



Educator Responsibility for Professional Competence

Competency

The educator demonstrates accountability for maintaining professional competence, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to fostering an equitable and responsible learning environment.

Key Method

The educator applies the principles of the MCEE to uphold high standards, prioritize student well-being, and ensure responsible use of data, materials, and assessments.

Method Components

Professional Codes of Ethics

A movement is growing within PK–12 education and educator preparation programs to ensure educators and prospective educators understand how professional decision-making impacts the safety and well-being of students, as well as the culture and mission of schools. While most professions have clear principles to guide ethical decisions, the education profession has often lacked a universally accepted model code of conduct. In the absence of such a standard, educators have frequently relied on judicial decisions and legislative actions to govern their conduct.

Code of Ethics vs. Code of Conduct

A professional code of ethics establishes a higher standard than regulatory codes of conduct. While codes of conduct provide absolutes tied to

employment, licensure, or criminal sanctions, the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) goes beyond these requirements. It offers guidance for educators to navigate ethical dilemmas through reflection, accountability, and principled decision-making, serving as both a learning tool and a foundation for self-assessment.

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) equips educators with a framework to address the complexities of PK–12 education. Developed by educators for educators, the MCEE upholds the public’s trust while elevating the dignity of the teaching profession.

The MCEE:

- Bridges professional aspirations with the practical realities of daily practice.
- Promotes an understanding of what constitutes best ethical practice.
- Provides a structured framework for ethical decision-making.
- Facilitates conversations across the profession, fostering a shared language rooted in ethical principles.

The MCEE encompasses five principles defining critical dimensions of professional ethics:

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

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

Professional Practices

Having established the foundational principles outlined in the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE), educators must translate these principles into daily professional practices. The following sections outline specific ways educators demonstrate their commitment to high standards, ethical use of data and resources, and prioritizing the best interests of all students. These

practices serve as tangible applications of the MCEE framework, reinforcing the connection between ethical principles and their real-world impact.

Educators Demonstrate Commitment to High Standards

Educators demonstrate their commitment to professional excellence through:

- Knowing and applying state and national standards specific to their discipline.
- Aligning practices with the MCEE and discipline-specific ethical codes.
- Fulfilling responsibilities and duties in accordance with licensure and professional standards.
- Regularly assessing their professional knowledge and skills to ensure competency.
- Engaging in continuous professional learning to stay informed and prepared.

Educators Demonstrate Responsible Use of Data, Materials, Research, and Assessment

Ethical educators ensure integrity and responsibility when handling data and resources by:

- Using data, findings, and materials accurately, reliably, and in context.
- Understanding intellectual property rights, including those of materials sourced from platforms like “Teachers Pay Teachers” or “Share My Lesson.”
- Crediting all data, research, and materials when sharing information, whether from published, unpublished, or digital sources.

As emerging AI tools become part of instructional practice, educators must also consider how algorithms and automated systems influence data use, material selection, and assessment practices. This includes evaluating AI tools for bias, ensuring transparency when using AI-generated content, and protecting student data privacy when platforms collect or analyze personal information.

Educators Act in the Best Interest of All Students

To uphold their ethical responsibility to students, educators:

- Safeguard students from practices that may harm their physical, emotional, or academic well-being.

- Provide equitable access to curricula, activities, and resources to ensure high-quality learning opportunities for all students.
- Develop cultural competence by learning about the history and experiences of the diverse student groups they serve.
- Actively engage the broader school community in efforts to close achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps.

The Model Code of Ethics for Educators provides a comprehensive framework for navigating the complexities of professional practice. By committing to high standards, responsibly managing resources, and prioritizing student well-being, educators translate ethical principles into meaningful action. These practices not only uphold the public trust but also contribute to a thriving, equitable educational environment that benefits the entire school community.

