



Educator Responsibility to Students

Competency

The educator respects the rights and dignity of all students by demonstrating an ethic of care, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and fostering developmentally and culturally responsive interactions within the educational setting.

Key Method

The educator applies the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE), relevant laws, district policies, and ethical decision-making frameworks to ensure student rights and dignity are upheld. By using these tools, the educator demonstrates care and respect through culturally and developmentally appropriate practices, while establishing trust and maintaining confidentiality.

Method Components

Professional Codes of Ethics

Professional ethics guide educators in making decisions that prioritize the safety, dignity, and well-being of students. The MCEE, along with federal, state, and district policies, provides a framework to navigate complex situations and uphold the public's trust in the teaching profession. Educators use these tools to reflect on their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that decisions align with ethical standards.

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators consists of five significant principles that broadly define critical dimensions of ethical practice expected of the professional educator.

1. Responsibility to the Profession
2. Responsibility for Professional Competence
3. Responsibility to Students
4. Responsibility to the School Community
5. Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology

Key principles of the MCEE relevant to this competency include:

- Responsibility to Students: Respecting students' rights and dignity through equitable, developmentally appropriate practices.
- Responsibility for Professional Competence: Maintaining ethical boundaries and engaging in ongoing self-reflection and professional growth.

A professional code of ethics sets a higher threshold than regulatory codes of conduct. A code of conduct provides absolutes for employment, licensure, and/or criminal sanctions. The Model Code of Ethics for Educators however, helps mitigate the risks inherent within the profession and is designed as a guide for current and future educators to construct the best course of action when faced with ethical dilemmas, providing a basis for educator learning, self-reflection, and self-accountability.

For additional information about the MCEE principles and performance indicators, visit [NASDTEC's website](#), where the full standards are also available for download.

Respecting the Rights and Dignity of Students:

Educators should respect the rights and dignity of students in the following ways:

- Respecting students by considering their age, gender, culture, setting, and socioeconomic context.
- Interacting with students with transparency and in appropriate settings.
- Communicating with students in a clear, respectful, and culturally sensitive manner.

- Considering how appearance and dress can affect one's interactions and relationships with students.
- Considering the implications of accepting gifts from or giving gifts to students.
- Engaging in physical contact with students only when there is a clearly defined purpose that benefits the student and continually keeps the safety and well-being of the student in mind.
- Avoiding multiple relationships with students - which might impair objectivity, increase the risk of harm to student learning or well-being, or decrease educator effectiveness.
- Acknowledging that there are no circumstances that allow for educators to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with students.
- Considering the ramifications of an adult relationship of any sort with a former student, including but not limited to potential harm to the former student, public perception, and the possible impact on the educator's career, the professional educator ensures that the adult relationship was not started while the former student was in school.

Demonstrating an Ethic of Care

Educators embody an ethic of care by:

- Understanding and valuing the diverse academic, personal, and social needs of their students.
- Respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each student, regardless of gender identity, religion, race, disability, or other characteristics.
- Creating a safe and supportive environment that promotes emotional, intellectual, physical, and sexual safety.

Maintaining Student Trust and Confidentiality

Educators should establish and maintain student trust and confidentiality when interacting with students in a developmentally appropriate manner and within appropriate limits by:

- Respecting students' privacy and holding certain communications in confidence.
- Balancing confidentiality with the legal and ethical obligation to report concerns for a student's well-being.
- Protecting student records and releasing information only in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

As schools adopt AI-powered tools such as adaptive learning platforms, behavior monitoring systems, or predictive analytics, educators must critically evaluate how these technologies collect, use, and store student data. Ethical use requires transparency, adherence to privacy policies, and a commitment to protecting student dignity when digital tools are involved.

