



# Alabama State Department of Education

## Educator Ethics Module 2

# Purpose

The session will focus on interactions between educators and students, with a special emphasis on the utilization of social/electronic media, teachers as role models and actions outside the classroom.





# Stimulating Thinking

- How does social media influence my work with students?
- How do interactions with students influence laws and policies?





# Participants will

- articulate effective uses of social media to enhance student learning;
- gain an understanding of appropriate and inappropriate social media interactions;
- identify social media grooming actions used to initiate inappropriate teacher - student relationships; and
- make connections between social media utilization guidelines, recommendations, and educator misconduct consequences.





# Participants will

- Gain an understanding of teachers as role models.
- Understand that their activity outside of the classroom impacts their profession.
- \*\*\*This combined module 4 with 2





# **BREAKING NEWS**

**Teacher Busted for Drugs Suspended by District**

**Teacher Resigns After Twerking Video**

**Teacher Fired for Stripping While on Leave**

**HS Principal Lied About Hypnotizing Students**

**Texas on Record-Setting Pace for Inappropriate  
Teacher-Student Relationships**





# TOP NEWS

**A Thank You to the Teacher  
Who Saw What No One Else Did**

**Eleven Education Leaders Had Their  
Lives Changed by Amazing Teachers**

**Assistant Principal Organizes  
Fundraisers for Students**





# Life Under a Microscope





# Our Private Lives Aren't So Private Anymore...





# The Impact of a Personal Online Post





# Consequences of Actions

OUTCOME



- ★ The professional relationship with his principal became strained.
- ★ The principal lost respect and trust for the teacher.





# Consequences of Actions

- ★ Loss of respect and credibility from colleagues, administrators, students, parents, board members, and community.
- ★ Loss of employment.
- ★ Loss of future employment/certification.

OUTCOME





# Ramifications





# Educators as Role Models







# A Role Model

A role model is a person whose behavior is imitated by others.



# Community Expectations for Educator Actions Outside of the School Day





## **The community expects educators to**

- ☑ be keenly aware that their actions reflect on the profession and the schools they represent;
- ☑ demonstrate the highest level of professional judgment inside and outside of the school day; and



## The community expects educators to

- ☑ understand that their presence within the community should be reflective of a law-abiding, trustworthy, and respectful citizen.



**Discuss the challenges of being a role model for students outside of school.**





- **Reprimand**
- **Suspension**
- **Termination**
- **Loss of Certification**
- **Incarceration**



# Positive Impact of Social Media

## Enhancing Learning Outcomes





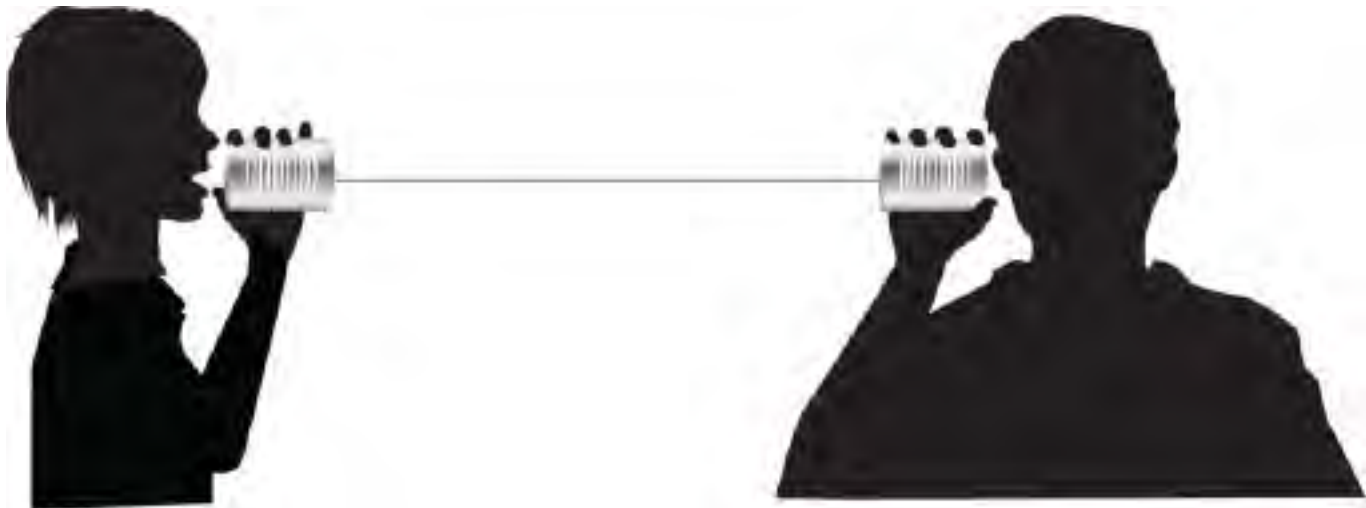
*How can the utilization of social media by educators cross serious teacher-student boundaries?*





# Social Media Boundary Crossings

What begins with an innocent string of social media communications (intentional or not) can soon lead to a strong emotional connection with a student.





