

Professional Ethics

All Aboard the E³-Train!

Essential Educator Ethics — and an Introduction to the NASDTEC Model Code of Ethics for Educators

Paul K. Fox, presenter

PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Retention

January 30, 2026

Columbia Heights Education Campus

paulkfox.usc@gmail.com

<https://paulfox.blog/>



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<https://paulfox.blog/>



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About “the Fox”

- Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music (Viola) & Master of Fine Arts in Music Education from Carnegie-Mellon University

Currently:

- Five decades involvement in the field of education
- Member (Past State Chair 2016-24) of the PA Music Educators Association (PMEA) Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Retention (10+ years)
- State Coordinator of PMEA Retired Members (11+ years)
- Trainer/Instructor for the Thomas W. Bailey PDE-approved Act 45 & Act 48 classes on Chapter 49 professional ethics competencies
- Presenter, author, blogger, and publisher of more than a dozen articles and 22+ workshops/webinars on educator ethics, most material archived at <https://paulfox.blog/category/ethics/>.



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“The WHO”



Retired:

- Performing Arts Curriculum Leader (7 years) & music teacher for the Upper St. Clair Schools (33 years) & Edgewood School District (2 years)
- Director/Producer of 29 Fall Plays, 30 Spring Musicals, & 5 Holiday Musicals
- School (USCSD) publications writer, editor, & photographer (25+ years)
- Secretary/Treasurer for PMEA District One (20 years)



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Other Voices on Ethics - “The WHO”



Connecticut Dept. of Ed.
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/TEAM/TEAM---Module-5>



<https://dcps.dc.gov/>



<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12203932/>



<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pspc/resources>



<https://danielsongroup.org/framework/>



TWBAILEYLAW.COM

PDE Approved Act 45/PIL & Act 48 Classes
Court Case Blogs, and Other Resources



Troy Hutchings, Senior Policy Advisor
<https://www.nasdtc.net/>



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PRE-TEST: “Which statement has the *least* validity?”

a.

Moral professionalism involves being well informed about students, education, and content, confronting parents of underachieving students, cooperating with colleagues to observe school policies, and criticizing unsatisfactory policies and proposing constructive improvement.

b.

Teachers, attorneys, doctors, nurses, counselors, therapists, and the clergy have “**fiduciary**” duties: own the highest legal duties of good faith and trust and are bound ethically to act in another party’s best interest.

c.

Although not always defined in exact terms of school law or policies, **professional ethics** are “standards that assist practitioners within situation and systemic contexts in choosing the best course-of-action.”

d.

A **code of ethics** outlines a set of principles that affect decision making, while a **code of conduct** delineates specific behaviors that are required or prohibited and governs actions.

e.

The intent of this ethics presentation is to emphasize the “**minimum standards of acceptable behavior**” and focus on specific illegal and unethical actions that may result in disciplinary actions.



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Today’s Targets - Keeping us “on track!”

- **Why** are we so concerned about continuous professional development in ETHICS?
- **How** do we practice ETHICS?
- **What** is important in the “regs” and our “codes” to understand, review and refresh over the long term?



Why - Your Purpose
What is your cause? What do you believe?

How - Your Process
Specific actions taken to realise your Why.

What - Your Process
What do you do? The result of Why. Proof.

<https://simonsinek.com/>



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Starting out with the “WHY”

Quick... Can YOU identify the
exact title or acronym of:

The nationally-recognized and recently revised
Code of Ethics to which educators can turn to
for help in professional decision-making?



Simon Sinek's
The Why!



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Why is this topic so important NOW?



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Why is this topic so important NOW?

Table 1: Cases of Educator Misconduct & Educator Sexual Misconduct in Each State

State	# of Cases	Educator Sexual Misconduct (n, %)
West Virginia (WV)	201	88 (43.8%)
New Hampshire (NH)	94	40 (42.6%)
Vermont (VT)	47	14 (29.8%)
Pennsylvania (PA)	1,901	503 (26.5%)
South Carolina (SC)	851	210 (24.7%)
Iowa (IA)	609	92 (15.1%)
Illinois (IL)	129	11 (8.5%)
Indiana (IN)	73	6 (8.2%)



3,905 educator misconduct cases from Department of Education websites of the eight states between the years 2011 to 2020.

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1336&context=ij_etds

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Why is this topic so important NOW?

School staff sexual misconducts (stats updated in 2022 by U.S. Dept. of Education)



An estimated **1 in 10 students will experience school employee sexual misconduct** by the time they graduate from high school.

Source: U.S. Department of Education [ED]. (2004). *Educator sexual misconduct: A synthesis of existing literature*. Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary.