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

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>

Cronqvist, Marita. "Teachers' Ethical Responsibility in Teaching; to Guide the Children about Right and Wrong." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 4 June 2024, pp. 1-14, Retrieved from www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00313831.2024.2360901

“Ethical Considerations in Teacher Reflection and Research.” Irish Educational Studies, 2025, Retrieved from www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03323315.2025.2479437

Kafi, Z., Motallebzadeh, K., & Ashraf, H. (2018). Developing, localizing & validating code of professional ethics through PLS-SEM: EFL university instructors' perspectives. *Cogent Education*, 5(1). DOI:<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1492340?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

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>

Lynch, P., Heath, M., Morehead, S., & Wallace, L. A. (2015). An analysis of Missouri school districts' ethics policies as related to educator decision-making at the district level (Order No. 3715755). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1701983712). Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/openview/97910f05f6200ecec95791d25bde97d8/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>

Maxwell, Bruce & Tremblay-Laprise, Audrée-Anne & Fillion, Marianne & Boon, Helen & Daly, Caroline & Hoven, Mariette & Heilbronn, Ruth & Lenselink, Myrthe & Walters, Sue. (2016). A Five-Country Survey on Ethics Education in Preservice Teaching Programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 67. 135-151. 10.1177/0022487115624490. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294105993_A_Five-Country_Survey_on_Ethics_Education_in_Preservice_Teaching_Programs

Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) - National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. (2023). [nasdtc.net. https://www.nasdtc.net/page/MCEE_Doc](https://www.nasdtc.net/page/MCEE_Doc)

Mathur, S. R., & Corley, K. M. (2014). Bringing Ethics into the Classroom: Making a Case for Frameworks, Multiple Perspectives and Narrative Sharing. *International Education Studies*, 7(9). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1070987.pdf>

Resources

Standards

[InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers 1.0: A Resource for Ongoing Teacher Development](#)

Videos

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

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

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

Articles

[The Importance of Ethics in Education](#)

[Now What? Confronting and Resolving Ethical Questions: A Handbook for Teachers](#)

[The Model Code of Ethics for Educators](#)

[Rationale for the MCEE](#)

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

[ESP Professional Growth Continuum](#)

[Great Teaching and Learning: Creating the Culture to Support Professional Excellence](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

[Educating Ethically](#)

Podcasts

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

[Blurred Lines: Protecting Educators from Social Media Mishaps](#)

[Understanding Educational Ethics](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient for 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 assessors understand your current context for working on this micro-credential.

Do not include any information that will make you or others identifiable to our reviewers.

1. List your specific position and title, number of years working in education, and a basic description of your worksite (grades, student population, demographics), community information (urban/rural/suburban), and other relevant information.
2. Describe your current understanding of professional ethics in education. Have you had any training in this area?
3. Share an example of how you've applied ethical principles, such as maintaining boundaries, respecting confidentiality, or addressing cultural or developmental needs.

Passing: The responses are clear and well-organized and fully address each question with specific examples. The writing demonstrates an understanding of professional ethics and reflects thoughtful consideration of ethical challenges.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **two artifacts** to prove 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
(250–500 words)

Compare your current district or school policies with Principle 3 of the MCEE: Responsibility to Students, focusing on respect for students' rights and dignity. Then, address the following:

1. Alignment with MCEE:

How do your current district/school policies demonstrate care, equity, and respect for students as outlined in Principle 3?

2. Discrepancies:

Identify one to two gaps or inconsistencies between your district/school policies and Principle 3 of the MCEE. What challenges do these discrepancies create for ensuring student rights and dignity?

3. Proposed Improvements:

Suggest one to two specific policy improvements to better align with the MCEE. How would these changes promote student success, equity, and dignity within your school community?

Artifact 2: Ethical Decision-Making

(600-1000 words)

Using a real-world ethical dilemma related to student rights, apply the **Ethical Decision-Making Process** from the Method Components to analyze and resolve the issue.

You may select any ethical dilemma that is meaningful within your professional context. This could involve issues related to confidentiality, student well-being, equity, or other areas where ethical decision-making is essential. If relevant to your role, you might also consider dilemmas involving the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education—such as the use of AI tools for grading, behavior monitoring, or instructional support. Regardless of the topic, your analysis should be grounded in ethical frameworks and aligned with the MCEE, applicable laws, and district policies.

Your submission should include:

1. **Context:**
 - Describe the ethical dilemma, its context, and its significance.
 - Why is this dilemma important in ensuring respect for students' rights and dignity?
2. **Process:**

- Who was involved in the resolution process (use nicknames or initials, and describe their roles)?
- Identify the student(s) or group impacted by the dilemma (use nicknames or initials, and avoid personally identifiable information).
- Describe how you applied the **Ethical Decision-Making Process**, including how MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, state laws, and district policies were considered.
- Summarize the potential solutions discussed and how they align with these ethical standards.