# An Inappropriate Relationship Begins

**Voluntary statement given to law enforcement:**

*"I began playing Words With Friends with several students before the end of the school year, including Gabriella. I often chatted with students about the game. My conversations began innocently, but after school let out in June my conversations with Gabriella became more intense."*

**(Name has been changed.)**



# An Inappropriate Relationship Ends

## Voluntary statement given to law enforcement:

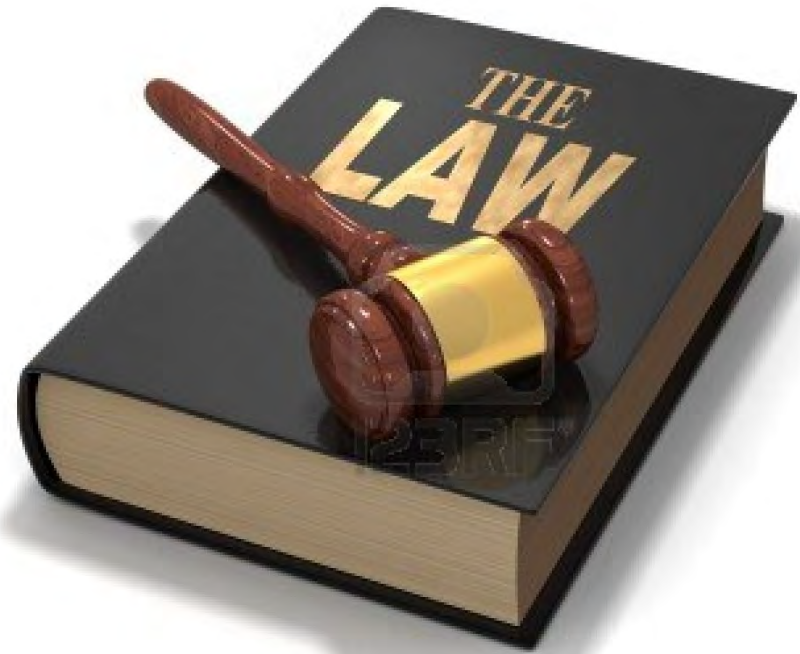
*"I told my wife that I had an emotional relationship with Gabriella and it moved beyond an appropriate boundary between a teacher and student. My wife was angry and demanded that I terminate contact with Gabriella entirely. I then emailed Gabriella and asked her to not try and contact me or my wife and I apologized for any emotional harm I had caused her."*

(Name has been changed.)



# Outcome of This Case

**The teacher voluntarily surrendered his teaching certificate.**



A photograph showing a man with a full beard and glasses, wearing a green inmate jumpsuit, being escorted by a police officer in a tan uniform. The man is looking towards the camera with a serious expression. The officer is looking slightly to the side. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Sentenced to 60 Years in Prison

Photo Source: Sterkel, M. (2016, February). Burns rejects plea deal [digital image]. *Odessa American Online*.



# 15 times EVERY week in this country





# Is Social Media to Blame for Inappropriate Student-Teacher Relationships?





# The Impact of Social Media

In Alabama, social media and text messaging continue to be the driving factors in the number of sexual misconduct cases investigated.