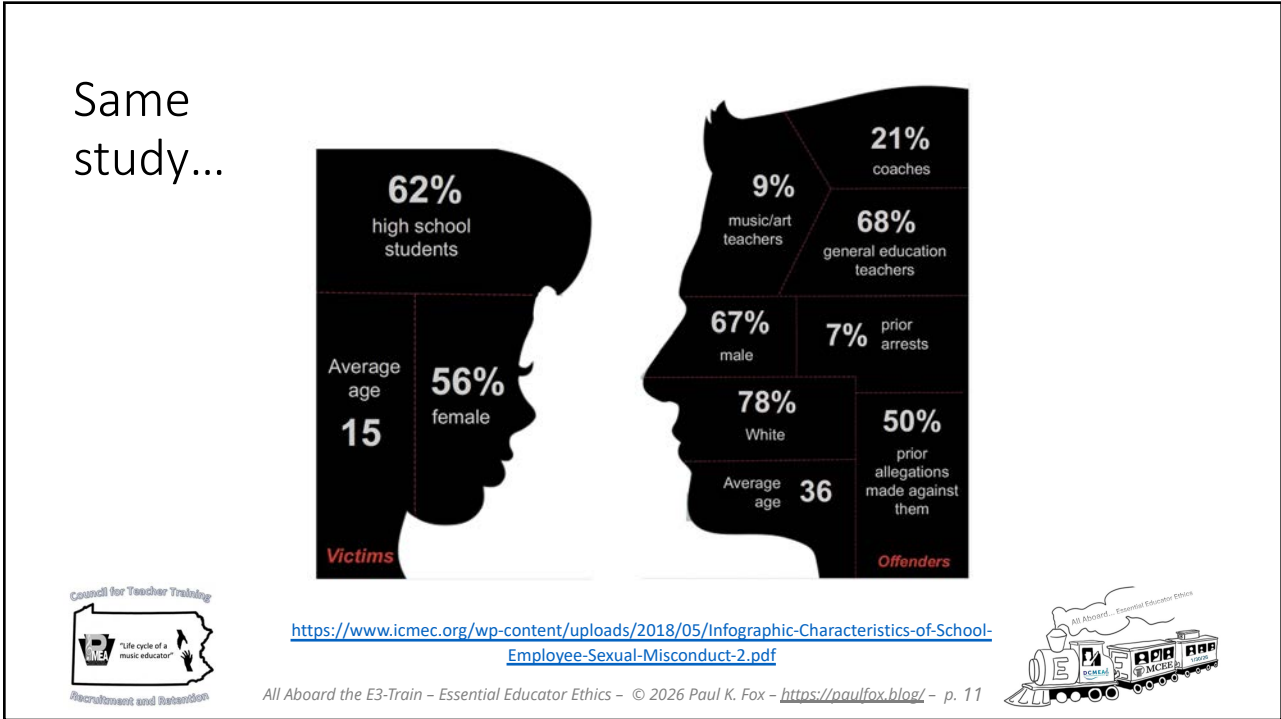


<https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Infographic-Characteristics-of-School-Employee-Sexual-Misconduct-2.pdf>

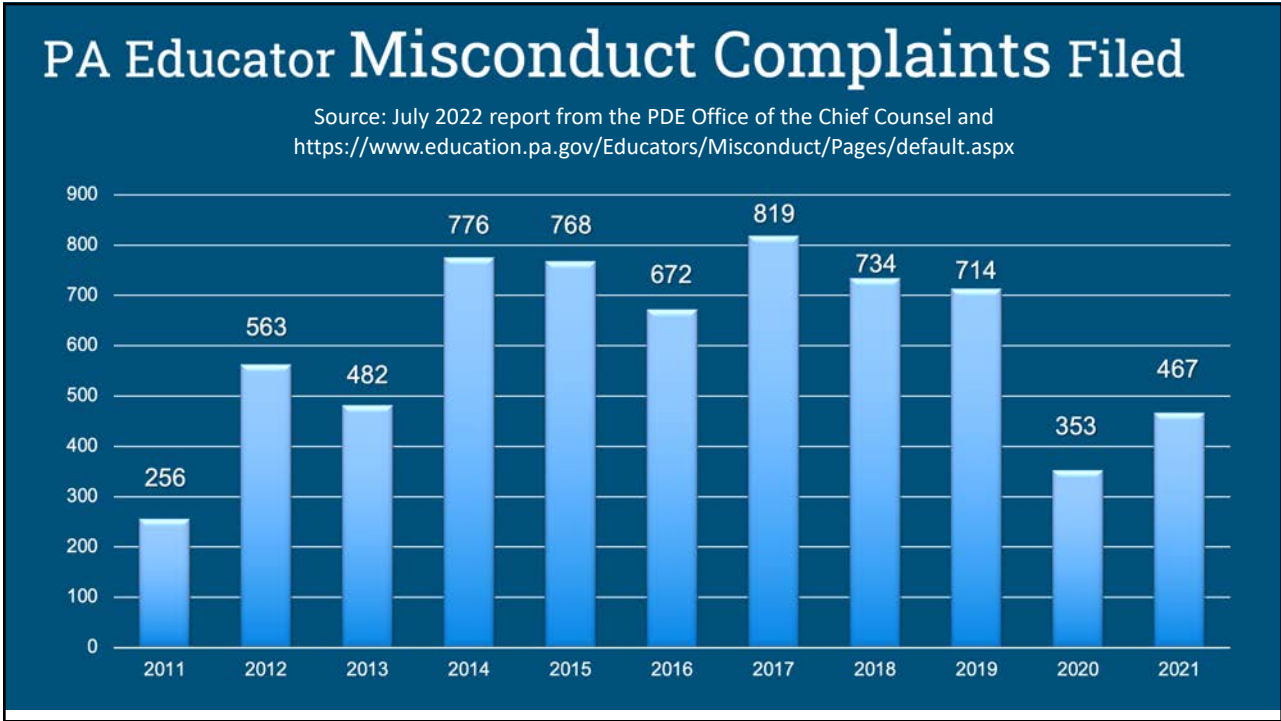
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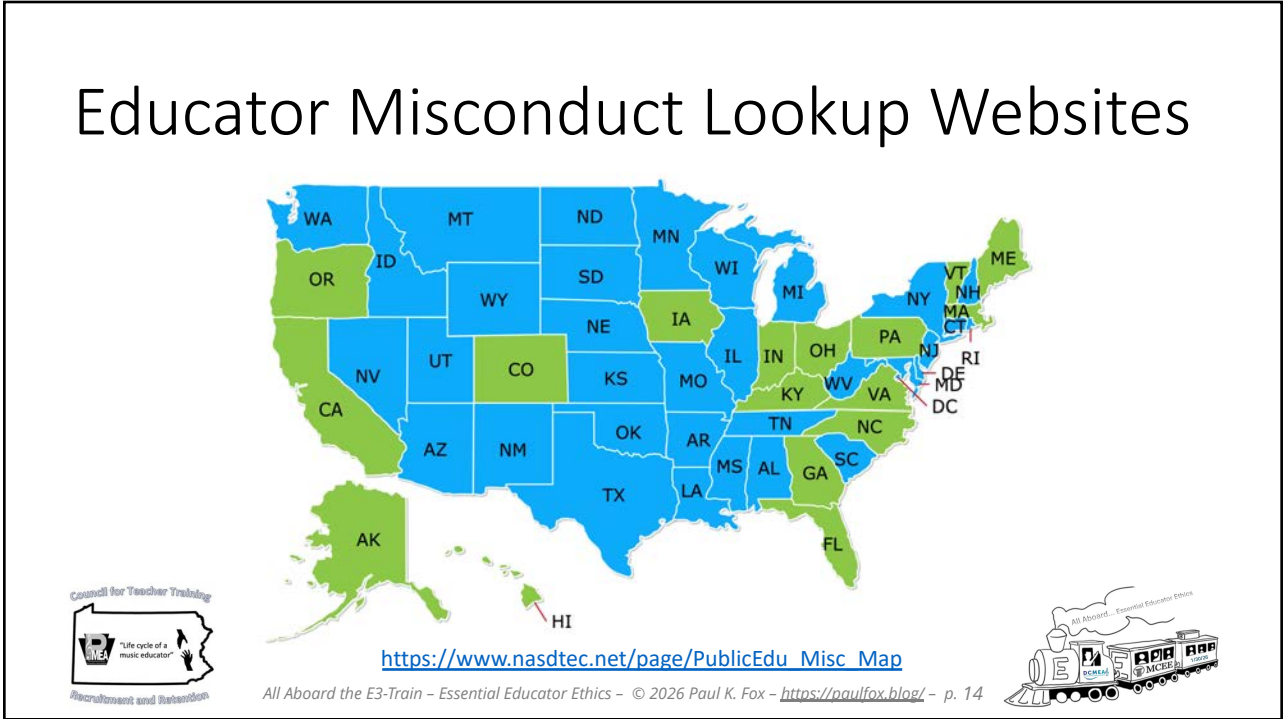
11



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Definitions –“Fiduciary”

- A person or organization that owes to another the duties of good faith and trust.
The highest legal duty of one party to another, it also involves being bound ethically to act in the other's best interests.
- Can you name at least five careers of professionals who are “fiduciaries...” – have a legal responsibility to serve the best interests of their “clients?”



