

Ethics and Boundaries in Schools

Cues of Blurring Boundaries - Participant Handout

Over Involvement Cues

- Your neutrality is progressively diminishing.
- You reveal information about other students to this student.
- You reveal information about yourself unrestrainedly.
- You are extraordinarily angered or saddened with this particular student's choices.
- You have intruding thoughts about this student when you are not at work.
- You are unusually invested in changing a student's behavior.
- You promote a student's dependence on you.
- You encourage a student to separate themselves from healthy support systems.
- You spend more time with a particular student than usual, in person or on the telephone.
- You meet with a student at the end of day to enable you to extend your time with them.
- You meet in uncommon places, when it is not necessary to be there.
- You are over-permissive with fees, late assignments, expectations.
- You exchange gifts.
- You daydream about a student.
- You long for this student's next visit.
- You plan your attire based on your appointment with this student today.
- You direct a student in their particular day-to-day details of life.
- You present yourself as the expert on a student's life choices.
- You disapprove of a student's assertive behavior.
- You act or feel jealous about a student.
- You are defensive when probed about a relationship.
- Physical contact begins.

Under Involvement Cues

- Your neutrality is progressively diminishing.
- You feel detached from or do not care about a student.
- You are unjustifiably pessimistic at work.
- You continue to employ strategies that have been clearly ineffective.
- You are loath to go to work.
- You are overly-intellectual about a student's problems.
- You present yourself as the expert on a student's life choices.
- You are punishing, callous, prejudiced or critical toward a student.
- You use patronizing or derogatory terminology when referring to a student.
- You feel impatient, irritated, or emotionally absent with a student.
- You refuse to offer help to meet a student's needs.

(Davidson, J.C. 2005. Professional relationship boundaries: A social work teaching module. *Social Work Education*, 24[5]. Appendix VII: Indicators of Blurring Boundaries.)

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Questions for Gaining Perspective

- Am I dealing with a particular student differently from the way I deal with other students under the same circumstances?
- Am I behaving in a way that puts my own emotional needs above the student's needs or welfare?
- Am I sharing information with a student because I think it will help the student or because I need to be liked?
- Am I interacting with the student in an 'online environment' consistently with how I would act with that student in class or at school?
- Am I engaging in behaviors and discussions either personally or 'online' that are unsuitable for this particular group of students?
- Is my dress, availability, language or demeanor different from the normal with a particular student?
- Would I modify my behavior with a student if a colleague were present?
- Would I judge my conduct negatively if I observed it in another teacher?
- Is it possible that the consequences of my actions will have negative outcomes for the student?
- Is it possible that the consequences of my actions will negatively affect people's confidence in my suitability to teach and work with children?
- Would my actions bring the teaching profession into disrepute?

(Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania. 2018. "Professional boundaries: Guidelines for Tasmanian teachers."

<https://www.trb.tas.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>.)