# Technology Tools and Platforms





# Social media leaves a digital footprint.





# Video Scenario



# Video Scenario Debrief



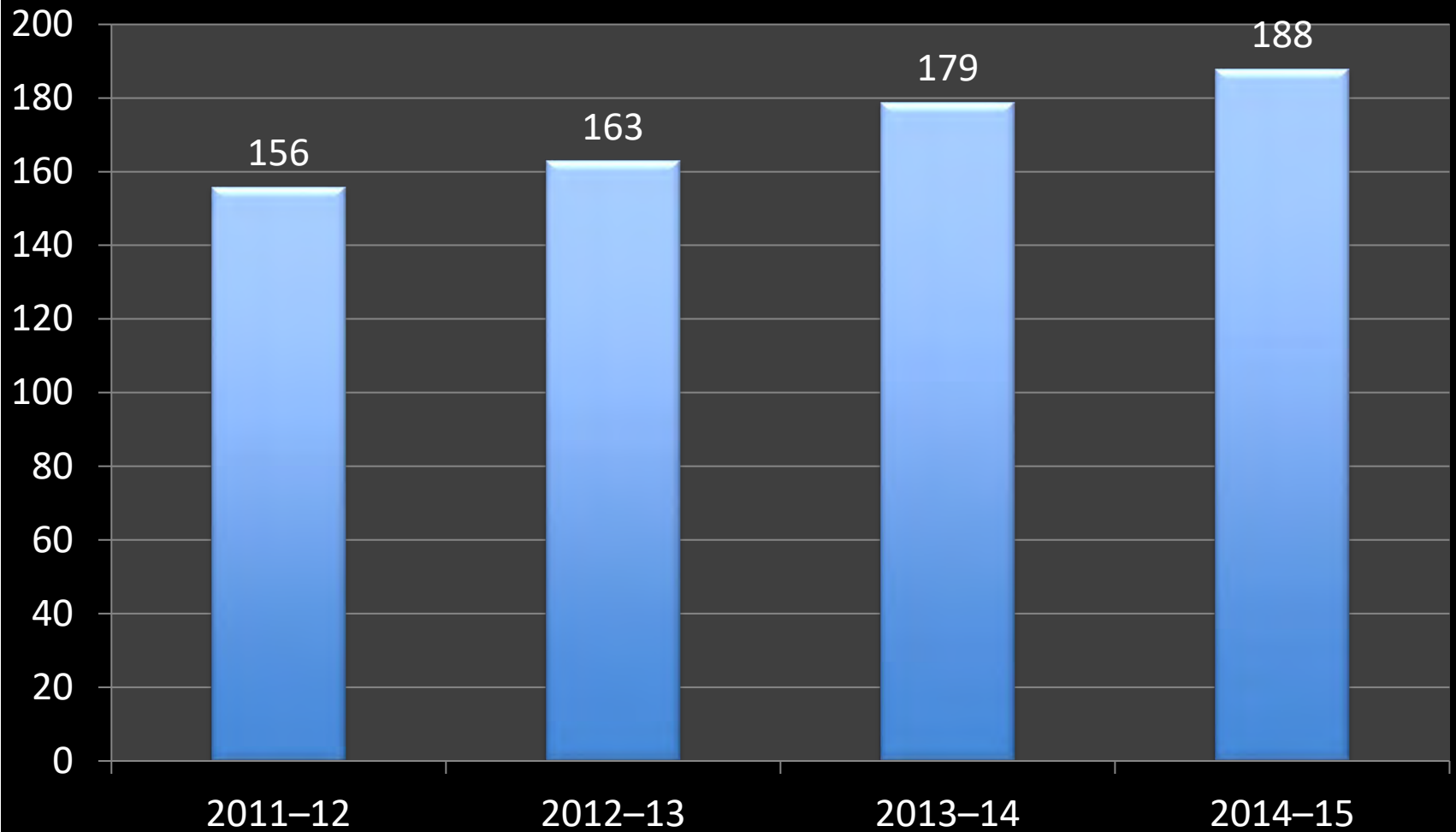


# Sobering Statistics





## IRWSM Investigations Opened







# Treading on Dangerous Ground

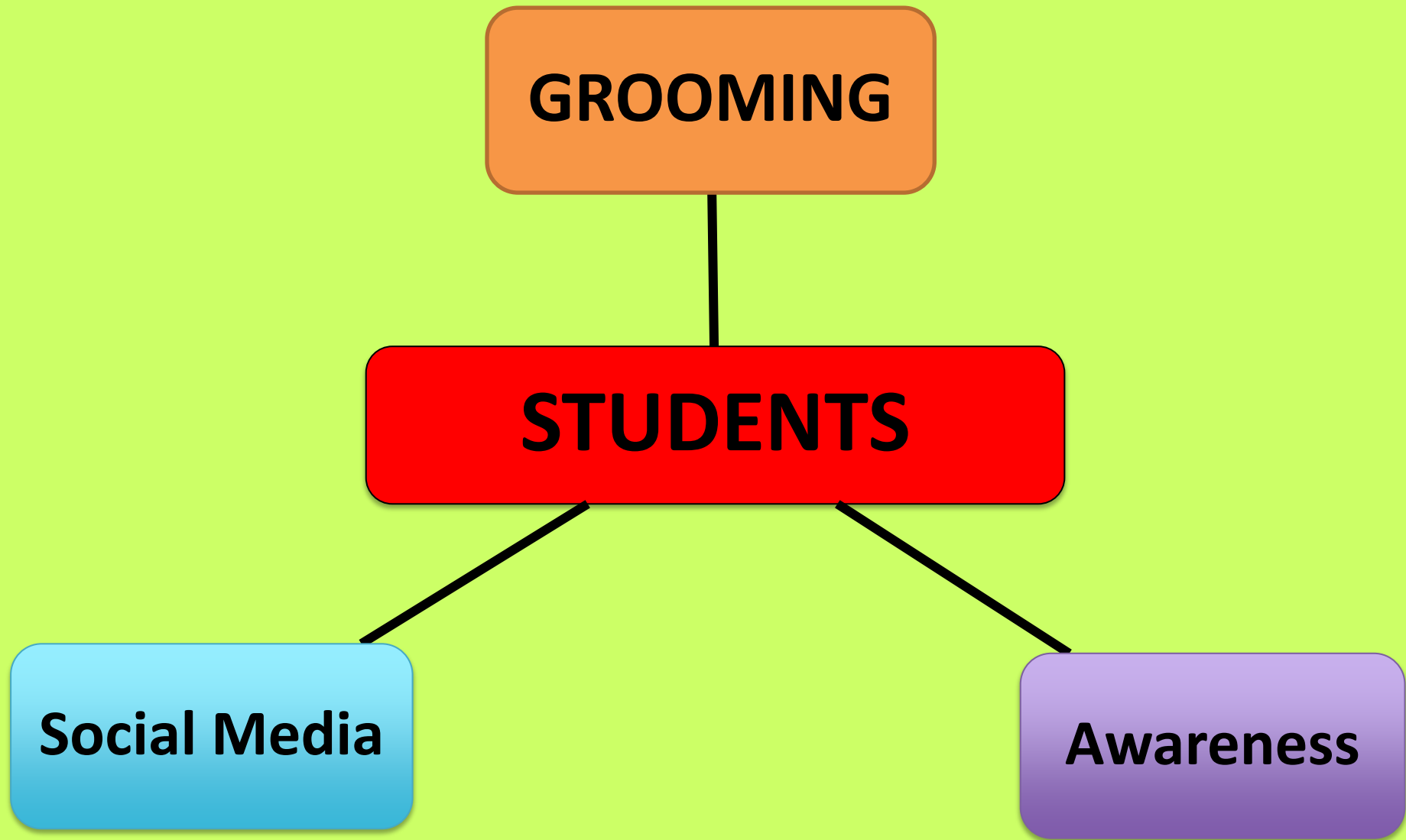




- Four out of five educators use social media for personal communication. However . . .
- More than 62% of educators surveyed have had minimal or no training in the area of interacting with students and parents through social media.

(University of Phoenix College of Education, 2015)