- Medical Professionals
- Lawyers
- Counselors (all types)
- the Clergy, and...
- **Teachers**



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Definitions –“Ethical Equilibrium”



Foundations of what’s “right or wrong”

- Personal **Morality**: “Personal values and beliefs derived from one’s life experiences... subjective and may or may not align with community mores.”
- Regulations of **Law**: “Policies, statutes, and judicial activity that articulate conduct absolutes.”
- Professional **Ethics**: “Professional ethical standards that assist practitioners within situation and systemic contexts in choosing the best course-of-action.”
- Professional **Dispositions**: “Agreed upon professional attitudes, values and beliefs to be held by educational practitioners.”

“Beyond the Obvious” <https://slideplayer.com/slide/12243050/>
“Ethics in Education” <https://vimeo.com/126979216>

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Definitions – “Moral Professionalism”

- Coming to work regularly and on time
- Being well informed about their students and subject-matter
- Planning and conducting classes with care
- Regularly reviewing and updating instructional practices
- Cooperating with, or if necessary, confronting parents of underachieving students
- Cooperating with colleagues and observing school policies so the whole institution works effectively
- Tactfully but firmly criticizing unsatisfactory school policies and proposing constructive improvement

Source: Wynne, E.A. (1995). The moral dimension of teaching. In A.C. Ornstein (Ed.) Teaching: Theory into practice. (pp. 190-202). Boston: Allyn and Bacon



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Which Standard Is It? – “Moral” vs. “Ethical”

1. Morality =

- Principles to judge right and wrong
- Often used to define personal character
- More abstract, subjective, more personal, may or may not be religious

A teacher decides not to drink a beer when he sees a student enter the same restaurant?



2. Ethics =

- Behavior expected by the group or profession
- Practical, shared principles promoting fairness & expectations



Iowa Board of Educational Examiners

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12203932/>



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Which Standard Is It? – “Moral” vs. “Ethical”

1. Morality =

- Principles to judge right and wrong
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A teacher calls in sick to extend her vacation.

?



2. Ethics =

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Iowa Board of Educational Examiners

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12203932/>



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Which Standard Is It? – “Moral” vs. “Ethical”

1. Morality =

- Principles to judge right and wrong
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- More abstract, subjective, more personal, may or may not be religious

A coach posts pictures of herself online wearing only a bikini while on a beach vacation?



2. Ethics =

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Iowa Board of Educational Examiners

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12203932/>



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Do high moral standards make us more vulnerable?

Are you more apt to commit ethics violations or professional misconducts trying to “do good” for your students with the best of intentions?

- Wanting a student to do well results in changing the student’s grade or test scores
- An educator gives out his personal cell phone and states that, “He is there to help, anytime, 24-7.”
- A counselor gives pre-natal vitamins to a student she knows is pregnant, but the parents do not know of the pregnancy.
- A vegan teacher rants on Facebook about farm animal rights while teaching in a community based in agriculture.
- A principal pays for a student to attend a summer camp.

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/12203932/>



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Two Types of “Codes...” Conduct vs. Ethics

#	Violations of IA Teachers Code of Conduct	#	NY State Teachers Code of Ethics
1	Crimes, sexual or other immoral; conduct with or toward a student.	1	Educators nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of each student.
2	Misrepresentation, falsification of information.	2	Educators create, support, and maintain challenging learning environments for all.
3	Misuse of public funds and property.	3	Educators commit to their own learning in order to develop their practice.
4	Violations of contractual obligations.	4	Educators collaborate with colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning.
5	Unethical practice toward other members of the profession, parents, students, and the community.	5	Educators collaborate with parents and community, building trust and respecting confidentiality.
6	Incompetence.	6	Educators advance the intellectual and ethical foundation of the learning community.



Mark, Michael L. and Madura, Patrice: *Music Education in Your Hands* (Routledge 2010)

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3	Misuse of public funds or property.	3	Educators commit to their learning in order to develop their practice.
4	Violations of the community.	4	Educators cooperate with other professionals in the interest of the community.
5	Unethical professional conduct.	5	Educators cooperate with the community, building trust and respect.
6	Incompetence.	6	Educators advance the intellectual and ethical foundation of the learning community.



Mark, Michael L. and Madura, Patrice: *Music Education in Your Hands* (Routledge 2010)

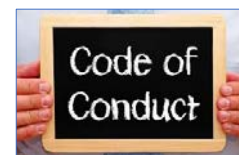
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Code of Conduct vs. Code of Ethics

- **Similarities:** Self-regulation and guidance of (un)acceptable behaviors
- **Code of Conduct** outlines specific behaviors that are required or prohibited and govern **actions**
- **Code of Ethics** outlines a set of principles that influence **decision making**



<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-code-ethics-conduct-2724.html>

<https://www.whistleblowersecurity.com/code-of-ethics-and-code-of-conduct-whats-the-difference/>



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A Code of Conduct...

- Is written and enforced by a **LICENSING AGENCY**
- Has **COMMON VALUES** required of members in the profession/group
- Spells out **REQUIRED & FORBIDDEN CONDUCT**
- Sets-up a COMPLAINT PROCESS with a
- TRIER OF FACT
- Violations of which may impose **SANCTIONS** upon the member's license



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A Code of Ethics Is...

- Not** defined in exact terms of **law or policies**
- Not** a focus of family **morals or values** on which you were raised
- Not** about issues of right/wrong or **black/white**, but shades of **grey**
- More **open-ended**: a selection from a set of possible choices
- Reflects on decision-making depended on the **circumstances of the situation**



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Model Code of Ethics for Educators



- National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification



NASDTEC

has served as a professional membership organization representing state departments of education and professional standards boards/commissions that are responsible for the preparation, licensure, and discipline of K-12 educational personnel.

Jurisdiction members include all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Guam, and the Canadian province of Ontario.

Associate members include constituent organizations with an interest in the preparation, continuing development, employment, and certification of educational personnel.



