

Teacher Code of Conduct

The School Board, in an effort to operate the District under the highest ethical standards, adopts the following code of ethics for the teachers.

Preamble to the NEA Code of Ethics

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nature of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

Section I. The educator treats students in an ethical manner, with respect and dignity by:

- 1.1 Making the well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making and actions.
- 1.2 Refraining from bias, preferential treatment, giving special advantages, punishment, denying benefits, or excluding from programs based on race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation.
- 1.3 Recognizing and showing respect for the unique potential of each student even when there are perceived deficiencies.
- 1.4 Protecting students from conditions that are harmful to learning. Students are kept safe and free from danger through a safe environment, proper supervision, adequate planning (foresight) regarding safety issues (preparation for emergencies such as fire, weapons, seizures, fights, and bomb threats).
- 1.5 Being committed to the welfare and interests of all students, and refraining from harming students physically or psychologically. Students are not deliberately humiliated, shamed, frightened, degraded, exploited, intimidated, hurt, or placed in danger. No cruel, unusual, demeaning, or excessive punishments are used.

- 1.6 Establishing only those relationships that promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of students, and refraining from engaging in any form of sexual relationship or other sexual misconduct with students. The educator refrains from excessive informal and social involvement with individual students.
- 1.7 Reporting symptoms of abuse and neglect to the proper authorities.
- 1.8 Refraining from advocating, using in front of students at school functions, providing to students controlled and illegal substances. Reporting to work while under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, or any mind-altering substance is unacceptable.
- 1.9 Refraining from disclosing information about students obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
- 1.10 Providing students with access to a variety of responsible points of view, neither distorting nor suppressing subject matter, and creating an environment that allows students to exercise critical judgment.
- 1.11 Assessing and grading students' performance carefully, accurately, objectively and impartially. The power of grading is not abused.
- 1.12 Using school resources (funds, machines, supplies, time, property) in the way for which they were intended.
- 1.13 Complying with state regulations, written local school board policies and other applicable state and federal laws.

Section II. The educator treats families/parents in an ethical manner.

- 2.1 Parents are informed about the curriculum, policies, their child's academic progress, difficulties their child has, planned activities such as field trips or controversial topics, their child's absences from classes and/or tardiness, and potentially harmful experiences at school (exposure to contagious diseases, accidents or injuries, etc.)
- 2.2 Parents are given access to all records kept on their child (per the Buckley Amendment) and are invited to interact with educators.
- 2.3 Parents are told that they have the right to make decisions regarding what is in the best interests of their child, even when that decision is different from the educator's or school's recommendation.

- 2.4 The confidentiality of students and families is protected. The educator refrains from disclosing confidential information about the family, unless it is a case of neglect or abuse. Parents are not talked about to other parents or members of the community and only with staff on a “need to know” basis.
- 2.5 Families are treated with respect and are not discriminated against due to race, national origin, socio-economic status, religious belief, physical appearance, or parenting style. The dignity of the family, its culture, customs, beliefs, and religion, are respected.
- 2.6 The educator encourages parents to come to him/her first when they question the educator’s judgment. If the issue is not resolved, parents are informed as to how to contact the educator’s immediate supervisor.
- 2.7 The educator presents the school/curriculum in a positive light to parents. The educator refrains from complaining to parents about the administrator or school policies. The educator defends the program when parents are critical and takes concerns expressed by parents to the administrator.
- 2.8 The educator does not use his/her position as educator for exploitation (tutoring, private lessons, private practice).
- 2.9 The educator refrains from creating an adversarial relationship with parents by blaming them for school-related problems.

Section III. The educator treats other staff members in an ethical manner.

- 3.1 The educator establishes a relationship of trust and respect by: refraining from deceptively criticizing others; openly communicating concerns directly to the person involved; sharing resources and pertinent information, but refraining from taking the resources of others without permission; being willing to accept suggestions and constructive criticism, showing respect for colleagues with different philosophies; and refraining from embarrassing colleagues in front of students, parents and other educators.
- 3.2 The educator maintains a positive approach to school life.
- 3.3 The educator talks with other staff members in a way that does not degrade: students; parents; staff; or administrators.

- 3.4 Support personnel, such as aides, assistants, and volunteers, are treated with respect and supported in their own professional development. The educator works with them in a way that helps them be successful, not making demands that they are incapable of meeting, but encouraging them to use the skills they have.
- 3.5 The educator refrains from discussing private information about one educator with another. The educator does not disclose negative information about colleagues unless there is a compelling professional purpose or it is required by law.

Section IV. The educator treats administrators in an ethical manner.

