No. 4330
SECTION: PERSONNEL
TITLE: CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND CONDUCT FOR EDUCATORS

ADOPTED: 6/21/10
READOPTED: 1/29/14; 11/15/16; 8/20/19; 6/17/25
REVISED:

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Background

The Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC) was required under Act 71 of 1989 to develop a code which would establish statewide standards for professional practice. The code will affect all professional educators as defined in the Public School Code, including teachers, administrators and certified guidance counselors, school nurses, home and school visitors, psychologists, dental hygienists, instructional media specialist and nutrition specialists. The Code became effective November 1, 1992.

Mission

The Professional Standards and Practices Commission is committed to providing leadership for improving the quality of education in this Commonwealth by establishing high standards for preparation, certification, practice and ethical conduct in the teaching profession.

Introduction

A. Professional conduct defines interactions between the individual educator and students, the employing agencies and other professional. Generally, the responsibility for professional conduct rests with the individual professional educator. However, in this Commonwealth, a Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for certified educators is required by statute and violation of specified sections of the Code may constitute a basis for public or private reprimand. Violations of the Code may also be used as supporting evidence, through may not constitute an independent basis, for the suspension or revocation of a certificate. The Professional Standards and Practice Commission was charged by the Act of December 12, 1973 (P.L. 397, No.141) (24 P.S. Sec. 12-1251, 12-1268), known as the Teacher Certification Law, with adopting a code by July 1, 1991. See 24 P.S. Sec. 12-1255(a) (10).

B. This chapter makes explicit the values of the education profession. When individuals become educators in this Commonwealth, they make a moral commitment to uphold these values.

Purpose

A. Professional educators in this Commonwealth believe that the quality of their services directly influences the nation and its citizens. Professional educators recognize their obligation to provide services and to conduct themselves in a manner which places the highest esteem

on human rights and dignity. Professional educators seek to ensure that every student receives the highest quality of service and that every professional maintains a high level of competence from entry through ongoing professional development. Professional educators are responsible for the development of sound educational policy and obligated to implement that policy and its program to the public.

B. Professional educators recognize their primary responsibility is to the student and to the development of the student's potential. Central to that development is the professional educator's valuing the worth and dignity of every person, student and colleague alike; the pursuit of truth; devotion to excellence; acquisition of knowledge; and democratic principles. To those ends, the educator engages in continuing professional development and keeps current with the research and technology. Educators encourage and support the use of resources that best serve the interests and needs of students. Within the context of professional excellence, the educator and student together explore the challenge and the dignity of the human experience.

Practices

A. Professional practices are behaviors and attitudes that are based on a set of values that the professional education community believes and accepts. These values are evidenced by the professional educator's conduct toward students and colleagues, and the educator's employer and community. When teacher candidates become professional educators in the Commonwealth, they are expected to abide by this Code.

B. Professional educators are expected to abide by the following:

1. Professional educators shall abide by the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. Sec. 1-101-27-2702), (a)(1), (2) and (4) and (b)(1), (2) and (4) of the Public Employee Relations Act (43 P.S. Sec. 1101,1201(a)(1), and (b)(1), (2), and (4) and this Code.

2. Professional educators shall be prepared and legally certified in their areas of assignment. Educators may not be assigned or willingly accept assignments they are not certified to fulfill. Educators may be assigned to or accept assignments outside their certification area on a temporary, short term emergency basis.

   Examples: a teacher certified in English filling a class period for a physical education teacher who has that day become ill; a substitute teacher certified in elementary education employed as a librarian for several days until the district can locate and employ a permanent substitute teacher certified in library science.

3. Professional educators shall maintain high levels of competence throughout their careers.

4. Professional educators shall exhibit consistent and equitable treatment of students, fellow educators and parents. They shall respect the civil rights of all and not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, culture, religion, sex or sexual orientation, marital status, age, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, or disabling condition of vocational interest. This list of basis of discrimination is not all-inclusive.

5. Professional educators shall accept the value of diversity in educational practice. Diversity requires educators to have a range of methodologies and to request the necessary tools for effective teaching and learning.

6. Professional educators shall impart to their students principles of good citizenship and societal responsibility.

7. Professional educators shall exhibit acceptable and professional language and communication skills. Their verbal and written communication with parents, students and staff shall reflect sensitivity to the fundamental human rights of dignity, privacy and respect.

8. Professional educators shall be open-minded, knowledgeable and use appropriate judgment and communication skills when responding to an issue within the educational environment.

9. Professional educators shall keep in confidence information obtained in confidence in the course of professional service unless required to be disclosed by law or clear and compelling necessity as determined by the professional educator.

10. Professional educators shall exert reasonable effort to protect the student form conditions that interfere with learning or are harmful to the student's health and safety.

Conduct

Individual professional conduct reflects upon the practices, values, integrity and reputation of the profession. Violation of 22 Pa. Code Sec. 235.6 – 235.11 may constitute an independent basis for private or public reprimand, and may be used as supporting evidence in cases of certification suspension and revocation.

Legal Obligations

A. The professional educator many not engage in conduct prohibited by the Act of December 12, 1973 (P.L. 397, No. 141)(24 P.S. Sec. 12-1251 – 12-1268), known as the Teacher Certification Law.

B. The professional educator may not engage in conduct prohibited by:

   1. Accept employment, when not properly certificated, in a position for which certification is required.

   2. Assist entry into or continuance in the education profession of an unqualified person.

   3. Employ or recommend for employment, a person who is not certificated appropriately for the position.

Civil Rights

The professional educator may not:

1. Discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, culture, religion, sex or sexual orientation, marital status, age, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, or disabling condition or vocational interest against a student or fellow professional. This list of discrimination is not all-inclusive. Discrimination having be found to exist by an agency of proper jurisdiction shall be considered an independent basis for discipline.

2. Interfere with a student's or colleague's exercise of political and civil rights and responsibilities.

Improper Personal or Financial Gain

The professional educator may not:

1. Accept gratuities, gifts or favors that might impair or appear to impair professional judgment.

2. Exploit a professional relationship for personal gain or advantage.

Relationships with Students

The professional educator may not:

1. Knowingly and intentionally distort or misrepresent evaluations of students.

2. Knowingly and intentionally misrepresent subject matter or curriculum.

3. Sexually harass or engage in sexual relationships with students.

4. Knowingly and intentionally withhold evidence fro the proper authorities about violations of the legal obligations as defined within this section.

Professional Relationships

The professional educator may not:

1. Knowingly and intentionally deny or impede a colleague in the exercise or enjoyment of a professional right or privilege in being an educator.

2. Knowingly and intentionally distort evaluations of colleagues.

3. Unlawfully harass a fellow employee.

4. Use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional decisions of colleagues.

5. Threaten, coerce or discriminate against any colleague who in good faith reports or discloses to a governing agency actual or suspected violations of law, agency regulations or standards.