



Educator Responsibility to the Profession

Competency

The educator evaluates their ethical behavior, advocates for the advancement of the profession, and actively addresses and resolves ethical issues.

Key Method

The educator engages in reflective practices to enhance their personal and professional growth, supports educational programs, policies, and curricula, and explores strategies for addressing ethical dilemmas.

Method Components

Professional Codes of Ethics

A growing movement within PK–12 and educator preparation communities emphasizes the need for educators to understand how their professional decisions impact the safety and well-being of children, as well as the school's culture and mission. While most professions adhere to clear ethical guidelines, the education profession lacks a universally adopted model code of ethics. In its absence, judicial decisions and legislative actions have often governed educator conduct.

Code of Ethics vs. Code of Conduct

A professional code of ethics represents aspirational ideals, guiding educators in ethical decision-making and reflective practice. In contrast, a code of conduct establishes minimum legal or regulatory requirements for employment, licensure, or sanctions. The Model Code of Ethics for

Educators (MCEE) bridges this gap by offering a framework to navigate ethical dilemmas and promote professional accountability.

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) serves as a guide for future and current educators navigating the complexities of PK–12 education. Developed by educators for educators, the MCEE upholds public trust and the dignity of the profession.

The MCEE:

- Connects professional ethics with the practical realities of education.
- Defines best ethical practices for educators.
- Provides a structured framework for ethical decision-making.
- Encourages a shared professional language about ethics.

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators consists of five major principles that define critical dimensions of ethical practice:

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

For additional information about the Model Code of Ethics for Educators, its principles, and performance indicators, visit www.nasdtdec.net.

Responsibility to Oneself as an Ethical Professional

Responsibility to oneself as an ethical professional includes maintaining organization, awareness, and preparedness in both professional and personal contexts. Educators should monitor and sustain their mental, physical, and emotional health, refraining from any activities that may compromise their effectiveness in the school community.

A lack of awareness, knowledge, or understanding of the MCEE is not a defense against charges of unethical conduct. Educators must:

- Hold themselves accountable for ethical conduct.
- Monitor and maintain sound mental, physical, and emotional health.

- Refrain from professional or personal activities that may reduce effectiveness within the school community.

Educator Responsibilities to the Profession

Addressing Ethical Issues:

- Identify and address conflicts between the MCEE and workplace practices.
- Act proactively to address potential ethical violations by colleagues.
- Avoid discrimination, retaliation, or frivolous complaints in ethical matters.
- Cooperate fully with ethics investigations.
- Reflect on and respond to ethical concerns related to emerging technologies, including how AI tools may impact equity, student data use, or professional integrity.

Advocating for the Profession:

- Support decisions that enhance teaching, learning, and leadership.
- Participate in respectful discussions on professional issues.
- Stay informed on evolving ethical standards and practices.
- Advocate for equitable resources and opportunities for all students.

Ethical Decision-Making

To navigate ethical dilemmas, educators use a structured decision-making process:

1. **Recognize and define the dilemma:** Identify the ethical question or concern.
2. **Gather facts:** Collect all relevant details.
3. **Define the role:** Clarify the educator's responsibilities in the situation.
4. **Explore solutions:** Consider options that address the issue and prevent future dilemmas.
5. **Align with standards:** Ensure solutions comply with the **MCEE**, laws, and district policies.
6. **Create and implement a plan:** Take actionable steps to address the issue.

7. **Reflect and adjust:** Review the results and refine the approach as needed.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Ashraf, H., Hosseinnia, M., & Domsy, J. G. H. (2017). EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence: A relationship study. *Cogent Education*, 4(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1298188>

Harrison, L. K. (2019). *Educator misconduct in Idaho: A quantitative analysis* (Order No. 13426867). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2175705732). Retrieved from

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/c1bee69a25f9d5a904182583c3f54f74/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

Gasser, L., Antonius H. N. Cillessen, Huber, C., Mainhard, T., Christoph Michael Müller, & Carmen. (2022). Editorial: The Role of Teachers in Students' Social Inclusion in the Classroom. *Frontiers in Education*, 7.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.830973>

Kafi, Z., Motallebzadeh, K., & Ashraf, H. (2018). Developing, localizing, & validating a code of professional ethics through PLS-SEM: EFL university instructors' perspectives. *Cogent Education*, 5(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1492340>

Kemman, H. R. (2019). *Ethical school leadership: The conceptions and practices secondary principals use to maintain ethical context and relationships in their schools* (Order No. 13810380). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2201789195). Retrieved from

<https://scholarspace.library.gwu.edu/etd/mg74qm740>

Resources

Ethics

Videos

[Code of Ethics with Troy Hutchings and Phil Rogers \(Part 1 of 2\)](#)

[Code of Ethics with Troy Hutchings and Phil Roger \(Part 2 of 2\)](#)

[Overview of the Model Code of Ethics for Educators \(MCEE\)](#)

[Exploring Applications](#)

