

COMMUNICATION POLICY

TEACHER – STUDENT

The following forms of contact/communication/relationship between Entheos staff members and students, (students includes non-Entheos students that are in the grades K-9 and who would be age eligible to be at Entheos), are not appropriate, and shall be avoided:

- (1) Text messaging
- (2) Instant messaging
- (3) Phone contact between teacher and student's private cell phone
- (4) Any form of online communication or "friending" via social networks (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc.), chat rooms, private emails, etc.
- (5) This policy is not intended to curtail the use of email to communicate with parents, and whole families regarding class-wide or school wide programs, projects and assignments. Nor is it intended to prohibit use of email communication between parents and teachers regarding student performance/evaluation. However, all communication to parents should be done with the school assigned email or on a school phone.

In the event that there is a need to have the above forms of contact or relationship with a student for reasons outside of school purposes, (i.e. Scout or Girl Scout programs, Youth Sports, church programs, family friendships, etc.), the staff member must give a written disclosure to the director and it must be disclosed to the Board of Directors of the relationship with the student. This policy is not intended to restrict outside appropriate relationships or to require staff members to ask for permission to have outside appropriate relationships, only to disclose them.

FOOTNOTE: It is recommended that staff working at Entheos use the same guidelines above regarding communication with all minors, not just those in grades K-9.

The purpose of the above policy is to promote the highest standards of care for young people and to protect teachers and others from potentially devastating consequences of false allegations. All teachers are urged to consider how they can safeguard their own position in the light of this advice without giving up important personal principles of care and trust. Whenever doubt exists any teacher should seek the advice of the director.

SCHOOLWIDE

A philosophy and vision of open, honest and useful communication is much more important than a thick booklet of rules, procedures and steps to follow. Every person must ask of him or herself, "what is my intent" in this communication? If intent is really to punish, embarrass or gossip then any communication policy will not be helpful.

Open, honest and useful communication allows anyone at Entheos to communicate with anyone else. Basically communication will not be useful if the person you approach isn't the key person involved or the person who should handle the situation. Generally parents speak with their student first, then the teacher, then the Director, then the Board if satisfaction is not achieved at any previous level.

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Whenever we approach someone when there is a problem we should first evaluate our intent and our “end in mind.” Then:

- Speak directly to the person(s) involved
- Seek to understand the others’ point of view
- Keep your courage high to tell the true story and keep your consideration high to listen to the other party
- Seek a mutually beneficial solution

The model of maturity and interdependence we would encourage at Entheos would invite all parties in a disagreement to go together to the next level of leadership to speak about the situation. As an example if all parties would sit down with the Director together, this would be helpful in facilitating a solution. It may be appropriate for an individual student, parent or teacher to come to the Director alone however the problem may be resolved with more understanding and effectiveness all together.

At Entheos we encourage the full range of due process steps that may include appeals to the Utah State Office at Education, the Office of Civil Rights or legal challenges in a court of law when parties cannot reach a solution at the Director or the Board level. We do want to go hand-in-hand to these next steps as people with a genuine and respectful disagreement. Our democracy works the best in an atmosphere of transparency and it is possible that on occasion we will be unable to resolve our differences at the Board level.

If intentions are honorable and communication is open, honest and useful we will almost always achieve excellent solutions at the classroom and Director’s office level. When communication and disagreement is approached in this manner we see the Expeditionary Learning Design Principle of: the Primacy of Self Discovery, the Having of Wonderful Ideas and Empathy and Caring will create synergy. The end of conflict should be the integration of ideas for a new and better solution that neither party may have imagined beforehand.

When concerned parties find it necessary to go to the Board of Directors with a concern, it should be as a result of discussion held first at the school level. The Director will be responsible for getting these issues scheduled and all parties present or represented to the Board. Remember there is always direct access to the Board through public comment.

We should all remember that the Board of Directors must finally render decisions based on law, policy and Entheos Education Philosophy that may appear that the Board did not understand a differing point of view. Understanding all sides of an issue will not mean the Board can always make a decision that honor all sides equally.

As a final comment on the Entheos Communication Policy; all students, parents and educators agree in principle that we stand shoulder to shoulder and face the Entheos Mission Statement and Core Values. The mission and core values are the philosophy statement that governs communication.