3. **Final Decision:**

- State your final decision and justify it based on the alignment with MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, and district/school policy.

4. **Reflection:**

- Reflect on the decision-making process and its outcomes.
- How has this process deepened your understanding of your responsibility to students, particularly in maintaining equitable and respectful practices?

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: District Policy and Common Practice	<p>All questions are thoughtfully and completely answered.</p> <p>Examples are relevant and clearly connected to the topic and highlight alignment or discrepancies between district policies and Principle 3 of MCEE.</p> <p>Proposed solutions are realistic and viable and align with MCEE and local policies.</p> <p>The response includes a clear explanation of how improvements would impact student success and equity.</p> <p>The writing is well-organized and easy to understand.</p>	<p>Most questions are answered, but responses may lack depth or completeness.</p> <p>Examples are provided but may not be fully relevant to the topic.</p> <p>Solutions are present but may lack feasibility or clear alignment with MCEE and local policies.</p> <p>The explanation of how improvements impact student success and equity is underdeveloped.</p> <p>Writing may lack organization or clarity.</p>	<p>Few questions are answered, and responses are incomplete or lack thoughtfulness.</p> <p>Examples are missing or not relevant to the topic.</p> <p>Proposed solutions are unrealistic or not aligned with MCEE and local policies.</p> <p>The response does not address how improvements impact student success and equity.</p> <p>Writing is poorly organized or difficult to understand.</p>
Artifact 2: Ethical Decision Making	<p>The dilemma is a real-world example relevant to student rights.</p>	<p>The dilemma is provided but may not fully relate to student rights.</p>	<p>The dilemma is not relevant or is not based on a real-world example.</p>

	<p>The ethical decision-making process is fully followed, including a well-documented context, clear involvement of diverse stakeholders, and comprehensive exploration of solutions.</p> <p>Solutions are thoughtfully aligned with MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, state laws, and district policies.</p> <p>The final decision is clearly justified.</p> <p>Reflection is thoughtful, addressing both the process and the results, with insights on how the decision supports student rights and dignity.</p> <p>Writing is clear and well-organized.</p>	<p>Some steps in the ethical decision-making process are followed, but the explanation may lack clarity or completeness.</p> <p>Stakeholder involvement is limited or not representative of the school population.</p> <p>Solutions may not be fully aligned with MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, state laws, or district policies.</p> <p>The reflection addresses the process and results but may lack depth or specific insights.</p> <p>Writing may lack organization or clarity.</p>	<p>The ethical decision-making process is incomplete or missing key steps.</p> <p>Stakeholders are not included or described.</p> <p>Solutions are missing, unrealistic, or not aligned with MCEE, NEA Code of Conduct, state laws, or district policies.</p> <p>Reflection is brief, lacks thoughtfulness, or does not address the process or results.</p> <p>Writing is poorly organized or difficult to understand.</p>
--	---	--	--

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.

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Reflect on how your learning in this micro-credential has reshaped your understanding of your ethical responsibilities to students, particularly as they relate to student rights, dignity, and well-being. Specifically, address the following:

1. Ethical Risk and Student Rights

Based on your new understanding of ethical risks and student rights, describe how you will change the way you navigate potentially risky situations involving students, families, and colleagues. Consider issues such as confidentiality, power dynamics, mandated reporting, professional boundaries, and students' rights to safety, privacy, and fair treatment.

2. Equity, Cultural Competency, and Student Protections

Explain how this micro-credential has helped you identify ways to promote equity and strengthen your cultural competency in ways that protect and affirm students' identities, voices, and rights. Describe how increased awareness of bias, systemic inequities, or cultural contexts informs your ethical decision-making with students.

Your response should include specific examples from your personal or professional experience that illustrate growth in understanding your ethical responsibilities to students. Clearly describe actionable steps you will take to integrate this learning into daily practice and ethical decision-making. Explain how these changes will protect student rights, improve student success, foster trust, and contribute to a more inclusive and ethical learning environment.

Passing:

- Reflection demonstrates the positive impact of this micro-credential on educator practice and the protection of student rights and well-being.

- Specific examples from personal or professional experiences illustrate ethical growth related to responsibilities to students.
- Clear, actionable steps are outlined for integrating new learning into future practice and ethical decision-making.
- The reflection explains how the educator's new understanding of ethics promotes equity, strengthens cultural competency, and improves outcomes for students.