<http://www.nasdtdec.net/>



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Model Code of Ethics for Educators



- National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification
- Principles
 - Responsibility to the Profession
 - Responsibility for Professional Competence
 - Responsibility to Students
 - Responsibility to the School Community
 - Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology

- ▶ First draft unveiled in 2015
- ▶ Updated in 2021

- ▶ 5 Principles
- ▶ 18 Sections
- ▶ 86 Standards



http://www.nasdtdec.net/?page=MCEE_Doc



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Model Code of Ethics for Educators



- National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification

• Principles

- Responsibility to the Profession
- Responsibility for Professional Competence
- Responsibility to Students
- Responsibility to the School Community
- Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology

Development Partners

- ▶ American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
- ▶ American Federation of Teachers
- ▶ Association of Teacher Educators
- ▶ Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation
- ▶ Council of Chief State School Officers
- ▶ National Association of Elementary School Principals
- ▶ National Association of Secondary School Principals
- ▶ National Board of Professional Teaching Standards
- ▶ National Education Association
- ▶ National Network of State Teachers of the Year



http://www.nasdtc.net/?page=MCEE_Doc



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Applying BOTH “Codes” to Education

I. Pedagogy

- What to teach
- How to teach
- How to assess

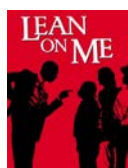


Conduct Ethics

III. Resource Allocation

- Equity issues
- Fiscal authority and Influence
- Budgets

II. Enforcement



- Activities – association, district, or union policies
- Copyright issues
- Teaching licensure and credentials
- Students who break the law



IV. Relationships

- Conflicts with colleagues, administrators, or parents
- Professional boundaries with students
- Confidentiality
- Honesty

V. Diversity **DEIBA**

Lien, Joelle L. 2012. Ethical dilemmas of in-service music educators. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*

http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Lien11_1.pdf



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Models for Ethical Scenario Analysis

• Code of Conduct – *Degree of Misconduct*

These could also be used to analyze violations of Federal Title IX, FERPA, teacher contracts, and School District/local policies & regulations



Conduct



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Mock Jury – Code of Conduct Scenarios

1. RED = “illegal” which may add criminal and civil penalties, fines, jail time, etc.

2. ORANGE = “unethical” which will result in significant discipline action, suspension or revocation of certificate, and/or loss of job

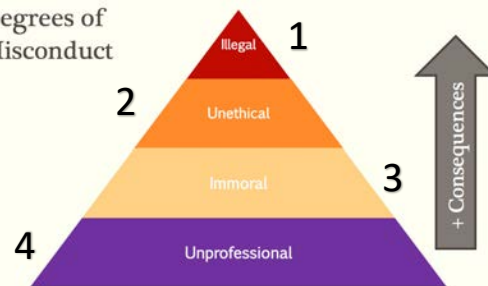
3. GOLD = “immoral” – no guarantee of major consequences except may result in lowering of year-end evaluation, earning a “warning” or “write-up,” or a job re-assignment

4. PURPLE = “unprofessional” – unlikely to result in major consequences except damage to one’s professional reputation

5. BLUE = inappropriate, unwise, “bad for appearances” – no consequences

6. GREEN = not a misconduct or inappropriate

Degrees of Misconduct



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Scenario: “Counseling Sessions”

Reflections:

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?



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Scenario: “Counseling Sessions”

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- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
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- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?

JURY: What is your judgement?
How do you find?



Mrs. K is a high school teacher whose husband recently divorced her. During a lesson one day, Mrs. K breaks down emotionally in front of her class. To calm everybody, she explains her emotional state to her students and discusses the end of her marriage. After school that day, a male student visits Mrs. K to see if she has recovered. The student explains that his parents are also divorcing, and he understands her feelings. The student begins stopping in to see Mrs. K more frequently and the pair begins spending more time outside of class supporting each other. Her colleagues become suspicious of her relationship with the student and report the teacher’s actions to their principal.

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Scenario: “Counseling Sessions”

Reflections:

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JURY: What is your judgement?

How do you find?



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Mrs. K is a high school teacher whose husband recently divorced her. During a lesson one day, Mrs. K breaks down emotionally in front of her class. To calm everybody, she explains her emotional state to her students and discusses the end of her marriage. A male student visits Mrs. K at home. The student explains the student's feelings to Mrs. K. Mrs. K understands her feelings. The student begins stopping in to see Mrs. K more frequently and the pair begins spending more time outside of class supporting each other. Her colleagues become suspicious of her relationship with the student and report the teacher's actions to their principal.

**Ethics Violation –
JOB LOSS?**

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Scenario: “Losing Contest Winner”

Reflections:

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?

JURY: What is your judgement?

How do you find?



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Jane S. was a first-year second-grade teacher who took a sick day to compete in a bikini contest on the Howard Stern show. In addition to appearing in a bikini on the show, Mrs. S. also discussed her sexual relationship with her husband.

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Scenario: “Losing Contest Winner”

Reflections:

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?

JURY: What is your judgement?

How do you find?



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Jane S. was a first-year second-grade teacher who took a sick day to compete in a bikini contest on the Stern show. In a bikini on the show, Mrs. S. also discussed her sexual relationship with her husband.

**Ethics Violation –
JOB LOSS!**

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Scenario: “Off-Duty Infraction”

Reflections:

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?

JURY: What is your judgement?

How do you find?



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James C. is a middle school teacher who was arrested for drunk driving. He goes to court and is found guilty of the offense. When the district moves to have him fired for his second-time DUI conviction, Mr. C argues that this offense has no influence over his ability to instruct his students. Also, the violation happened during the weekend on his private time.

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Scenario: “Off-Duty Infraction”

Reflections:

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher and the student?

JURY: What is your judgement?

How do you find?



James C. is a middle school teacher who was arrested for drunk driving. He goes to court and is... in the district... second... that the... his ability to instruct his students. Also, the violation happened during the weekend on his private time.

Ethics Violation & Criminal Penalties – JOB LOSS!

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Models for Ethical Scenario Analysis

- Code of Conduct – *Degree of Misconduct*
- Code of Ethics – *Bad Voices in My Head*



MCEE
Model Code of Ethics for Educators



Ethics




It's time for a...
Scavenger Hunt!




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“I didn’t know it was wrong...” I. A. 7.






PRINCIPLE I

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION

The professional educator knows that trust in the profession depends upon a level of professional responsibility that may be higher than the minimal standard of policy and law. This responsibility entails holding oneself and other educators to the same ethical standards.