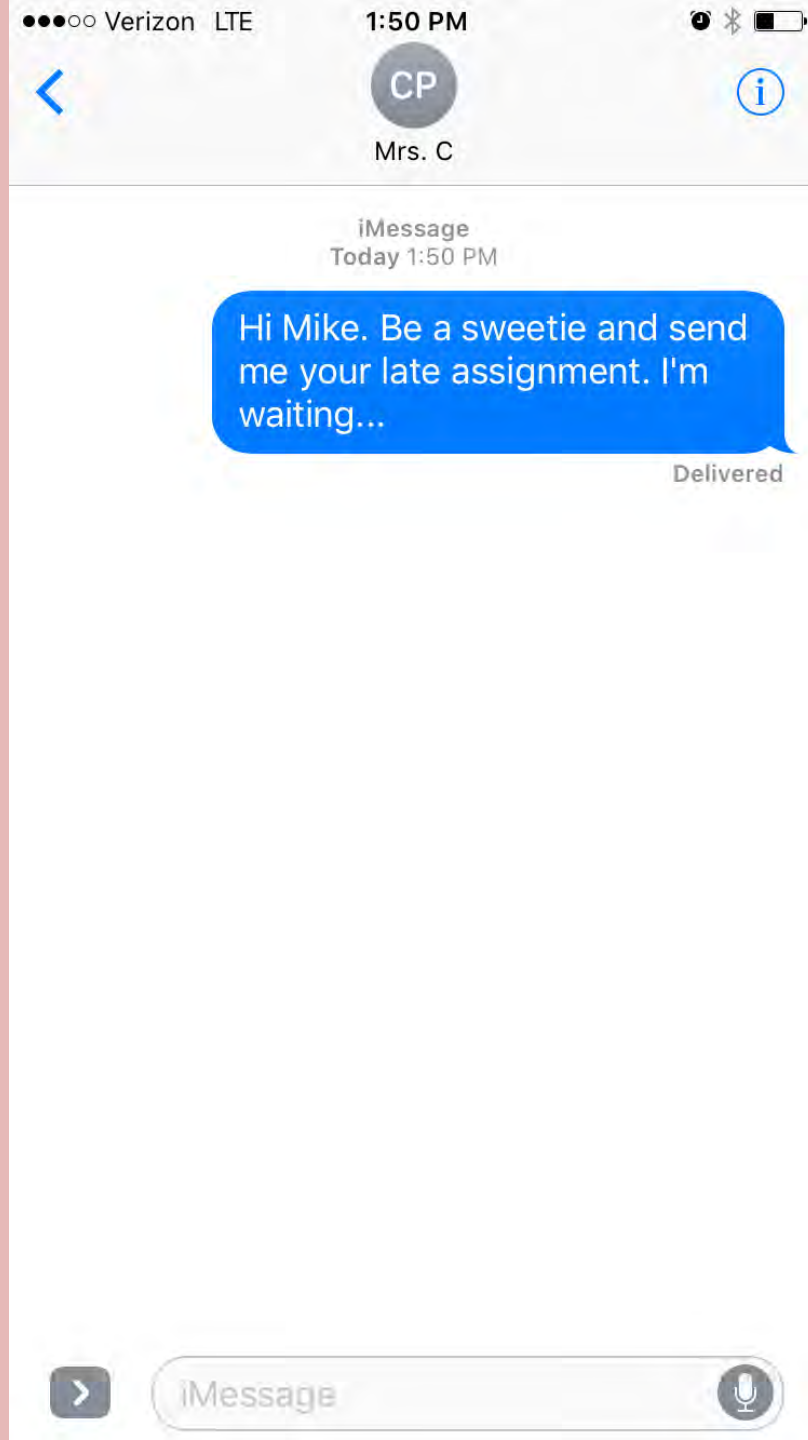






# Appropriate vs. Inappropriate





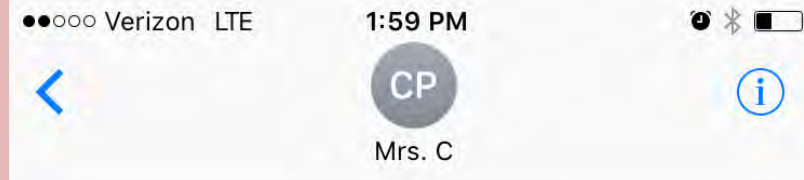












