

PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 We, professional educators of the United States of America, affirm our belief in the worth and dignity of man. We recognize the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, the encouragement of scholarship, and the promotion of democratic citizenship. We regard as essential to these goals the protection of freedom to learn and to teach, and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. We affirm and accept our responsibility to practice our profession according to the highest ethical standards.
- 1.2 We acknowledge the magnitude of the profession we have chosen, and engage ourselves, individually and collectively, to judge our colleagues and to be judged by them in accordance with the applicable provisions of this code.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 **Commitment to the Student** - We measure success by the progress of each student toward achievement of his/her maximum potential. We therefore work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals. We recognize the importance of cooperative relationships with other community institutions, especially the home.

In fulfilling our obligations to the students, we--

- A. Deal justly and considerately with each student.
- B. Encourage the student to study varying points of view and respect his/her right to form his/her own judgment.
- C. Withhold confidential information about a student or his/her home unless we deem that its release serves professional purposes, benefits the student, or is required by law.
- D. Make discreet use of available information about the student.
- E. Conduct conferences with or concerning students in an appropriate place and manner.

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- F. Refrain from commenting unprofessionally about a student or his/her home.
- G. Avoid exploiting our professional relationship with any student.
- H. Tutor only in accordance with officially approved State Board policies and West Virginia Board of Ethics Opinions.
- I. Inform appropriate individuals and agencies of the student's educational needs and assist in providing an understanding of his/her educational experiences.
- J. Seek constantly to improve learning facilities and opportunities.

2.2 Commitment to the Community

We believe that patriotism in its highest form requires dedication to the principles of our democratic heritage. We share with all other citizens the responsibility for the development of sound public policy. As educators, we are particularly accountable for participating in the development of educational programs and policies and for interpreting them to the public.

In fulfilling our obligations to the community, we --

- A. Share the responsibility for improving the educational opportunities for all.
- B. Recognize that each educational institution may have a person authorized to interpret its official policies.
- C. Acknowledge the right and responsibility of the public to participate in the formulation of educational policy.
- D. Evaluate through appropriate professional procedures conditions within a district or institution of learning, make known serious deficiencies, and take any action deemed necessary and proper.
- E. Use educational facilities for intended purposes consistent with applicable policy, law, and regulation.
- F. Assume full potential and citizenship responsibilities, but refrain from exploiting the institutional privileges of our professional position to promote political candidates or partisan activities.

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- G. Protect the educational program against undesirable infringement.

2.3 Commitment to the Profession

We believe that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the future of the nation and its citizens. We therefore exert every effort to raise educational standards, to improve our services, to promote a climate in which the exercise of professional judgment is encouraged, and to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education. Aware of the value of united effort, we contribute actively to the support, planning, and programs of our professional organizations.

In fulfilling our obligations to the profession, we --

- A. Recognize that a profession must accept responsibility for the conduct of its members and understand that our own conduct may be regarded as representative.
- B. Participate and conduct ourselves in a responsible manner in the development and implementation of policies affecting education.
- C. Cooperate in the selective recruitment of prospective teachers and in the orientation of student teachers, interns and those colleagues new to their positions.
- D. Accord just and equitable treatments to all members of the profession in the exercise of their professional rights and responsibilities, and support them when unjustly accused or mistreated.
- E. Refrain from assigning professional duties to non-professional personnel when such assignment is not in the best interest of the student.
- F. Provide, upon request, a statement of specific reasons for administrative recommendations that lead to the denial of increments, significant changes in employment, or termination of employment.
- G. Refrain from exerting undue influence based on the authority of our positions in the determination of professional decisions by colleagues.
- H. Keep the trust under which confidential information is exchanged.
- I. Make appropriate use of time granted for professional purposes.

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- J. Interpret and use the writings of others and the findings of educational research with intellectual honesty.
- K. Maintain our integrity when dissenting by basing our public criticism of education on valid assumptions as established by careful evaluation of facts and hypotheses.
- L. Represent honestly our professional qualifications and identify ourselves only with reputable educational institutions.
- M. Respond accurately to requests for evaluations of colleagues seeking professional positions.
- N. Provide applicants seeking information about a position with an honest description of the assignment, the conditions of work and related matters.

2.4 Commitment to Professional Employment Practices

We regard the employment agreement as a solemn pledge to be executed both in spirit and in fact in a manner consistent with the highest ideas of professional service. Sound professional personnel relationships with governing boards are built upon personal integrity, dignity, and mutual respect.

In fulfilling our obligations to professional employment practices, we --

- A. Apply for or offer a position on the basis of professional and legal qualifications.
- B. Apply for specific position only when it is known to be vacant and refrain from such practices as underbidding or commenting adversely about other candidates.
- C. Fill no vacancy except where the terms, conditions, policies, and practices permit the exercise of our professional judgment and skill, and where a climate conducive to professional services exists.
- D. Adhere to the conditions of a contract or to the terms of an appointment until either has been terminated legally or by mutual consent.
- E. Give prompt notice of any change in availability of service, in status of applications, or in change of position.
- F. Conduct professional business through the recognized educational and professional channels.

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- G. Accept no gratuities or gifts of significance that might influence our judgment in the exercise of our professional duties.

- H. Engage in no outside employment that will impair the effectiveness of our professional service and permit no commercial exploitation of our professional position.

Sources: Board of Education Minutes, West Virginia Education Association
WV Board of Education Policy 5902

Dates: 2/25/82, 4/27/71, 3/23/99, 11/21/02