



# **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.



# **BREAKING NEWS**

**Alabama has One of the Highest Rates of  
Inappropriate Teacher-Student Sexual  
Relationships.**

# **BREAKING NEWS**

**Since Alabama criminalized teacher-student sexual relationships, incidents of this crime went from 11 cases annually to 45 cases in 2017.**



# **BREAKING NEWS**

**“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.**

# **BREAKING NEWS**

**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.”*



- What is happening?
- Why are there more cases each year?



# Video Scenario



# Video Scenario Debrief

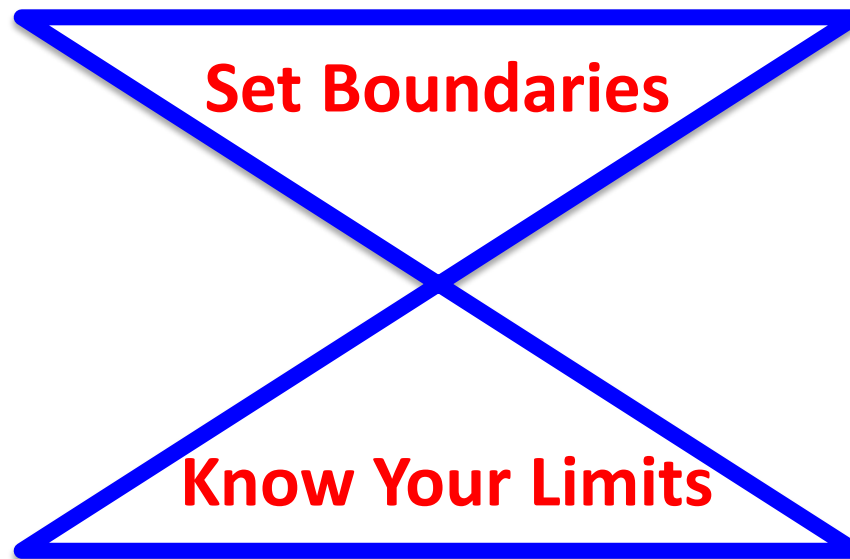


# Enough is enough!



# Professional Boundaries

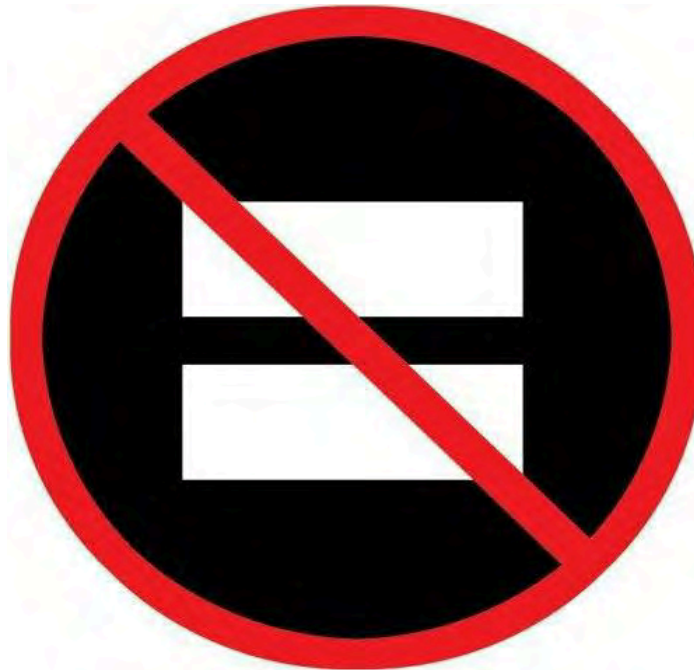
**Parameters** describe the limits of a relationship between an educator and a student.



# 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.



# Unintentional Boundary Violation

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.



