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| Edst 404 ethics and teaching |
| Final Assignment |
| The Importance of Ethical Decision Making In Education |
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Ethics can be defined as the moral principles that govern an individual or groups behaviors (Oxford University Press, 2015). For educators, the notion of ethics is complicated in that they have the responsibility of taking care of children and adolescents as well as teaching correct ethical behaviors and the assigned curriculum all whilst attempting to form a personal connection with their individual students. This places a heavy burden on educators as they typically spend 6- 8 hours per day as the focal point of students who are constantly observing their surroundings and learning new behaviors. Ethical boundaries therefore need to be established as a means to protect both the educator and the student alike from the potential abuse of “power, control, and/or influence” (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009, p. 636). Educators have a fiduciary role that expands into all areas in which they are surrounded by students and they are expected to be professionals that maintain a particular relationship with their students. It is therefore pivotal that educators understand how to prevent and if need be overcome ethical dilemmas whilst still delivering a wholesome and multi-dimensional learning experience for their students. This makes establishing ethical boundaries difficult in that it contradicts the teaching process by promoting impersonal connections between educators and their students (Carr, 2005). Aultman et el provides a typology of boundaries that educators could reference to help guide them through the potential ethical dilemmas they might face and thus maintain a professional stance whilst still providing their students with a caring and personal education experience. These boundaries include: curricular boundaries, emotional boundaries, relationship boundaries, power boundaries, institutional boundaries, financial boundaries, communicative boundaries, temporal boundaries, cultural boundaries, expertise boundaries, and personal boundaries (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). It is the responsibility of the teacher to familiarize themselves with these ethical boundaries, and in combination with the policies of a particular school or institution, an educator should not be afraid to meaningfully connect with their students at the risk of potentially placing their students or themselves in harms way.

As a teacher involved primarily in Physical Education and coaching, I often am placed in a fiduciary role for longer periods of time including weekends (for weekend games and trips). As an educator I naturally care for my students and I often imprint on them as a role model or even as a big brother (particularly to adolescent males). It is in this relationship that I ride the fine line between caring and control. Aultman et al describe instances where it may or may not be appropriate to overstep the line between control and care. These instances include situations in which a child or student may feel hurt if not enough care is shown in a particular situation, or vice versa if the care placed toward the student is considered harmful (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). For my particular area of expertise, the boundary that I need to be particularly mindful of in my teaching according to Aultman’s typology of boundaries is the “communication boundary” (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). Because students are often placed in my care outside of school hours, dialogue between my students and I may become more personal. Speaking about highly personal subject matters or sharing information that is not beneficial to a student crosses ethical boundaries. I should also avoid sharing potentially confidential information or offering personal advice, and should always make my students aware that I am a mandated reporter and that certain conversations cannot be kept secret (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). Ultimately it is important to build a relationship with my students as it fosters meaningful and memorable educational experiences, but it is just as important that my students understand that our relationship is professional in nature and that I am the one that is in control.

# Works Cited

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