A. The professional educator demonstrates responsibility to oneself and the profession by:


1. Holding oneself responsible to Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) and other recognized professional ethics standards;
2. Knowing and upholding the procedures, policies and laws relevant to professional practice regardless of personal views;
3. Monitoring and maintaining sound mental, physical and emotional health necessary to perform duties and services of any professional assignment and taking appropriate measures when personal or health-related issues may interfere with work-related duties;
- ➔ 4. Refraining from professional or personal activity that may lead to reducing one’s effectiveness within the school community;
5. Refraining from using one’s position for personal gain and avoiding the appearance of impropriety;
6. Taking responsibility and credit only for work actually performed or produced, and acknowledging the work and contributions made by others; and
7. Recognizing a lack of knowledge or understanding of the MCEE is not, in itself, a defense of unprofessional conduct

B. The professional educator fulfills the obligation to address and attempt to resolve ethical issues by:

1. Identifying and taking reasonable steps to resolve conflicts between the MCEE and the implicit or explicit demands of a person or organization;
2. Maintaining fidelity to the MCEE by taking proactive steps when having reason to believe that another educator may be approaching or involved in an ethically compromising situation;
3. Refraining from discriminating or retaliating against a person on the basis of having made an ethics complaint;
4. Refraining from filing or encouraging frivolous ethics complaints solely to harm or retaliate; and
5. Cooperating fully and honestly during investigations and proceedings.

C. The professional educator promotes and advances the profession within and beyond the school community by:


1. Engaging in respectful discourse regarding issues that impact the profession;
2. Influencing and supporting decisions and actions that positively impact teaching and learning, educational leadership and student services;
3. Staying current with ethics guidelines and decisions from professional organizations and other relevant sources;
4. Engaging with the greater educational community through professional organizations and associations; and
5. Advocating for adequate resources and facilities to equitable opportunities for all members within the lei community.




Recruitment and Retention

“It wasn’t against the law...” A. 4.


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“I’m not a rat...” I. B. 2.



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1. Holding oneself responsible to Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) and other recognized professional ethics standards;
2. Knowing and upholding the procedures, policies and laws relevant to professional practice regardless of personal views;
3. Monitoring and maintaining sound mental, physical and emotional health necessary to perform duties and services of any professional assignment and taking appropriate measures when personal or health-related issues may interfere with work-related duties;
- ➔ 4. Refraining from professional or personal activity that may lead to reducing one’s effectiveness within the school community;
5. Refraining from using one’s position for personal gain and avoiding the appearance of impropriety;
6. Taking responsibility and credit only for work actually performed or produced, and acknowledging the work and contributions made by others; and
7. Recognizing a lack of knowledge or understanding of the MCEE is not, in itself, a defense of unprofessional conduct

B. The professional educator fulfills the obligation to address and attempt to resolve ethical issues by:

1. Identifying and taking reasonable steps to resolve conflicts between the MCEE and the implicit or explicit demands of a person or organization;
- ➔ 2. Maintaining fidelity to the MCEE by taking proactive steps when having reason to believe that another educator may be approaching or involved in an ethically compromising situation;
3. Refraining from discriminating or retaliating against a person on the basis of having made an ethics complaint;
4. Refraining from filing or encouraging frivolous ethics complaints solely to harm or retaliate; and
5. Cooperating fully and honestly during investigations and proceedings.


C. The professional educator promotes and advances the profession within and beyond the school community by:

1. Engaging in respectful discourse regarding issues that impact the profession;
2. Influencing and supporting decisions and actions that positively impact teaching and learning, educational leadership and student services;
3. Staying current with ethics guidelines and decisions from professional organizations and other relevant sources;
4. Engaging with the greater educational community through professional organizations and associations; and
5. Advocating for adequate resources and facilities to equitable opportunities for all members within the lei community.




Recruitment and Retention


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“What’s in it for me?” I. C. 1-5.



PRINCIPLE I

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION

The professional educator knows that trust in the profession depends upon a level of professional responsibility that may be higher than the minimal standard of policy and law. This responsibility entails holding oneself and other educators to the same ethical standards.

A. The professional educator demonstrates responsibility to oneself and the profession by:


1. Holding oneself responsible to Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) and other recognized professional ethics standards;
2. Knowing and upholding the procedures, policies and laws relevant to professional practice regardless of personal views;
3. Monitoring and maintaining sound mental, physical and emotional health necessary to perform duties and services of any professional assignment and taking appropriate measures when personal or health-related issues may interfere with work-related duties;
4. Refraining from professional or personal activity that may lead to reducing one’s effectiveness within the school community;
5. Refraining from using one’s position for personal gain and avoiding the appearance of impropriety;
6. Taking responsibility and credit only for work actually performed or produced, and acknowledging the work and contributions made by others; and
7. Recognizing a lack of knowledge or understanding of the MCEE is not, in itself, a defense of unprofessional conduct

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- 3. Staying current with ethics guidelines and decisions from professional organizations and other relevant sources;
- 4. Engaging with the greater educational community through professional organizations and associations; and
- 5. Advocating for adequate resources and facilities to ensure equitable opportunities for all members within the learning community.




Recruitment and Retention

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“What’s the big deal about standards?” II. A. 2.



PRINCIPLE II

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The professional educator is committed to the highest levels of professional and ethical practice.

A. The professional educator demonstrates commitment to high standards of practice through:


1. Using the MCEE and other ethics codes unique to one’s discipline to guide and frame educational decision-making;
- 2. Incorporating into one’s practice state and national standards, including those specific to one’s discipline;
3. Advocating for equitable educational opportunities for all students;
4. Accepting the responsibilities, performing duties and providing services corresponding to the area of certification, licensure and/or training of one’s position;
5. Reflecting upon and assessing one’s professional skills, knowledge and competency on an ongoing basis; and
6. Committing to ongoing professional learning.

B. The professional educator demonstrates responsible use of data, materials, research, and assessment by:

1. Recognizing others’ work by appropriately citing data or materials from published, unpublished or electronic sources when disseminating information;
2. Using appropriate assessments for the purposes for which they are intended and for which they have been validated to guide educational decisions;
3. Conducting research in an ethical and responsible manner with appropriate permission and supervision;
4. Seeking and using evidence, instructional data, research and professional knowledge to inform practice;
5. Creating, maintaining, disseminating, storing, retaining and disposing of records and data relating to one’s research and practice, in accordance with, but not limited to, official guidance, policy and laws; and
6. Using data, data sources, or findings accurately, reliably and ethically.


C. The professional educator demonstrates competence by acting in the best interest of all students by:

1. Increasing students’ access to the curriculum, activities and resources in order to provide a quality and equitable educational experience;
2. Working to engage the school community to close achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps; and
3. Protecting students from any practice that harms or reasonable potential to harm.




