Tips for Setting Online Boundaries with Students
From the Pennsylvania Standards and Practices Commission

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant amount of change to our daily lives, including the ways in which we interact with one another. Schools have closed and communication has moved to the virtual world. While the use of technology provides many opportunities for teaching and learning, it is important to establish clear rules for appropriate student-teacher communication. In order to promote safety and appropriate boundaries while transitioning to a virtual teaching and learning environment, the Professional Standards and Practices Commission offers suggestions to help educators protect themselves and their students during this unique time.

1. All technological resources and applications should be school entity-approved and only used in the manner prescribed. Ensure that you are familiar with the tools you are using in order to use them properly.

2. Communication with students should occur at designated times, consistent with traditional school day hours. Maintain transparency and protect yourself by keeping a record of all communications with students.

3. Clearly communicate when and how students should contact you and provide a timeframe for when students should expect responses to questions.

4. Avoid one-to-one interactions with students in any forum, whether an on-line meeting room such as Zoom, by telephone, by email, etc.

5. Rely upon one of the many communication applications approved by your school entity to connect with students and parents (i.e. Remind), use only your school email to communicate, and copy administration when communicating with parents or students.

6. When creating content or interacting in an online space with students, conduct yourself as you would if you were in school. If appearing on camera, dress professionally and be mindful of your surroundings and the camera's view.

7. Do not "friend" or follow students on social media, or otherwise communicate or interact with students using social media applications, and do not allow students to "friend" or follow you on your personal social media.

8. Keep your personal and professional lives separate. Do not share overly personal information about yourself with students.