMPLES:**

- Make class-related social media and internet sites available to supervisors and parents.
- When in question copy a supervisor and/or parent on text and email communications.
- When meeting with students outside of class, leave the door open or meet in a room with a window or glass panel in the door, where you are in view of others.
- Do not cover classroom windows in a way that restricts viewing from the outside or hallways.
- Avoid inviting student(s) to your home or a location off campus without prior approval from a school leader and parent/guardian.
- Avoid transporting students in personal vehicles. The only exception is for emergency situations, and even then you need approval from a parent/guardian and supervisor.
- Do not have any student beyond kindergarten sit in your lap. Sitting in an adult's lap is only allowed in the pre-school and kindergarten class, and should be initiated by the student (not the adult) unless a child is hurt. Parents may request that their child not sit on any adult's lap at school or any school-sponsored activity.
- For students participating in a non-school activity for a Catlin Gabel employee such as babysitting, tutoring or coaching, both the parent and school need to be notified in advance of this arrangement.

## **P = Professional**

### **EXAMPLES:**

- Apply the same communication standards for electronic interactions that you would for in-person interactions.
- Do not post images of students on your personal social media sites without consent of the parent.
- Avoid conversations of a sexual nature with students. This includes conversations that involve sexual banter or questions about a student's dating relationships, or other conversations that are flirtatious or have a romantic tone.

- Avoid addressing students or allowing students to address adults with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
- Do not discuss your own personal problems (particularly personal relationships, sexual activities, or use of drug/alcohol), or other non-academic matters about your personal life, with students. If a student comes to you to discuss their own personal problems, encourage the student to talk to a counselor or to the student’s advisor.
- Avoid adopting an “emotional welfare role” beyond the scope of your school role (for example, in the Upper and Middle School it is appropriate for a counselor or a dean to offer support to a student, and for the student’s advisor to check in with a student in order to support and track the student’s development in athletics, their social interactions, and well-being, as well as their involvement in clubs and activities). If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate for you to adopt an “emotional welfare role”, please check with your division or department head.

Catlin Gabel maintains that all interactions should be fostered through the framework of **TAP**. To this end, we ask that everyone, all students, parents and guardians, employees, contractors, volunteers, board members, and others in our community, view all interactions with the following question in mind: “Are the interactions of this adult with this student **t**ransparent, **a**ccessible to parents and supervisors, and **p**rofessional?” If you believe that the answer is “no,” or you are unsure of the answer, we encourage you to speak with head of school, human resources, assistant head of school, or to report your concerns to the Catlin Gabel Tip Line.

Our school’s success relies in great part on quality relationships with our students and community. There are positive and appropriate ways in which to maintain these relationships.

## Examples of Appropriate vs. Inappropriate Conduct

### VERBAL / WRITTEN / ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Appropriate/Healthy	Inappropriate/Harmful
Praise for specific accomplishment	Sexually provocative or degrading comments
Humor and friendly comments	Risqué jokes
Positive reinforcement for good work or behavior	Singling out a student for favors or special privileges

Appropriate/Healthy	Inappropriate/Harmful
Compliments that are not personal in nature	Written greeting card messages, notes, texts, emails, social media posts, or yearbook inscriptions that are highly personal in nature
	Suggestive teasing that references matters of gender or contains sexual innuendo
	Engaging in overly-familiar banter or gossip with students
	Sending to a student or requesting a student send nude, sexual, or other intimate images or videos

## PHYSICAL CONDUCT

Appropriate/Healthy	Inappropriate/Harmful
Personal contact in safe-touch areas (i.e. shoulders, upper back, arm) if the behavior is obviously appropriate, such as when giving a handshake, pat on the back, or high five	Patting the buttocks
Legitimate nonsexual touching such as an athletic coach hugging a student who made a goal or a kindergarten teacher's consoling hug for a child with a skinned knee	Hugging, if the child is not receptive, if the adult is hugging too often or for too long, or if the contact is romanticized or sexually intimate
	Touching that is intimate, romantic, or sexual in nature
	Meeting students away from school grounds during out-of-school hours or take them away from school grounds before or after school hours
	Using corporal punishment

## Prohibition on Dating Former Students and Graduates Under Age 21

Catlin Gabel prohibits any of its employees from dating or having a sexual relationship with a current student at any time and from dating or having a sexual relationship with a former student until the student reaches the age of 21. If at any time the school learns that a current employee is dating or having a sexual relationship with a Catlin alumna or alumnus under the age of 21, that employee will be terminated. In the event the alumna or alumnus is under the age of 18, we will notify the appropriate authorities.

## Pre-Existing or Familial Relationships

Catlin Gabel recognizes that employees may have a familial and pre-existing relationships with parents or their own children's friends. Employees should use appropriate professional judgment when they have a dual relationship with students to avoid violating this policy and handbook guidelines, the appearance of impropriety, and the appearance of favoritism. The following recommendations may assist employees in these circumstances.