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"I just teach [subject]..."





PRINCIPLE II

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The professional educator is committed to the highest levels of professional and ethical practice.

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"...so don't ask me to do anything else!" II. C. 2


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"I just teach [subject]..."





PRINCIPLE II

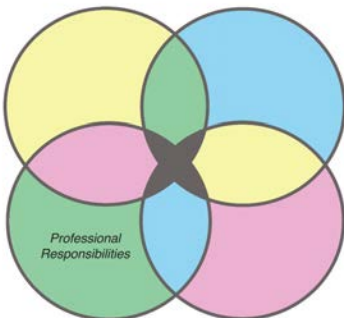
RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

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5. Reflecting upon and assessing one's professional skills, knowledge and competency on an ongoing basis; and
6. Committing to ongoing professional learning.

DOMAIN 4 Professional Responsibilities




demonstrates responsible use of data, materials, research, and assessment by:


1. Recognizing others' work by appropriately citing data or materials from published, unpublished or electronic sources when disseminating information;
2. Using appropriate assessments for the purposes for which they are intended and for which they have been validated to guide educational decisions;
3. Conducting research in an ethical and responsible manner with appropriate permission and supervision;
4. Seeking and using evidence, instructional data, research and professional knowledge to inform practice;
5. Creating, maintaining, disseminating, storing, retaining and disposing of records and data relating to one's research and practice, in accordance with, but not limited to, official guidance, policy and laws; and
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3. Protecting students from any practice that harms or reasonable potential to harm.




"...so don't ask me to do anything else!" II. C. 2



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MCEE
Model Code of Ethics for Educators

“My students are my friends!”

III. A. 7.


Boundaries?



PRINCIPLE III

RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

The professional educator has a primary obligation to promote the health, safety and well being of all students. The professional educator treats students with dignity and respect, and establishes and maintains appropriate verbal, physical, emotional and social boundaries.



A. The professional educator respects the rights and dignity of all students by:


1. Respecting students by taking into account their individual characteristics, including but not limited to age, gender, culture, setting, ability and socioeconomic context.
2. Interacting with students with transparency and in appropriate settings;
3. Communicating with students in a clear, respectful and culturally sensitive manner;
4. Taking into account how appearance and dress can affect one's interactions and relationships with students;
5. Considering the implications of accepting gifts from or giving gifts to students;
6. Engaging in physical contact with students only when there is a clearly defined purpose that benefits students and continually keeps their health, safety and well-being in mind;
7. Avoiding multiple relationships with students that might impair objectivity and increase the risk of harm to their well-being or decrease educator effectiveness;

B. The professional educator demonstrates an ethic of care through:

1. Seeking to understand students' educational, academic, personal and social needs as well as their values, beliefs and cultural background;
2. Respecting the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual student including, but not limited to, actual and perceived gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic context and culture; and
3. Establishing and maintaining an environment that promotes the emotional, intellectual, physical and sexual safety of all students.


C. The professional educator maintains student trust and confidentiality when interacting with students in a developmentally appropriate manner and within appropriate limits by:

1. Respecting the privacy of students and the need to hold in confidence certain forms of student communication, documents or information obtained in the course of professional practice;
2. Upholding parents'/guardians' legal rights, as well as any legal requirements, to reveal information related to legitimate concerns for the well-being of a student; and
3. Protecting the confidentiality of student records and personal data in accordance with prescribed state and local policies.




Council for Teacher Training
"Life cycle of a music educator"
Recruitment and Retention

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MCEE
Model Code of Ethics for Educators

“Never touch a student!”

III. A. 6.



PRINCIPLE III

RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

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2. Upholding parents'/guardians' legal rights, as well as any legal requirements, to reveal information related to legitimate concerns for the well-being of a student; and
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Council for Teacher Training
"Life cycle of a music educator"
Recruitment and Retention

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“Never touch a student!” III. A. 6.



PRINCIPLE III
RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

The professional educator has a primary obligation to promote the health, safety and well being of all students. The professional educator treats students with dignity and respect, and establishes and maintains appropriate verbal, physical, emotional and social boundaries.

8. Acknowledging there are no circumstances that allow for educators to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with students; and

9. Considering the ramifications of entering into an adult relationship of any kind with a former student, including but not limited to, any potential harm to the former student, public perception and the


A. The professional educator respects the rights and dignity of all students by:

1. Respecting students by taking into account their individual characteristics, including but not limited to age, gender, culture, setting, ability and socioeconomic context.
2. Interacting with students with transparency and in appropriate settings;
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5. Considering the implications of accepting gifts from or giving gifts to students;
6. Engaging in physical contact with students only when there is a clearly defined purpose that benefits students and continually keeps their health, safety and well-being in mind;
7. Avoiding multiple relationships with students that might impair objectivity and increase the risk of harm to their well-being or decrease educator effectiveness;


“No-touch policies” vs. “ethos of care...”

It's all about context!


- Motivation - the “why?”
- Purpose in terms of the needs of student?
- Length of touch?
- Location (in public?)
- Frequency or repetition?
- Accepted or welcomed by student?




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“It's just a gift!” III. A. 5.



PRINCIPLE III
RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

The professional educator has a primary obligation to promote the health, safety and well being of all students. The professional educator treats students with dignity and respect, and establishes and maintains appropriate verbal, physical, emotional and social boundaries.

8. Acknowledging there are no circumstances that allow for educators to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with students; and

9. Considering the ramifications of entering into an adult relationship of any kind with a former student, including but not limited to, any potential harm to the former student, public perception and the possible impact on the educator's career. The professional educator ensures the adult relationship was not started while the former student was in school

A. The professional educator respects the rights and dignity of all students by:


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3. Protecting the confidentiality of student records and re personal data in accordance with prescribed state and laws and local policies.




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“Wait ’til you hear what happened today” III. C. 1.



PRINCIPLE III

RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

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Recruitment and Retention


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“Don’t tell my parents!” IV. A. 1.



PRINCIPLE IV

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The professional educator promotes appropriate relationships and effective interactions with members of the school community.

A. The professional educator promotes appropriate and effective relationships with parents/guardians by:


1. Communicating with parents/guardians in a timely, respectful and culturally sensitive manner that represents the students' best interests;
2. Demonstrating a commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion with parents/guardians;
3. Considering the implication of accepting gifts from or giving gifts to parents/guardians; and
4. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality with respect to student information disclosed by or to parents/guardians unless required by law

B. The professional educator promotes appropriate and effective relationships with colleagues by:

1. Respecting colleagues as fellow professionals and maintaining civility when differences arise;
2. Resolving conflicts, whenever possible, privately and respectfully and in accordance with policy;


C. The professional educator promotes appropriate and effective relationships with the community and other stakeholders by:

1. Maintaining the highest professional standards of accuracy, honesty and appropriate disclosure of information when representing the school or district within the community and in public communications;
2. Advocating for policies and laws benefiting students within the school community; and
3. Collaborating with community agencies, organizations in order to advance students' best interests




Recruitment and Retention


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"Did you hear what he said about you?" IV. B. 1-2.