# Table Talk

## 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.

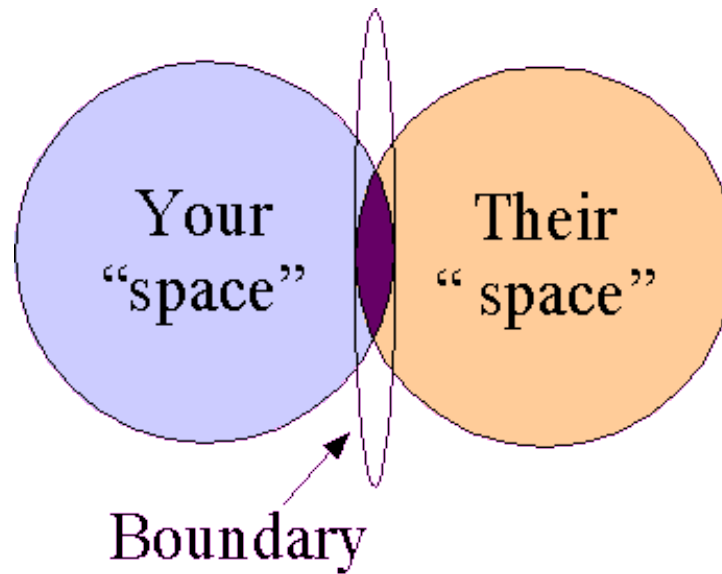
We **listen**, **guide**, **praise**, **correct**, **respect**, **honor**, **discipline**, and **TEACH** effectively.



# Guideline Expectations

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

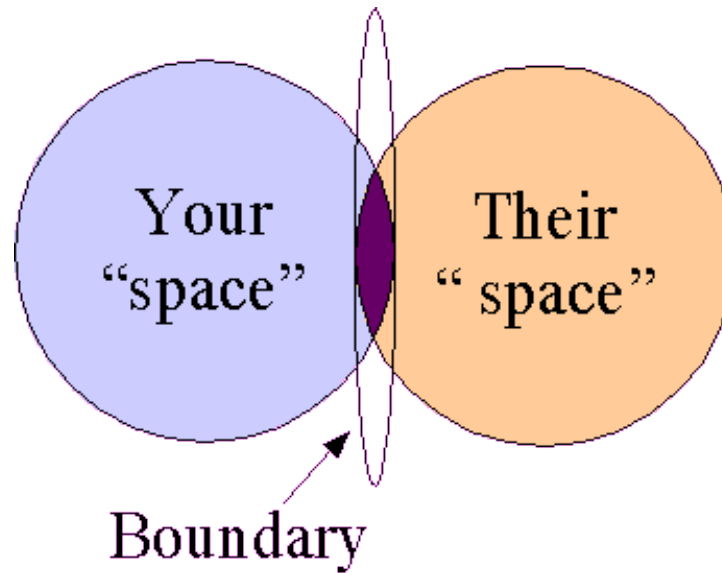
**Do** listen, praise, and guide your students.



# Guideline Expectations

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

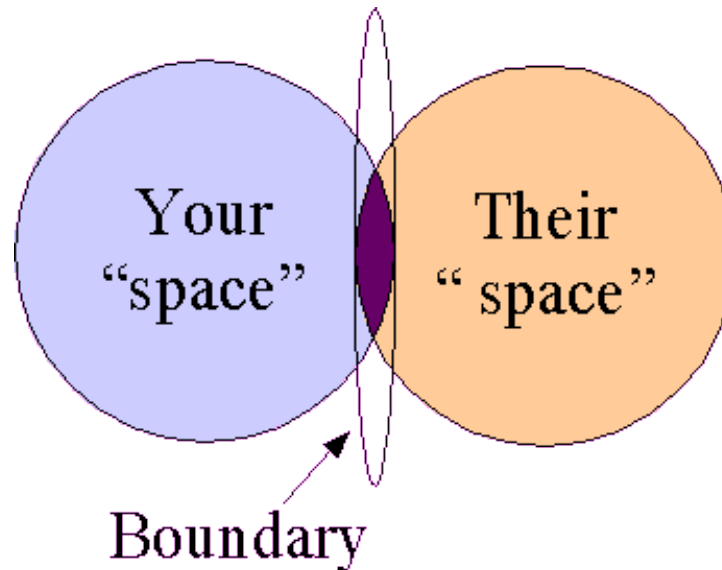
**Do** respect, discipline, and honor your students.



# Guideline Expectations

**Don't** have physical contact with your students.

**Do** correct and teach your students.



# PERFORMANCE TASK

# Reflection





ANY  
QUESTIONS  
?

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