- Social contact should be generated via the relationship the employee has with the parents or by the event.
- Employees should avoid being alone with students in these situations. Where it is unavoidable, do so with informed consent of the parent.
- Faculty should politely avoid discussing matters relating to their workplace and should not discuss students' learning or progress at social or sporting events.
- Consuming alcohol in these situations may affect or impair your judgment, so alcohol should be limited when students are present at a social event.
- An employee with concerns about whether a situation may be compromising or may breach professional boundaries should discuss the concerns immediately with their supervisor or human resources.

## How to Report Child Abuse, Misconduct, Boundary Violations or Rumors of Sexual Misconduct

### Reporting Information and Expectations for All Non-Employees

Any student, parent, volunteer, contractor, or other member of the community with a concern about adult-student boundary violations, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or child abuse should immediately report the concern to the Catlin Gabel Tip Line, head of school, assistant head of school, or director of human resources. Catlin Gabel takes all such reports seriously and will investigate the concerns. When appropriate, Catlin Gabel will notify law enforcement and/or contract the services of a third-party investigator to conduct an investigation.

Upon receiving a report, a response team will convene. The Catlin Gabel Response Team is comprised of at least the head of school, assistant head of school, and director of human



resources. Additional team members will join the team that can contribute to a thorough response to the report. The team functions as a collaborative, multi-dimensional team encompassing critical partners including, but not limited to, school administration, counselor, Washington County Law Enforcement, and/or Oregon Youth Authority and Department of Health Services (DHS).

## TIP LINE

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## OTHER CONTACTS

**Head of School:** Tim Bazemore ([bazemoret@catlin.edu](mailto:bazemoret@catlin.edu))

**Assistant Head of School:** Barbara Ostos ([ostosb@catlin.edu](mailto:ostosb@catlin.edu))

**Director of Human Resources:** Linda Yoesel ([yoesell@catlin.edu](mailto:yoesell@catlin.edu))

**Washington County DHS for reports of child abuse:** (503) 681-6917 or 1-855-503-7233

## Reporting Information and Expectations for All Employees

Catlin Gabel employees must immediately report concerns about sexual misconduct, child abuse, or boundary violations to head of school, assistant head of school or director of human resources. **If the conduct rises to the level of child abuse, the employee is also required to report to Child Protective Services.**

**If you observe any adult engaging in the behaviors described in this handbook as inappropriate, harmful, or prohibited:**

- If a student is in imminent harm, call law enforcement immediately.

- Promptly inform the head of school, assistant head of school, or human resources of your observations.
- Do not wait or mull things over – just report it!
- Do not confront or discuss with the adult exhibiting the behavior unless it is necessary to do so to protect a student.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- If approached by anyone other than the appropriate administrator, CPS, law enforcement (e.g., a detective or police officer), or parent of the student, do not discuss the matter.
- Document who notified, where, when, what you reported, and to whom.
- If you observe student-to-student sexual harassment or misconduct, take appropriate action to intervene.

As mandatory reporters, failure to report first-hand concerns of adult-student boundary violations, sexual misconduct, or child abuse, or failure to report concerns of these inappropriate behaviors that are reported to them, is a violation punishable by law and by school disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Reporting obligations are in effect at all times, regardless whether when and where you obtained the information. An employee who, based on reasonable grounds, participates in good faith making of a child abuse report will have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as provided by law.

## Information and Resources

### 1. What You Should Know About the Grooming of Students

#### THE SIGNS: WHAT IS GROOMING?

“Grooming” is a pattern of behavior in which a perpetrator lures a child into an abusive relationship and conceals that relationship so the abuse can continue. Offenders groom victims for abuse, but they also manipulate the people around the child, such as parents or teachers. This is often referred to as “grooming the environment.” Grooming helps “overcome resistance, maintain access, and minimize disclosure,” notes Stephen C. Brake, a psychologist whose practice centers on the evaluation of sex offenders.

People who abuse children are often extraordinarily charismatic. They have to be. As one school leader explains, “No one is going to hand a child over to someone they think is creepy.” Offenders may use personal charm to gain access to children and to lure them closer. Personal charm provides an alibi because no one can believe that someone so likeable could harm children. Grooming typically involves the following stages:

- **TARGETING THE VICTIM:** The abuser searches for children with vulnerabilities he can exploit, such as low self-confidence, unmet emotional needs, strained bonds with caregivers, and low supervision.
- **BUILDING TRUST:** The offender learns about the interests and needs of the child he's targeted and gets closer without raising suspicions.
- **ESTABLISHING A BOND:** The offender works to fill a need in the child's life. He may offer gifts or extra attention, often lavishing praise on the child. He may treat the child like an adult, making the child feel special or chosen.
- **ENCOURAGING RELIANCE:** The offender works to make the child rely on him in numerous ways. The child may feel like the offender is the only person who cares for or truly understands him or her. This makes it harder for the child to stop the abuse when it happens because the loss would be so great.
- **ISOLATING THE VICTIM:** The offender creates situations where he is alone with the child, such as taking the child for a ride in his car or meeting the child in a place away from peers or known adults. The offender also isolates the child psychologically, making the offender the only person the child can turn to for support. This reduces the likelihood of disclosure and it also makes people less likely to believe the child when he or she discloses the abuse because the child may be viewed as distant or weird.
- **SEXUALIZING THE RELATIONSHIP:** Offenders typically try to desensitize children by touching them in nonsexual ways first and then gradually advancing to sexual touch. The offender may also violate boundaries by talking about inappropriate or overly personal matters or exposing the child to pornography.
- **MAINTAINING CONTROL:** Offenders manipulate victims emotionally to continue the abuse. An offender might treat the child as a co-conspirator, making the child believe that he or she is to blame and might get in trouble if the "relationship" is discovered. The child may conceal the abuse because the potential loss of the emotional connection and gifts or special privileges would be too great. The child may also worry that he or she will not be believed because the abuser is well-liked and trusted within the community.

