ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educator Ethics
Module 1
Professional Conduct and Boundaries for Alabama Schools

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.
Create an awareness of educator/student boundaries that maintain a safe, healthy, and secure learning environment for all students.
Stimulating Thinking

How does the educator/student relationship evolve appropriately to impact student learning?
Participants will

• develop an understanding of proper and improper educator/student relationships and the life-changing impact they have on a student;

• discuss strategies to avoid a boundary violation;

• know and understand educator/student boundaries; and

• identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors when developing a relationship with a student.
In the News

Cases of improper relationships between teachers and students are on the rise nationwide.

Alabama teachers charged with sexual relationships with students

2015-16 school year
Alabama has One of the Highest Rates of Inappropriate Teacher-Student Sexual Relationships.
Since Alabama criminalized teacher-student sexual relationships, incidents of this crime went from 11 cases annually to 45 cases in 2017.
“Alabama has a Student-Teacher Sex Problem” (New York Post, June 2017).

Alabama also does a better job of reporting these incidents than many states.
Alabama Leads the Nation on a per capita basis in Inappropriate Student-Teacher Relationships.
Do you have a Social Media Account?
Teacher Charged with Sex with 15-year-old Student after Video Surfaces
Alabama Cases

Since 2010, there have been over 200 educators involved in inappropriate relationships with students. (2011-25; 2012-27; 2013-35; 2014-51; 2015-46-2016-49).
Common sense should prevail, but “The absence of reason is usually at the heart of inappropriate relationships.”

—Voltaire
• What is happening?
• Why are there more cases each year?
Video Scenario
Video Scenario Debrief
Enough is enough!
Professional Boundaries

Parameters describe the limits of a relationship between an educator and a student.

Set Boundaries

Know Your Limits
Professional Boundaries

The educator/student relationship is not equal.

(Bird, 2015)
Boundary Violations

- Emotional
- Relationship
- Communication
Emotional Violations

• “Playing favorites” with certain students
• Using subtle forms of control
• Showing preferential treatment
Relationship Violations

• Forming intimate relationships with students
• Having a romantic relationship with a student
• Meeting a student alone outside of school
Communication Violations

• Providing a student with advice on personal matters

• Using social media to communicate romantically or sexually
Boundary Violations

- Emotional
- **Relationship**
- Communication
The Teacher/Student Relationship

The overwhelming majority of educators in Alabama exercise their professional responsibility with care and conviction.
Not all sexual misconduct cases begin with the intention to victimize a student.

Some teachers fall prey to the slippery slope of misconduct.
Some educator/student relationships may initially be appropriate and well-intentioned, but at some point they can shift to serving the needs of the teacher and not the needs of the student.
A teacher’s conversation with a student after class:

**Teacher:** Maria, I’ve noticed that you’ve been absent for the last three days. I’m glad you are here today. Is everything OK?

**Student:** No, my father walked out on us and my boyfriend broke up with me. I wish more guys were like you.

How would you respond to the student’s comment?
Intentional Boundary Violations

Some teachers intentionally groom a student for the purpose of engaging in sexual misconduct.
A Student’s Response

Actual statement submitted by a student to the Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Investigations:

“"I’m writing this letter not to stir up drama or controversy, but because I now have the confidence and courage to say that Mr. Benedict is a predator. He gains the trust of female students and slowly makes advances at them. He exploits his power and authority as a teacher to manipulate female students.”

(Name has been changed.)
Sexual Grooming

Finding a vulnerable student and engaging in inappropriate boundary invasions
Grooming Process: Phase 1

Picking a student
Grooming Process: Phase 2

Engaging with a student in student-like behaviors
Grooming Process: Phase 3

Desensitizing the student to touch
Grooming Process: Phase 4

Isolating the student
Grooming Process: Phase 5

Making the student feel responsible
What are the teacher behavior expectations on your campus?
Maintaining Professional Boundaries

No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.

- James Comer
Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries can be maintained by making them **transparent, approved, and timely.**
Maintaining Professional Boundaries
Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Build a supportive relationship by being a teacher and not a friend.

We listen, guide, praise, correct, respect, honor, discipline, and TEACH effectively.
Guideline Expectations

**Don’t** have one-on-one meetings behind closed doors or personal social media exchanges.

**Do** listen, praise, and guide your students.
Guideline Expectations

Don’t have meetings with your students away from school, and don’t exchange personal gifts.

Do respect, discipline, and honor your students.
Guideline Expectations

Don’t have physical contact with your students.

Do correct and teach your students.
PERFORMANCE TASK
Any
Questions?
References


References


If you have any questions about this presentation, please contact Susan Crowther with the Alabama State Department of Education
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