PRINCIPLE IV

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The professional educator promotes appropriate relationships and effective interactions with members of the school community.

A. The professional educator promotes appropriate and effective relationships with parents/guardians by:


1. Communicating with parents/guardians in a timely, respectful and culturally sensitive manner that represents the students' best interests;
2. Demonstrating a commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion with parents/guardians;
3. Considering the implication of accepting gifts from or giving gifts to parents/guardians; and
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1. Respecting colleagues as fellow professionals and maintaining civility when differences arise;
2. Resolving conflicts, whenever possible, privately and respectfully and in accordance with policy;


C. The professional educator promotes appropriate and effective relationships with the community and other stakeholders by:

3. Working to ensure a workplace environment that is free from harassment;
4. Collaborating with colleagues in a manner that supports academic achievement and related goals that promote the best interests of students;
5. Keeping student safety, education, and health paramount by maintaining and sharing educational records appropriately and objectively in accordance with local policies and state and federal laws;
6. Enhancing the professional growth and development of new educators by supporting effective field experiences, mentoring or induction activities across the career continuum;
7. Ensuring educators who participate as mentors for new educators, cooperating teachers and leadership positions are prepared and supervised to assume these roles; and
8. Demonstrating a commitment that educators are assigned to positions in accordance with their educational credentials, preparation and/or training to maximize students' opportunities and achievement.




Recruitment and Retention


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"Don't ask for permission. Beg for forgiveness!"



PRINCIPLE IV

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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"Isn't the use of social media forbidden?" v. A. 1.



PRINCIPLE V

RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The professional educator considers the impact of consuming, creating, distributing and communicating information through all technologies. The ethical educator is vigilant to ensure appropriate boundaries associated with role, time and place are maintained when using electronic communication.



A. The professional educator uses technology in a responsible manner by:

1. Using social media transparently and primarily for purposes of teaching and learning per school and district policy. The professional educator considers the ramifications of using social media and direct communication via technology with one's interactions with students, colleagues and the general public;
2. Staying current with trends and uses of school technology;
3. Evaluating information obtained electronically for reliability and bias;
4. Respecting intellectual property rights, copyright and fair use when accessing, using and documenting proprietary materials;
5. Understanding and abiding by policy and procedures on the use of technology and communication;
6. Recognizing that some electronic communications are records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and state public access laws;
7. Considering the implications of sharing legally protected or other sensitive information electronically either via professional or personal devices/accounts; and
8. Exercising vigilance in maintaining separate and professional virtual profiles and keeping personal and professional lives distinct.

B. The professional educator ensures students' safety and well-being when using technology by:


1. Being vigilant in identifying, addressing and reporting (when appropriate and in accordance with local school, district, state and federal policy) inappropriate and illegal materials/images in electronic or other forms;
2. Respecting the privacy of students' presence on social media unless there is possible risk of harm to the student or others; and
3. Being attentive to (and appropriately reporting) information concerning possible cyber bullying incidents and their potential impact on the student learning environment.

C. The professional educator maintains confidentiality with the use of technology by:

1. Taking appropriate and reasonable measures to maintain confidentiality of privileged information and stored or transmitted educational records;
2. Understanding the intent of Federal Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) and how it applies to sharing student records electronically;
3. Ensuring the rights of third parties, including the right of privacy, are not violated via the use of technology; and
4. Protecting information from being shared with unintended third parties through technology.


D. The professional educator promotes the appropriate use of technology in educational settings by:

1. Advocating for equal and equitable access to technology for all students;
2. Promoting the benefits and clarifying the limitations of various appropriate technological applications with colleagues, appropriate school personnel, parents and community members;
3. Promoting technological applications that assist and enhance the teaching and learning process; and
4. Practicing and advocating for cybersecurity to protect and the integrity of the network.




Recruitment and Retention


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Or curated your old social media posts?" v. A. 8.



PRINCIPLE V

RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The professional educator considers the impact of consuming, creating, distributing and communicating information through all technologies. The ethical educator is vigilant to ensure appropriate boundaries associated with role, time and place are maintained when using electronic communication.



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2. Staying current with trends and uses of school technology;
3. Evaluating information obtained electronically for reliability and bias;
4. Respecting intellectual property rights, copyright and fair use when accessing, using and documenting proprietary materials;
5. Understanding and abiding by policy and procedures on the use of technology and communication;
6. Recognizing that some electronic communications are records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and state public access laws;
7. Considering the implications of sharing legally protected or other sensitive information electronically either via professional or personal devices/accounts; and
8. Exercising vigilance in maintaining separate and professional virtual profiles and keeping personal and professional lives distinct.

B. The professional educator ensures students' safety and well-being when using technology by:


1. Being vigilant in identifying, addressing and reporting (when appropriate and in accordance with local school, district, state and federal policy) inappropriate and illegal materials/images in electronic or other forms;
2. Respecting the privacy of students' presence on social media unless there is possible risk of harm to the student or others; and
3. Being attentive to (and appropriately reporting) information concerning possible cyber bullying incidents and their potential impact on the student learning environment.

C. The professional educator maintains confidentiality with the use of technology by:

1. Taking appropriate and reasonable measures to maintain confidentiality of privileged information and stored or transmitted educational records;
2. Understanding the intent of Federal Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) and how it applies to sharing student records electronically;
3. Ensuring the rights of third parties, including the right of privacy, are not violated via the use of technology; and
4. Protecting information from being shared with unintended third parties through technology.


D. The professional educator promotes the appropriate use of technology in educational settings by:

1. Advocating for equal and equitable access to technology for all students;
2. Promoting the benefits and clarifying the limitations of various appropriate technological applications with colleagues, appropriate school personnel, parents and community members;
3. Promoting technological applications that assist and enhance the teaching and learning process; and
4. Practicing and advocating for cybersecurity to protect and the integrity of the network.



Recruitment and Retention

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Models for Ethical Scenario Analysis

- Code of Conduct – *Degree of Misconduct*
- Code of Ethics – *Voices in My Head*
- All “Codes” – *Deep Dive in Break Outs*

From CSDE’s Teacher Education And Mentoring Manual:

“Teachers must engage in district-facilitated conversations that focus on ethical and professional dilemmas and their professional responsibility to students, the larger school/district educational community, and to families.”