iMessage  
Today 1:59 PM

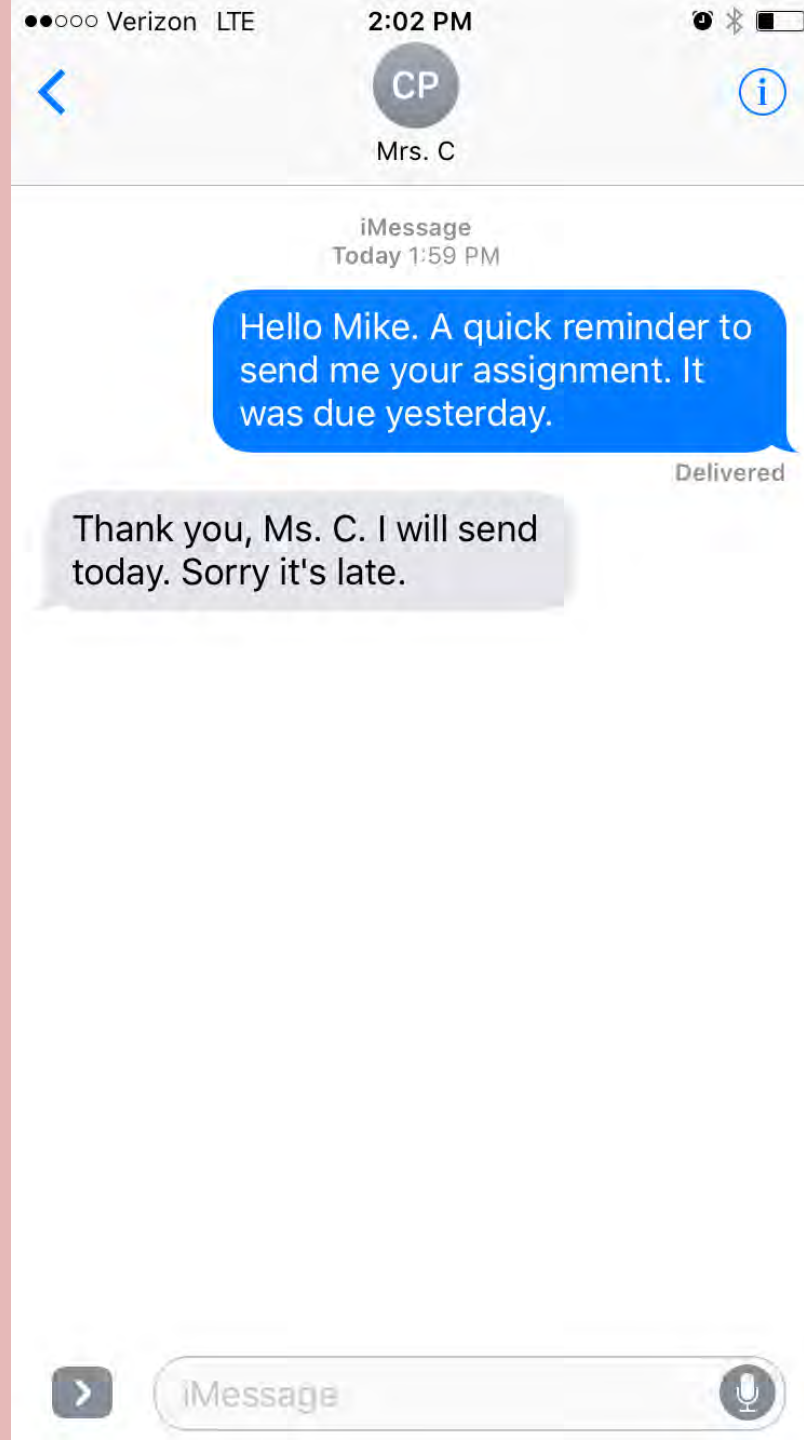
Hello Mike. A quick reminder to send me your assignment. It was due yesterday.

