

## WHAT TO WATCH

- Does the teacher seem to get more-than-normal (or affectionate) attention from students, likely of the opposite gender?
- Does the teacher routinely give out his/her cell phone number and receive text messages from these students?
- Does the teacher seem to spend more of his/her spare time at school with these students in a social context rather than in an academic context or with other teachers?
- Does the teacher see these students in his classroom after school?
- Does the teacher interact with these students using social media?
- Have there been rumors about the teacher and other members of the faculty being sexually involved?
- Does the teacher appear to care more about being a “cool” teacher instead of being an effective teacher?
- Does the teacher take pride in his/her popularity among the student population?
- Is the teacher having problems in his personal life?
- Does the teacher reveal details about his/her personal life to his students?
- Is the teacher particularly lenient with the students regarding his/her enforcement of school policy?

*“More often than not, suspicions are correct; these suspicions need to be reported to the school administration every time.”*

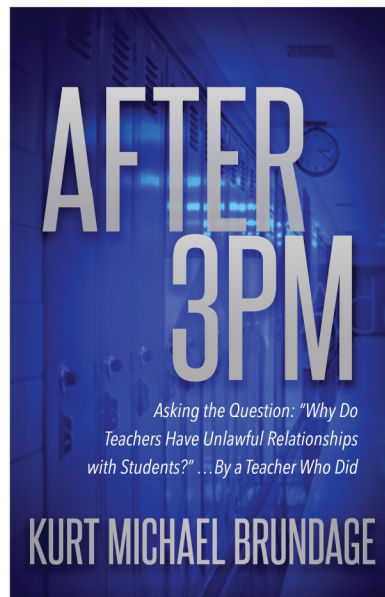
## Kurt Michael Brundage

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## Addressing the issue of unlawful teacher/student relationships

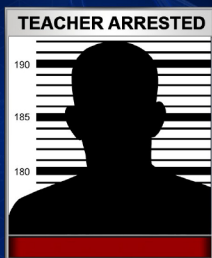


***How to see it***

***How to stop it***

***How to report it***

**A FREE RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS**



## This is an epidemic!

Approaching the issue of unlawful teacher/student relationships must be done delicately. When schools bring this topic up with their faculties (though rare this occasion may be), many educators' first impressions may be to become offended, perhaps thinking the administration suspects them of improper conduct. This is *not* the case.

However, with each passing week comes multiple news reports of another teacher who crossed the lines of propriety with another student. And although it should be "common sense" to abstain from these behaviors, the frequency of their occurrence indicates otherwise.

The time has come to stop relying on "common sense" and instead take a proactive approach toward addressing the issue of unlawful teacher/student relationships.

Because all-too-often, this issue is not addressed until *after* it happens.

## BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION

It is incumbent upon *all* educators to be vigilant about student safety, even when that means protecting them from fellow teachers.

To maintain this safe environment for students, every teacher, administrator, paraprofessional, and all support staff must do four things:

### STOP-LOOK-LISTEN-ACT

**1. Stop** — If teachers would take a moment and observe the behaviors of their colleagues as much as they observe their students, much of this behavior could be addressed before students are harmed. It isn't the mentality of "catching" another teacher doing something inappropriate, but rather, keeping one another accountable. There's a reason it's called the "educational community." Faculties are families who go through so much together; turning a blind eye to things that are "not my business" or not wanting to "get involved" by simply ignoring impropriety can only be described as irresponsible and dangerous.

**2. Look** — If teachers see something that seems improper, something needs to be said immediately. This, of course, is a slippery slope depending on numerous variables such as the teacher's relationship with his/her colleagues, the reporting teacher's relationship with the administrators, or even the administrators' relationship with the teacher being reported. Thus, each instance must be evaluated and handled individually. However, the only option that is not an option is inaction.

Seeing a potential problem and doing nothing only perpetuates the problem. In this instance, inaction is tantamount to negligence.

**3. Listen** — More often than not, rumors carry at least some semblance of truth. In most cases, rumors don't start from nothing; and while many rumors are exaggerations or assumptions, it does not mean they are not rooted in some percentage of truth. For example, a teacher may not be crossing any lines of propriety with a student, but if someone at some point got the impression that this was happening based solely on observation, then perhaps the teacher needs to reevaluate his/her interactions with students to prevent this perception from causing problems, or prevent him/herself from entering any compromising situations or developing cognitive distortions.

**4. Act** — Teachers, it is your business; it is your responsibility. Plainly-said, if a teacher is not breaking the rules or crossing the line, he/she has nothing to worry about if colleagues raise concerns. Sometimes the mere appearance of impropriety is enough to cause problems, so raising those concerns with school administrators is a necessity. If an administrator needs to have a sit-down discussion with a teacher about appearances and perceptions, then so-be-it. Better to risk possibly offending someone than to ignore the warning signs until another relationship hits the news.

**"Do something about this.  
Change the culture.  
*Be the change.*  
Now."**