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Small Group Discussion Questions:

Adapted from Module 5 of the Connecticut State Department of Education Teacher Education And Mentoring Manual

1. What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?

2. How could this situation conflict with school policy, state/country code of conduct, Model Code of Ethics for Educators, or case law?

3. In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the educator's students, fellow educators and the school community-at-large?

4. What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

5. Please take 10 minutes to prepare a reply with educators in your breakout room.

You need not agree!



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(Ideal) Steps to Analyzing Case Studies

Mock Practice in Professional Ethical Decision-Making

1. Establish “safe” learning networks (informal?) with fellow educators.
2. Share a(n) incident or “hypothetical” scenario.
3. Discuss the conflicts & consequences (use the **CSDE TEAM** questions?)
4. Consider divergent opinions with an open mind.
5. In formal settings (PLCs or department/faculty meetings), summarize the responses from the members of your group.

Although fictional, most of the fact scenarios are based on actual past adjudications of state department of education court hearings.



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Additional Scenarios for Discussions



Blogsites on Ethics Case Studies

- Ethics for Music Educators - Part III Case Studies
<https://paulfox.blog/2017/09/01/ethics-for-music-educators-iii/>
- Ethical Scenarios
<https://paulfox.blog/category/ethics/>
- Ethical Conundrums Revisited - Part I
<https://paulfox.blog/2018/08/20/ethical-conundrums-revisited-part-i/>
- Ethical Conundrums Revisited - Part II
<https://paulfox.blog/2018/10/14/ethical-conundrums-revisited-part-ii/>
- Studies in PA Educator Ethics Case Law
<https://paulfox.blog/2021/06/26/studies-in-pa-educator-ethics-case-law/>





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Addition

All Aboard

Ethical Scenarios – For Collegial Analysis


PA Educators: Your Ethical Codes & School Law
Act 45 & 48 Workshop Sessions © 2023 Paul K. Fox & Thomas W. Bailey Attorney at Law

"Mock" Case Studies for More Sessions of Interactive Discussion

- Mr. S is a high school teacher who has been tutoring Melissa on an Advanced Placement course after school for several months. Although Melissa's academic performance has been improving, Melissa's parents meet with the principal about concerns they have regarding Mr. S's relationship with Melissa. During their tutoring sessions, Mr. S has given Melissa gift cards as rewards for her academic progress, driven Melissa home after tutoring sessions, and even begun to communicate with Melissa via text messaging during the evenings. While they have no proof of any impropriety, Melissa's parents are concerned. When the principal meets with the teacher, Mr. S argues that his behavior is not inappropriate and that he is simply offering assistance to a student in need.
- During lunch, Steven R. often walks around the faculty room giving his female colleagues back massages to help them "relax." Some of the teachers look visibly uncomfortable with the contact and attempt to avoid his massages.
- Melissa S. is a third-grade teacher in a rural school. Near the end of the year, Rodrigo enrolls in her class, even though he cannot speak English. Ms. S. is frustrated because she feels she does not have the training to work with a student like Rodrigo and complains in class that "people shouldn't come here if they can't even speak our language." One of the students complains to her parents about what Ms. S said.
- In the hallway one day, students from one of your classes stop and ask you what you think of Mr. T. When you ask why this would be important to them, they explain that Mr. T. had gone on a tirade in their class and complained about your ability as a teacher. One of them says that Mr. T. says that you were the worst teacher in the school.
- An itinerant special needs teacher travels from school to school. After leaving Elm elementary school, the teacher travels to Central elementary. A Central teacher has a biological child who attends Elm elementary. Because of recent discipline issues with some of the special education students, the teacher at Central begins to ask the itinerant instructor about the behavior of some of the children at Elm elementary. The itinerant begins to share some of the concerns and specifics about the IEPs of those children who were involved in a recent behavioral incident.

Mock Jury – Code of Conduct Scenarios

- RED** - "Illegal" which may add criminal and civil penalties, fines, jail time, etc.
- ORANGE** - "Unethical" which will result in significant discipline action, suspension or revocation of certificate, and/or loss of job
- GOLD** - "Immoral" - no guarantee of major consequences except may result in hearing of peer and evaluation, earning a "warning" or "write-up" or a job re-assignment
- PURPLE** - "unprofessional" - unlikely to result in major consequences except damage to one's professional reputation
- BLUE** - inappropriate, unwise, "bad for appearance" - no consequences
- GREEN** - not a misconduct or inappropriate



Degrees of Misconduct

↑ Discipline

Connecticut State Dept. of Ed.

In Depth Discussion Questions

- What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?
- How could this situation become a violation of your school entity policy, CPC, other PA regulations, statutes, MCEE, or caselaw?
- In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the students, fellow educators, and the school community?
- At this point, what responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?

Submissions

Studies


Case Studies

[educators-iii/](#)

I [drums-revisited-part-i/](#)

II [ns-revisited-part-ii/](#)

AW [ator-ethics-case-law/](#)



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GRADE YOURSELF: “Which statement has the *least* validity?”

a.

Moral professionalism involves being well informed about students, education, and content, confronting parents of underachieving students, cooperating with colleagues to observe school policies, and criticizing unsatisfactory policies and proposing constructive improvement.

b.

Teachers, attorneys, doctors, nurses, counselors, therapists, and the clergy have **“fiduciary” duties**: own the highest legal duties of good faith and trust and are bound ethically to act in another party’s best interest.

c.


Although not always defined in exact terms of school law or policies, **professional ethics** are “standards that assist practitioners within situation and systemic contexts in choosing the best course-of-action.”

d.

A **code of ethics** outlines a set of principles that affect decision making, while a **code of conduct** delineates specific behaviors that are required or prohibited and governs actions.


e.

The intent of this ethics presentation is to emphasize the **“minimum standards of acceptable behavior”** and focus on specific illegal and unethical actions that may result in disciplinary actions.



All Aboard

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THE CHOICES WE MAKE...

*You said that you had things to teach me.
And now, I see it all so clear.
We're led, each moment that we live in,
To the only choice we're given.
Will we live by love or fear?
And you, you knew it's never easy.
It's never black or white,
Just shades of grey.*

*All we do, is face up to those choices,
And obey our inner voices
And hope we find our way.
And all the choices we make
Will shape our lives forever,
Ev'ry path we take
When push comes down to shove,
Ev'ry moment counts.*

*It's always now or never.
And although, god knows,
You chose the life you chose,
I'm here because, just once,
You chose to love...*

Feel free to reach out to paulkfox.usc@gmail.com

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