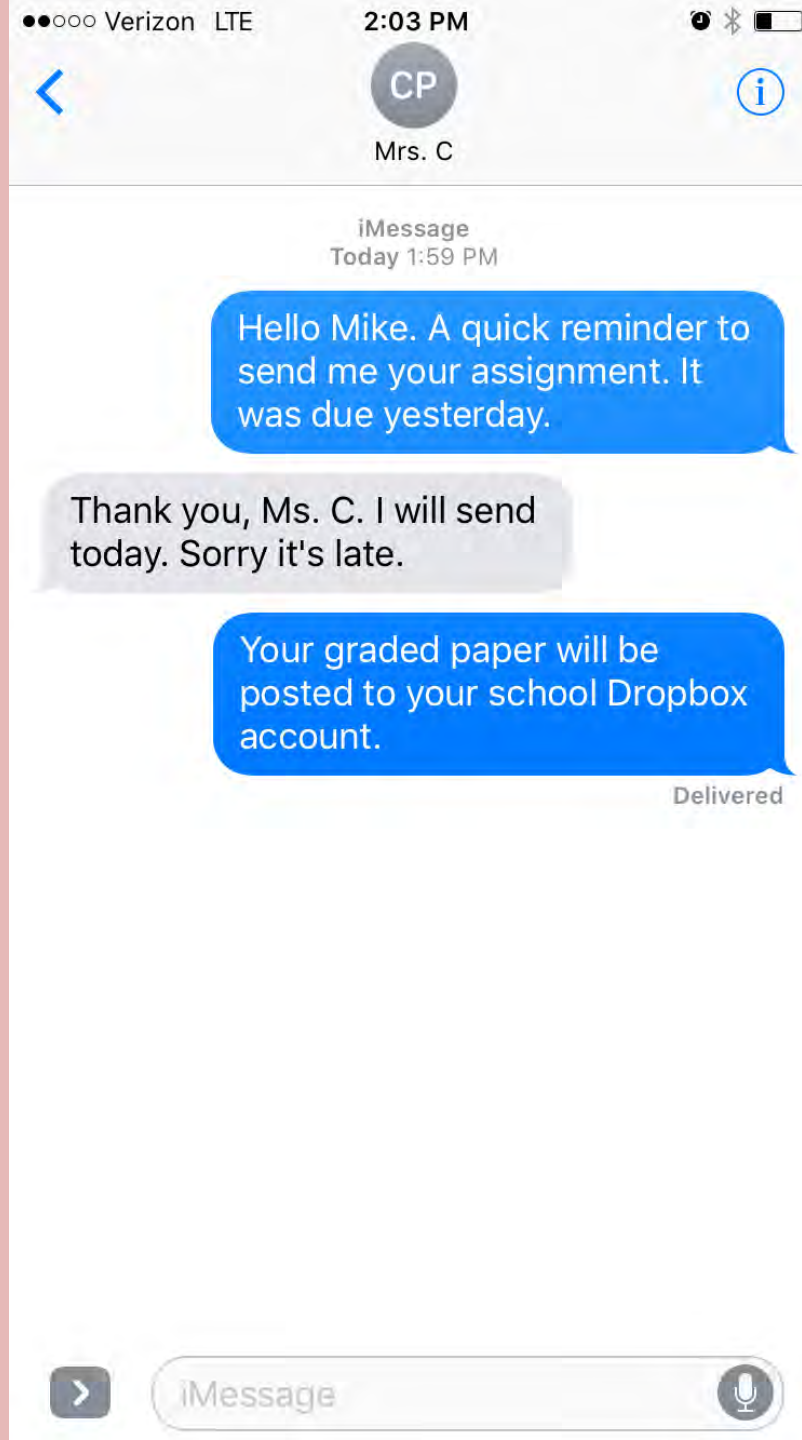
Delivered



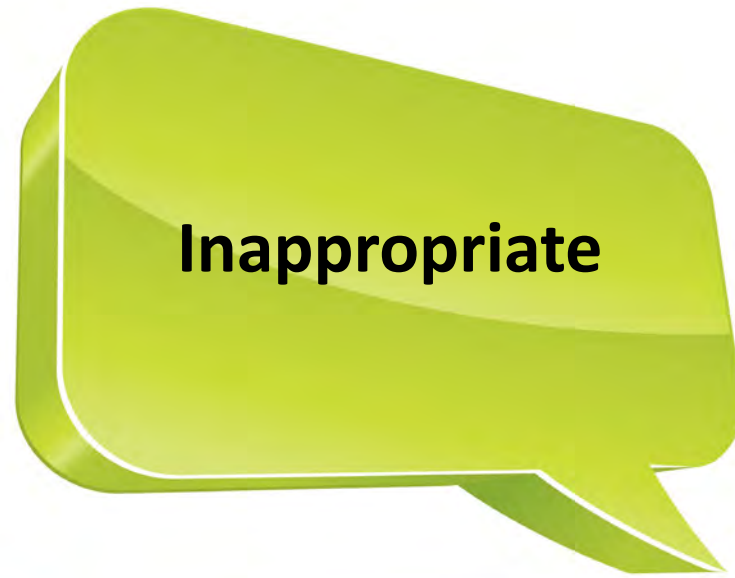
iMessage











**Inappropriate**



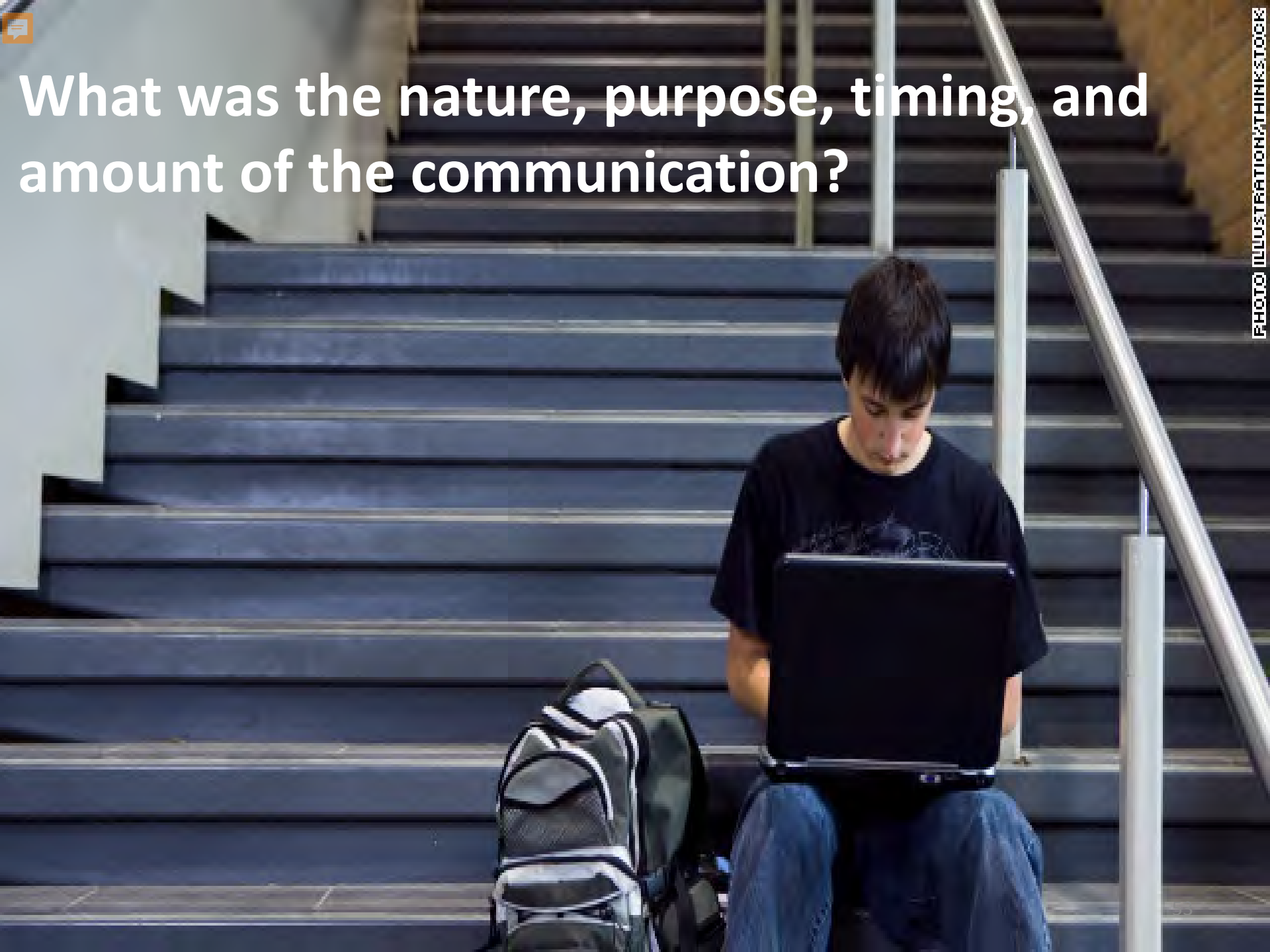
**Social Media**



**Communications**



What was the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication?





**Was the communication made openly, or did the educator attempt to conceal it?**



**SECRET**





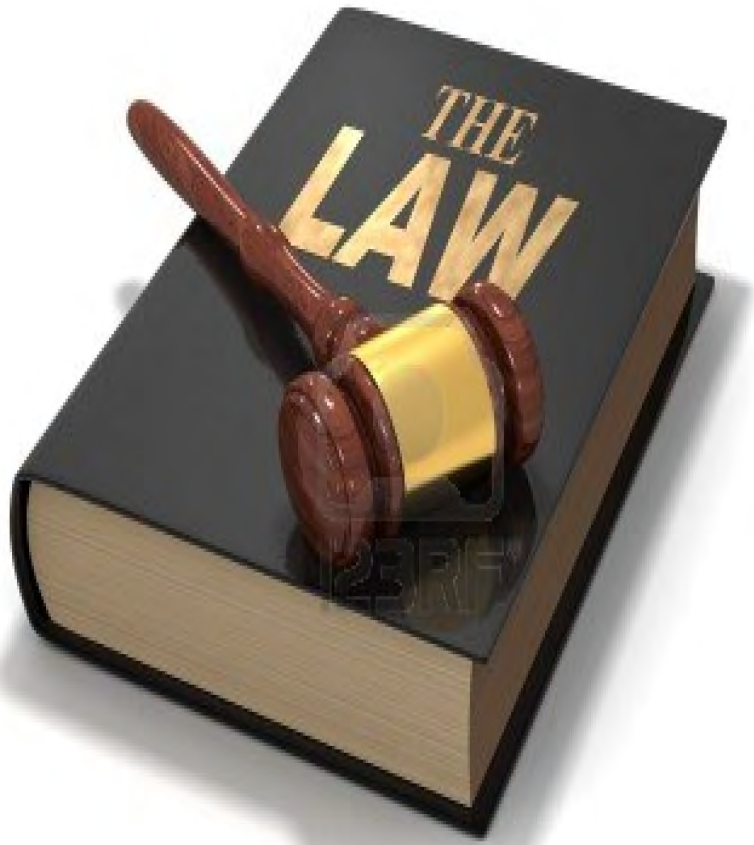
**Could the communication be interpreted as soliciting contact or a romantic relationship?**



- 
- A dark silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing right, with their hands on a laptop keyboard. The laptop screen is illuminated with a bright blue light, which casts a glow on the person's face and the surrounding area. The background is dark and out of focus.
- **Was the communication sexually explicit?**
  - **Did it involve discussion of a sexual nature regarding either the educator or the student?**



# The Law and the Consequences



- **Loss of Career**
- **Loss of Freedom**
- **Register as Sex Offender**



# Utilization Guidelines



# Social Media Utilization Guidelines

- Be aware of what you post online. You represent not only yourself, but also your school district.
- Follow your district's policy for electronic and online communication.
- Be transparent by maintaining openness, visibility, and accountability.

(O'Donovan, 2012)



# Social Media Utilization Guidelines

- Consider all electronic communication to be accessible and a matter of record.
- Choose appropriate subject matter and words that are courteous, grammatically correct, and professional.

(O'Donovan, 2012)

**Would your online account pass muster?**







# OUTCOMES





# Strategies to Decrease Incidents

- Provide educator ethics training that focuses on appropriate use of social media.
- Strengthen and communicate district social media utilization policies and guidelines.





# Strategies to Decrease Incidents

- Report suspected incidents consistently and in a timely manner.
- Expand accountability for withholding information.
- Acknowledge that schools will enforce a zero-tolerance policy.





# PERFORMANCE TASK



# Reflection





ANY  
QUESTIONS  
?





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