- 4.1 Administrators are treated courteously and with respect.
- 4.2 Administrators respect the dignity and worth of educators.
- 4.3 Where there is a conflict over policy, the educator takes the role of advocacy by clearly articulating the problem and researching possible solutions. The educator provides information to support his/her position, but refrains from demanding that it be followed.
- 4.4 When there is a disagreement over policy, a confidential meeting is held with the administrator, and the problem is explained clearly and in a constructive manner. The educator recognizes that this may not alleviate the problem, but continues to do research and bring more information to the administrator in a noncritical and positive manner.

Section V. The educator is an ethical professional.

The educator:

- 5.1 Engages in lifelong learning regarding best practices, laws, standards, and current research.
- 5.2 Serves as an advocate for what is in the best interests of students when policies are being made.
- 5.3 Educates others in a tactful and positive way about appropriate education.
- 5.4 Advocates for good educational practice. The primary focus of all decisions is “What is best for students?”
- 5.5 Avoids using the position of educator for special personal, religious, political, or economic influence.

- 5.6 Maintains a balance between the individual needs of students and the need to maximize learning for the entire class as a group. The educator does not work with one student to the detriment of others.
- 5.7 Is committed to quality, uses current best practices as defined by research, and maintains high standards of teaching, appearance, and behavior.
- 5.8 Takes only those positions which he/she is qualified.
- 5.9 Implements federal and state laws regarding education, as well as the policies, rules and regulations of the school district. When he/she commits a crime that places students in potential physical or emotional jeopardy, or when the crime detracts from the educator's professional standing so as to render him/her unqualified or unfit to teach, he/she steps out of the role of educator.
- 5.10 Uses respectful, courteous language, as well as appropriate vocabulary and voice tones. The educator does not use or distribute profane, obscene, vulgar, or indecent matter.
- 5.11 Demonstrates self-control in coping with stressful situations and anger. The educator does not fight, agitate a fight, or attempt bodily harm or injury to another person. The educator avoids conduct offensive to the dignity, decency, and morality of the profession.
- 5.12 Refrains from accepting any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or action.
- 5.13 Upholds the civil rights of all. The educator does not impede due process.
- 5.14 Refrains from intentionally misrepresenting official policies of the school or educational organizations, and clearly distinguishes those views from his or her own personal opinions.

Section VI. The educator upholds high ethical standards in the classroom.

A. Academic Honesty for Students

- 6.1 Honesty is clearly defined as an expectation for students.
- 6.2 Dishonesty is treated decisively with appropriate consequences. Middle school example: The educator explains what kind of assistance is and is not acceptable for each assignment. Students are encouraged to put the names of all participants on group projects. Students are taught the appropriate use of information from others and how to cite it. The educator discusses cheating, what it means, and the consequences.

Primary examples: Students are encouraged to tell the truth. They are helped to distinguish fact from fantasy (“Is that real or pretend?”)

B. Harassment by Students

- 6.3 The educator is vigilant in keeping the classroom a place where everyone can work and learn in an atmosphere of respect for the dignity and worth of all. The following are addressed decisively with consequences that follow the guidelines in the student handbook:
- a. Sexual harassment (offensive behavior that includes requests for sexual favors; attempts to engage in sexual activity; sexist remarks about an individual’s body, clothes, or behavior; displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical conduct and expressive behavior of a sexual nature) is dealt with clearly and decisively.
 - b. Any offensive behavior that is intimidating, such as bullying, taunting, threats, name-calling, or ridicule, is addressed decisively and with consequences.
 - c. The educator clearly explains that students are expected to treat the bodies and feelings of others with respect, to respect each other’s space, and to refrain from physically or psychologically harming or intimidating others.

C. Discrimination by Students

- 6.4 The educator rigorously opposes any form of discrimination, whether on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, handicap, disability, or sexual orientation. (Discrimination, or prejudice, refers to having an unfavorable attitude of a hostile nature regarding a particular group, and/or demeaning behavior or language toward a class of people.)
- a. The use of racial slurs or derogatory nicknames is not tolerated and has consequences. Students are expected to use appropriate language and refrain from obscene words or gestures.
 - b. The educator provides appropriate education for students with handicaps. These are not excluded or denied a benefit. They have access to all the services provided for able-bodied students.
 - c. The educator models and expects students to use inclusive language that respects females.
 - d. Diversity of race, ethnicity, political and religious views, and ability is affirmed, welcomed, and appreciated. The educator upholds the rights of all to exercise their political, religious, and civil privileges.
 - e. Physical and emotion cruelty are not tolerated.
 - f. Students treat each other with respect, compassion, and honesty.

References:

<http://www.charactered.org/ethicstext.htm> (ISBE Website)

<http://www.nea.org/home> (National Education Association Website)

www.aateachers.org (American Association of Education Website)

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