Articles

[Model Code of Ethics for Educators \(MCEE\)](#)

- [Rationale for the MCEE](#)
- [National Council for the Advancement of Educator Ethics \(NCAEE\)](#)

[Online Courses: Universal Standards for ESPs](#)

[NEA Code of Ethics for Educators](#)

[How to Resolve Ethical Dilemmas](#)

[Learning for Justice. \(n.d.\). Classroom resources for equity and justice](#)

[Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation \(CAEP\). \(n.d.\). CAEP Accreditation Standards.](#)

Podcasts

[Focusing on Ethics: Smartphones in the classroom](#)

[Blurred Lines: Protecting educators from social media mishaps](#)

[Educator's Playbook](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

300-500 words

Please use the suggested word count as a guide to answer the following contextual questions. This will help our assessor understand your current context for working on this micro-credential.

Please answer the following contextual questions to help our reviewer understand your professional environment. *Please do not include any information that will make you or others identifiable to our reviewers.*

1. List your job title, years in the education field, a snapshot of your school or organization (grades served, student demographics), and details about the community setting (urban, rural, or suburban). Include any additional context that highlights your work environment
2. Reflect on your understanding of professional ethics in education, particularly in relation to your responsibilities as an educator.
 - a. Have you received any formal training on ethical decision-making or the Model Code of Ethics for Educators?
 - b. How do you navigate ethical dilemmas, and what guides your decisions?
 - c. Provide specific examples to illustrate your approach and reasoning.

Passing: Responses answer all components of each question and include specific examples that clearly illustrate understanding. Writing is easy to organize and understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **two artifacts** as evidence of your learning. *Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: District Policy and Common Practices

(400–600 words)

Locate your district or school policies, then compare your current district/school policies with Principle 1 of the MCEE: Responsibility to the Profession, found [here](#). Then, address the following questions:

1. (Alignment) Reflect on your district/school policies in alignment and support of Principle 1: Responsibility to the Profession. Address each of the following in your response:
 - a. List or identify specific policies or practices that promote accountability, collaboration, and professional integrity.

- b. Provide concrete examples, such as policies on professional conduct, mentorship, or continuous professional development.
2. (Discrepancies) Reflect on the discrepancies between your district/school policies and **Principle 1: Responsibility to the Profession**. Address each of the following in your response:
 - a. Discuss one-two possible solutions to align with the MCEE.
 - b. Identify areas where policies fall short in meeting MCEE standards.
 - i. For example, a lack of clear guidance on reporting unethical behavior could be addressed by implementing formal reporting protocols.
 - c. Explain how these changes would strengthen alignment with the MCEE.
3. (Improvements) Reflect on possible improvements and solutions to your district/school policies based on **Principle 1: Responsibility to the Profession**. Address each of the following in your response:
 - a. Identify an area(s) of improvement to your district/school policy to align with the MCEE.
 - b. Discuss why the current policy needs improvement and how that has impacted the professional behavior of educators in your district/school?
 - c. Propose two-three potential solutions to improving the policy, such as adding ethics training programs or updating guidelines for educator conduct.
 - d. Describe how these changes could foster a stronger culture of ethical decision-making, improve educator accountability, and positively influence student outcomes.
4. If your district or school has adopted AI tools for instruction, grading, or communication, you might choose to include these in your analysis. Consider whether your policies address the ethical use of AI and how they align with MCEE principles related to transparency, fairness, and professionalism.

Artifact 2: Ethical Decision-Making

Create a pamphlet (e.g., tri-fold or digital flyer) or a slide deck (8–12 slides) that applies the Ethical Decision-Making process outlined in the Method Components to a real-world ethical dilemma. Your presentation should clearly and concisely communicate how you navigated the dilemma and what you learned from the experience. Your final product must include the following sections:

Context

- Introduce the ethical dilemma by briefly describing the setting and background.
- Include relevant district policies, professional standards, or state laws connected to the situation.
- Explain why this dilemma was meaningful to you and how it relates to your professional responsibilities.

Process

- Identify the individuals involved (use nicknames or initials to protect privacy) and explain their roles.
- Describe how the dilemma impacted each person and the broader school or district community.
- Show how you applied the Ethical Decision-Making process step by step.
- Explain how your potential solutions aligned with ethical and professional standards, such as the MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, state law, and district policy.
- Justify your final decision and how it reflects your commitment to ethical practice.

Reflection

- Summarize key challenges you faced during the decision-making process and how you addressed them.
- Describe the outcome and how it affected all stakeholders involved.
- Share what you learned from this experience and how it has shaped your future approach to ethical dilemmas in education.