In the school setting, abusers may exhibit many of the positive traits of great teachers: warm personality, a deep understanding of children, and willingness to work long hours to help students out. Someone who is grooming children for abuse, however, will exhibit boundary-violating behavior. It's important to train teachers to recognize grooming behavior as well as signs of potential abuse in children. It is also critical to empower every member of the community to report suspicions of abuse in order to protect children.

*Source: Excerpted from "Protecting Students from Sexual Abuse," NAIS Magazine Summer 2019, by Myra McGovern, Steve Mandell, and Kathleen Buckstaff*

## 2. What You Should Know About Reportable Child Abuse

### WHAT IS REPORTABLE CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is a crime under Oregon Law. It is also strictly prohibited under our policy, and concerns about potential abuse should be reported immediately. **The law establishes several categories of child abuse.**

#### CHILD ABUSE CATEGORIES

- Physical abuse (deliberate, non-accidental physical injury)
- Mental injury (extreme and/or repeated conduct which is isolating, frightening, intimidating, and undermining self-worth)
- Sexual abuse (sexual contact/involvement between a child or teen younger than 18 years and an adult who has greater knowledge, authority, power, and resources)
- Neglect
- Threatened harm
- Buying or selling a child
- Allowing a child to be present in an area where methamphetamines are being manufactured.
- Allowing a child to be exposed to a controlled substance in a manner that subjects a child to a substantial risk or harm to the child's health or safety.

Catlin Gabel School is subject to Oregon's mandatory child abuse reporting laws. This means that every school employee is a mandatory reporter and is required by law to report child abuse. An employee having reasonable cause to believe that any child under 18 with whom the employee comes in contact has suffered abuse or neglect, or that any person with whom the employee comes in contact has abused a child, must report or cause a report to be made to the Oregon Department of Human Services, Community Human Services, or a local law enforcement agency.

### WHAT IS "REASONABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE" THAT CHILD ABUSE HAS OCCURRED?

Mandatory reporters do not have to—and must not—wait to “make certain” or confirm that child abuse occurred before making a report. “Reasonable cause” is not defined in the law but is generally considered to be equivalent to “reasonable suspicion.” If a mandatory reporter (such as a Catlin Gabel employee) has a suspicion or reason to believe that child abuse may have occurred, it must be reported.

An employee who, based on reasonable grounds, participates in good faith making a child abuse report has immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as provided by law.

*Source:* CPS Guide on Child Abuse Reporting <https://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/de9061.pdf>

### 3. What You Should Know About Catlin Gabel’s Background Checks

All employees (including all regular faculty and staff, as well as subs, temps, and coaches) are required to submit to a background check, as are all chaperones, volunteers and contractors who have individual access to students. The screening process varies according to the adult’s role in the school community:

#### FOR ALL NEWLY HIRED EMPLOYEES

- Oregon State Police Background Check
- Fingerprinting via the Oregon Department of Education
- Sexual Abuse/Misconduct Verification Check (Sent to at least 3 of the employee’s most recent former employers)

#### FOR NEWLY HIRED BEGINNING SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

- All the above including enrollment in the Criminal Background Registry (CBR), which includes a second process of being fingerprinted

#### FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

- Oregon State Police Background Check
- If a volunteer will have contact with students without the presence or supervision of a Catlin Gabel School employee, they must also be fingerprinted
- This includes parent chaperones who must be fingerprinted in order attend an overnight school trip

Any individual required to submit to a criminal records check and/or fingerprinting in accordance with law and school policy will be terminated from employment, or not permitted to volunteer or chaperone, immediately upon (a) failure to pass the criminal records check; (b) the refusal to consent to criminal records check and/or fingerprinting; or (c) notification that the individual has made a false statement as to conviction of crimes prohibiting employment with the school as specified by law.

We voluntarily follow the Oregon Department of Education’s provisions pertaining to criminal records, including those pertaining to Forever Crimes. Subject individuals who have been convicted of any of the crimes listed under ORS 342.143 (i.e. “Forever Crimes”), or the substantial equivalent of any of those crimes if the conviction occurred in another jurisdiction or in Oregon under a different statutory name or number, shall be refused employment.

*Source:* Catlin Gabel Human Resources Department, 2019, GSB:10341422.1