Chapter 1: Introduction

Video

Transcript:

I was a high school English teacher and as an English teacher, I encouraged my students to express themselves through writing. I obviously encouraged a lot of free reading, and reading on their own. And I had a lot of students who would discuss their reading and writing with me. You know this was a passion of theirs; of course, I wanted to support that as their teacher. But what I noticed in the situation that you’re referring to was that a student started to write about more mature themes that I flagged that were probably inappropriate both for myself as a teacher to be reading and also just as, you know, as a student, as a high school student. Um, these were scenarios and situations that were not school appropriate and very mature. So that was an initial red flag. And then, building a connection with my students, while it was important, what I noticed in one particular scenario was that this student had a hard time defining what the boundaries were. You know what was professional. Things like constantly wanting to meet before school or after school. Leaving writing, you know, for me to read that was very personal in nature. Instead of it staying as a supportive sort of tutoring type of relationship, it became something to where the student was…expecting more of a personal connection with me than what was professional.
Module Purpose

Professional Relationships

- Ethical conduct
- Appropriate communication
- Proper boundaries

(Hurst & Redding, 2000; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005; Sockett, 1993)

Transcript:

Chris’ experience is a familiar storyline for many teachers. In teacher-student interactions, professional boundaries can sometimes get blurred. When this happens, the proper course of action may not be clear.

In this module, we’re going to focus on what it means to maintain professional relationships with students. A professional relationship includes the ethical conduct, appropriate communication, and proper boundaries that should be maintained between teachers and their students (Hurst & Redding, 2000; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005; Sockett, 1993).
Chapter 2: Five Guiding Principles

Five Guiding Principles

- Build relationships, but maintain boundaries.
- Present yourself professionally.
- Maintain a safe environment.
- Uphold confidentiality.
- Seek professional support.

Transcript:

When building professional relationships with students, there are five general principles that can guide your efforts: build relationships, but maintain boundaries; present yourself professionally; maintain a safe environment; uphold confidentiality; and seek professional support (Association of American Educators, 2016; National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2015; National Education Association, 2015).

**Principle 1**

- Take the time to get to know your students as individuals in order to support their academic and personal growth.
- Reflect on relationships to ensure that they support students’ social and academic well-being, and that they maintain professional boundaries.
- Don’t use a student as your personal confidant or friend.
- Don’t accept expensive or numerous gifts from students.
- Don’t favor some students over others.
Transcript:

Building a strong, caring rapport with students is central to the academic and personal growth we hope to achieve in the classroom. To build this rapport, teachers may seek to learn about students’ interests, cultural backgrounds, and other important aspects in their lives. Teachers may also share information about their own lives and interests, but should carefully consider what information is relevant to their professional setting (Sockett, 1993; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). We are, first and foremost, our students’ teachers.

Click the tabs to see specific dos and don’ts when it comes to this guiding principle.

Principle 2

Present yourself professionally.

- When conversing with students, use language (and discuss topics) that you would be comfortable using in public.
- Meet with students in public, open locations (e.g. library, cafeteria).
- Wear clothing that is clean, appropriate to the setting, and in good condition.

- Don’t discuss illegal activities, sexual relationships, or gossip about students or colleagues.
- Don’t meet with students in isolation. If you must, ensure there is “visual access” into the room.
- Don’t wear clothing that is more suitable for settings other than school (e.g. the gym, a bar).

Transcript:

Professional presentation includes clothing choices, grooming, the topics that one discusses, and even the language one uses. These aspects of professionalism can frame how students perceive teachers and can dictate the tone of the relationship (Hurst & Redding, 2000; Kramer, 2003; National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2015; Sockett, 1993; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005).

For example, dress that is too casual or too similar to your students’ could convey that you’re more like a peer rather than their teacher.

Click the tabs to see specific dos and don’ts when it comes to this guiding principle.
**Principle 3**

**Maintain a safe environment.**

- Treat all students with respect and dignity.
- Operate with an affirmative attitude toward difference.
- Immediately address any breach of physical, emotional, or mental safety in your classroom.
- Don’t allow seemingly playful language to damage classroom culture (e.g., sarcasm, inside jokes, etc.).
- Don’t allow any student to be ridiculed or marginalized because of some aspect of their identity.

*(Association of American Educators, 2016; National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2015; National Education Association, 2016)*

**Transcript:**

To maintain a safe and welcoming environment, teachers must make sure that they and their students speak and act in ways that are inclusive, respectful, and affirming.

**Principle 4**

**Uphold confidentiality.**

- Keep all documents with personally identifiable information concealed and protected at all times.
- Only communicate about confidential student information with school personnel and family members who hold a “legitimate educational interest” in the information.
- Don’t discuss confidential information in front of students.
- Don’t share confidential information about a student with anyone who is not directly involved in supporting the child.

*(Association of American Educators, 2016; National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2015; National Education Association, 2016)*

**Transcript:**
Legally and ethically, teachers have the responsibility to protect confidential information about students (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Any breach in this confidentiality could have grave consequences for the student’s social, physical, and mental well-being. It is also a major breach of trust in the relationship between the teacher and student.

**Principle 5**

Seek professional support.

- Know district policies that govern teacher/student interactions and your responsibilities as a mandated reporter.
- Seek the guidance and advice of professionals at your school for any situation that falls outside of your formal training and expertise.
- Don’t ever guess or assume which teacher actions are permissible.
- Don’t attempt to support a student on your own if you are not professionally qualified to do so.


Transcript:

As we build relationships with students, they may divulge personal information or describe problems that they are facing. It is the teacher’s responsibility to recognize the limits of his/her role and expertise and seek professional support at the school and district when necessary. Involving other school professionals can help protect the health and well-being of the student (Hurst & Redding, 2000; Knoll, 2010; Page, 2014; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005).
Closing

Transcript:

Let’s see how Chris, the teacher educator from the beginning of the module, responded to the situation while maintaining professional boundaries.

The first thing is to always document. As a teacher we are trained to understand our legal responsibilities, and while this wasn’t necessarily something that was potentially illegal it was something that was concerning to me. So the very first step is always to document. You know, even if it’s just for me. What date did this happen? Um, what was the situation and what actions did I take, you know, in response to the situation. So the first step is to document and that is exactly what I did. After the situation had escalated a little bit, then I had reached out to the advisor, the guidance counselor at my site, and we had a conversation. We looked at my documentation, we talked about, you know, potential responses to this, to be able to best support the student. We eventually followed up with a student meeting with the advisor, myself, and the student to discuss some of the concerns we had, to let the student know that we were there to support her that this was something that um, we felt that she had a lot of strengths in her English classroom, but that we wanted her to understand that there is a certain role that teachers need to play. And if we aren’t able to play that role, our students need to be aware of that.

You have support systems there in the school for any scenario such as this and I think you need to take advantage of those assets and reach out to them as I did.