- Your pamphlet or slide deck should be visually clear, logically organized, and suitable for sharing with colleagues as a professional learning resource.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: District Policy and Common Practice	<p>All three reflection sections—alignment, discrepancies, and improvements—are addressed thoughtfully and completely.</p> <p>Specific district or school policies are identified and clearly connected to MCEE Principle 1, including accountability, collaboration, and professional integrity.</p> <p>Examples are specific, concrete, and directly relevant, such as mentorship programs, professional conduct policies, or ethics training.</p> <p>Discrepancies between local policies and MCEE are clearly explained, with realistic, viable solutions that align with both MCEE and local</p>	<p>Two of the three required reflections—alignment, discrepancies, and improvements—are addressed, though some questions may be incomplete or lack depth.</p> <p>Policies are identified but may not be clearly connected to MCEE Principle 1 or may overlook key areas such as collaboration or professional integrity.</p> <p>Examples are present but may lack specificity or direct relevance to the prompt.</p> <p>Discrepancies may be mentioned without clear or realistic solutions.</p> <p>Proposed improvements may be vague, lack rationale, or fail to clearly explain their impact on professional</p>	<p>One or none of the required reflection sections—alignment, discrepancies, and improvements—are addressed adequately.</p> <p>Relevant policies are not identified, or connections to MCEE Principle 1 are missing or inaccurate.</p> <p>Examples are missing or not relevant to the topic.</p> <p>Discrepancies are not addressed, or solutions are unrealistic, unclear, or missing entirely.</p> <p>Proposed improvements are missing, unclear, or unsupported by rationale.</p> <p>The artifact is disorganized and difficult to follow.</p>

	<p>context.</p> <p>Proposed improvements include at least two actionable recommendations with clear rationales and explanations of how changes would improve professional behavior, foster ethical decision-making, and positively impact student outcomes.</p> <p>If included, the discussion of AI tools is thoughtful and clearly connected to MCEE principles.</p> <p>The artifact is clearly organized and easy to understand.</p>	<p>behavior or student outcomes.</p> <p>AI-related discussion, if included, may be underdeveloped or loosely connected to MCEE.</p> <p>The artifact may lack clear organization or be difficult to understand in places.</p>	
<p>Artifact 2: Ethical Decision Making</p>	<p>The dilemma is a real-world example that is clearly explained, relevant, and grounded in the educator’s professional context.</p> <p>The ethical decision-making process is followed</p>	<p>The dilemma may be a real-world example but is not clearly explained or lacks strong relevance to the professional context.</p> <p>Some steps in the ethical decision-making process are</p>	<p>The dilemma is not a real-world example or is poorly explained, with limited or no connection to the educator’s professional responsibilities.</p>

	<p>completely, with all steps explicitly addressed and logically presented.</p> <p>Stakeholders are representative of the school population and meaningfully involved throughout the process.</p> <p>The context section provides sufficient background for understanding the dilemma, including local and, where appropriate, historical factors.</p> <p>The process and final decision(s) are clearly explained and show strong alignment with the MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, applicable state laws, and district policies.</p> <p>The reflection is thoughtful and includes clear insights about the decision-making process, outcomes, and how the experience will inform future professional practice.</p>	<p>addressed, but not all are fully explained or clearly connected.</p> <p>Stakeholders are mentioned but may not represent the broader school population or are not clearly involved in the process.</p> <p>The context section is included but may be missing important background information or lacks clarity.</p> <p>The process and final decision(s) are explained but may lack clarity or partial alignment with relevant standards and policies.</p> <p>The reflection addresses aspects of the process and results but lacks depth or clear application to future practice.</p> <p>The presentation format is mostly organized and legible but may have minor issues with clarity or flow.</p>	<p>The ethical decision-making process is not followed or is missing critical steps.</p> <p>Stakeholders are not included or are unrelated to the school population.</p> <p>The context section is missing or provides insufficient information to understand the dilemma.</p> <p>The process and final decision(s) are unclear and do not align with professional or ethical standards.</p> <p>The reflection is minimal, lacks meaningful insight, or fails to connect to future practice.</p> <p>The presentation format is disorganized or difficult to understand, making content hard to follow.</p>
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	The presentation format (pamphlet or slide deck) is well-organized, visually coherent, and appropriate for a professional audience.		
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Part 3. Reflection

(300–500 words)

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. Answer the following reflective question. *Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.*

Reflect on your new understanding of ethical responsibilities and decision-making as outlined in this micro-credential. How will this understanding change the way you approach questionable or unacceptable behaviors, particularly when working with colleagues and other educational professionals? In what ways will your learning help you advocate for equity, enhance cultural competency, and foster ethical practices within your professional environment?

Your reflection should demonstrate how this activity has positively influenced your professional practice. Provide specific examples from your personal or work-related experiences to support your response. Include actionable steps that outline how you will apply this new learning in your daily interactions and decision-making processes. Be sure to address how your increased awareness will contribute to creating a more equitable and culturally competent educational community.

Passing:

- Reflection provides clear and compelling evidence that this activity has positively impacted both educator practice and student success.
- Specific examples from personal and/or work-related experiences are cited to substantiate claims.
- The response includes detailed, actionable steps outlining how new learning will be integrated into future practices, with an emphasis on promoting equity, enhancing cultural competency, and fostering ethical decision-making in professional interactions.