

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: TEACHERS

Maintaining professional boundaries in the virtual classroom

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“The two most important rooms in a democracy are the living room and the classroom and both require teachers” *John Parsons*

Teachers have a Duty of Care for themselves

The boundaries we express inform and shape the opinions people have about us and the professions we represent. Professional boundaries that are maintained contribute to a teacher’s health and wellbeing and the duty of care they have for themselves.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries in the Virtual Classroom: Key Points

Teachers

1) Create a space within your home that is fit for purpose. Use this space when engaging with students remotely. When possible in the background use symbols or objects that promote learning and connect the student with the school.

Example: Some teachers are placing the school values on the wall behind them.

2) Do not use sensitive spaces to teach from such as bedrooms. If it is not possible and this is the only space available, then arrange the space and background to suit the purpose.

Students

3) Schools should Inform the parents and students that appropriate clothing and learning spaces should be worn and used when in the virtual classroom. Students should not be in sensitive spaces like the bedroom when teachers are engaging with them in the virtual classroom. This is to ensure the safety of staff and students. If it is not possible and this is the only space available, then arrange the space and background to suit the purpose.

Update Policy

4) Develop a section within your Social Media Policy. **Guidelines for contact between staff and students in the virtual classroom.** This section should clearly state when

teachers are available and when they are not. I have received concerns from teachers who are finding it difficult to switch from teacher role into family member role. There is also increasing examples of parents expecting more access to teachers at any time of the day. Your family relationships are therapeutic so defining when you teach, and when you are accessible is important to you professionally and personally. Protect your personal life for your sake and your loved ones.

Recording Sessions in Students homes

5) Some schools are recording the sessions with students for use at a later date perhaps for students who could not attend the live session. Also, to protect a teacher if a complaint is made about them.

This raises the following questions:

How long will you store the video file?

Who is responsible for its security?

What will you do with the file if you see something that embarrasses a student?

Do we need to adopt a consenting process with parents before we record their home environment?

If you decide to record the sessions, seek legal advice before you commence from NZSTA or another appropriate place on how to do this and whether they advise its legally safe to do so.

Management: Who, When and Why?

6) Develop a process that identifies who is delivering knowledge remotely, what is its purpose and date and time of delivery. Develop a register of who those staff members are.

New Staff Entering your School

7) If a new or reliving teacher joins your school introduce them to the section in your social media policy that describes guidelines for live streaming.

Parental Software/Guardianship applications

8) The deployment of parental software or guardianship application onto the student device is an effective way of extending protection into the home and virtual classroom.

It gives parents the opportunity to provide oversight and guardianship. These applications also allow the parent to harmonize with classroom deliveries and curb children's ability to wander off online when they should be learning. They also reduce the chances of young people accessing online pornography and other types of material that can be devastating to a child's health and wellbeing if viewed repeatedly.

Teachers, stay in your lane

9) When you are communicating with parents or students through any digital platform and especially text messaging systems, be mindful of what you are communicating. Refrain from personal conversations and do not try to resolve an emerging conflict via text. If the situation is serious seek advice from management and trigger a formal process that supports all parties concerned.

Management: Child Protection Policy (CPP)

10) Make sure all staff have a strong relationship with this policy. This policy should be introduced to all staff prior to working in the school. Before any member of staff works with your students they will have read and agreed to follow the process described in the CPP, should they believe a child is in harm's way.

11) The CPP is still vital when inside a virtual classroom, therefore the same processes apply. Lean back onto your Child Protection Training, do not leave it behind when you go into the virtual classroom.

Management

12) Adopt a school-wide policy that directs teachers and any member of staff not to form relationships with students via *personal* online platforms including Facebook and other similar applications. Where there is a clear imbalance of power it is important to remind staff of their workplace boundaries. This is to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and students.

Contact NZSTA

13) Seek advice as necessary from NZSTA advisors on employment matters and other relevant agencies where child safety issues arise.

Help parents become teacher supports

14) When a virtual classroom is in operation within the home Parents need to step into a teacher support role for it to be successful. Define the learning time with the parents and students. This will allow parents to support their child's learning at home.

Management: To increase parent attendance in workshops

15) Try using the following statement

"We look forward to seeing you at the cyber safety workshop. If you cannot attend, please nominate someone in your absence. This workshop is dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of your child. Through the school partnership, we can make a difference for our tamariki."

Sauce: John Parsons, Change the language change the landscape.

TEACHERS, KEEP YOUR CHIN UP. HERE ARE COMMENTS I HAVE RECEIVED FROM PARENTS AND STUDENTS

"Hi John, my school is just wonderful what they are doing for our kid's matters" *Parent*

"John, today I felt scared then I listened to Nigel Latta who told me to chill out and then my teacher came on screen and the world seemed ok" ... *14-year-old Girl*

"I hope we don't forget what the teachers have done for our young people, I won't, and neither will my 9-year-old who waits with a smile by her computer for the teacher to come onto the screen" *Parent*

"When my boss told me to go home, I was scared of what the future had to offer. I bet the teachers felt the same, but you never see it John they just keep on smiling, they just keep on supporting the children" *Parent*

This is a good world, full of decency and love and you remind children of that every time they see you.

Thank you

John Parsons



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School: Face to face

Schools can book a full day of presentations with John. 9 am till 9 pm

Students, staff and parents: www.citizen21.co.nz/schools

Schools: Video Conferencing

School Cyber Safety Workshops delivered into the home and or school

Students, staff and parents: www.citizen21.co.nz/webinars



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