Supporting Rationale and Research

EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence: A relationship study. (2019). *Cogent Education*.
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<https://www.proquest.com/openview/97910f05f6200ecec95791d25bde97d8/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>

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Carolina, A., Klock, T., Santana, B., & Hamari, J. (2023). Ethical challenges in gamified education research and development: An umbrella review and potential directions. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2309.14918>

Zhou, K. Z., Kilhoffer, Z., Sanfilippo, M. R., Underwood, T., Gumusel, E., Wei, M., Choudhry, A., & Xiong, J. (2024). "The teachers are confused as well": A Multiple-Stakeholder Ethics Discussion on Large Language Models in Computing Education. ArXiv.org. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2401.12453>

Resources

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

[Beyond the Classroom: The Importance of Ethics in Education](#)

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

[Rationale for the MCEE](#)

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

[ESP Professional Growth Continuum](#)

[\[NEA\] Code of Ethics for Educators](#)

[State Schools Suffer with no Code of Ethics](#)

Podcasts

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

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

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 answer the following contextual questions to help our reviewers understand your current situation. Do not include any information that will make you or others identifiable to our reviewers.

1. Provide your current position and title, years of experience in education, and a brief description of your work environment, including grade levels, student demographics, and community context (urban, rural, or suburban). Include any additional details relevant to your role.
2. Describe your understanding of ethics in education, including any training or professional development you've received. Explain how you determine whether an action is ethical, supporting your response with specific examples and details.

Passing: Responses completely answer 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 **three 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: Action Plan

Examine the **Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)** and any ethical codes or standards unique to your position. Based on this review, create an **action plan** that identifies and addresses your professional learning needs.

Your action plan should include **three professional learning goals** tailored to your role and responsibilities. For each goal, provide the following:

- **Job Responsibilities Related to the Goal:** Explain how this goal connects to specific aspects of your daily work or professional responsibilities.
- **Skills Needed to Reach the Goal:** Identify the skills, knowledge, or competencies you need to develop to achieve this goal.
- **How You Will Engage in Professional Learning:** Describe the specific professional learning activities you will use to meet the goal. For each activity, include the title and provider of the workshop, course, collaborative learning experience, or research resource (for example, the name of a course, conference session, professional learning community, book, or article). Activities should reflect professional learning opportunities that currently exist rather than general or hypothetical descriptions.
- **Timeline:** Specify when and how you will achieve this goal, including short- and long-term benchmarks.
- **Intended Results:** Define what success will look like, including measurable outcomes for your professional growth and its impact on students, colleagues, or your community.

Artifact 2: One-Pagers on Responsible Use

Design a series of three one-pagers to educate colleagues on ethical responsibilities related to professional competence. Select the topics most relevant to your role and context from the list below. Each one-pager should address a different topic:

1. **Data:** Guidelines for using, sharing, and protecting data ethically and responsibly.

2. **Materials:** Best practices for using instructional materials, including considerations for accuracy, appropriateness, and inclusivity.
3. **Assessment:** Ethical use of assessments, including ensuring fairness, reliability, and validity.
4. **Intellectual Property Rights:** Understanding copyright and fair use policies when sourcing materials from platforms such as “Teachers Pay Teachers” or “Share My Lesson.”
5. **AI in Education:** Ethical considerations for using AI tools responsibly, such as ensuring fairness, transparency, and protecting student data when implementing automated feedback systems, content generators, or analytics platforms.

What’s a One-Pager?

A one-pager is a single-page document that clearly and concisely summarizes key information. It should be easy to scan and digest, like an executive summary. In this case, each one-pager should highlight core ethical responsibilities related to professional competence in a way that is practical and useful for your colleagues.

You’ll see one-pagers used across multiple micro-credentials in this stack - should you choose to complete them all. Think of each one as part of a larger collection—together, they can serve as chapters in your personalized Educator Ethics Handbook.

Artifact 3: Act in the Best Interest of Students

(500-800 words)

Write an analysis exploring two real-world examples where the education system failed to act in the best interest of students, as defined by established ethical or professional standards (e.g., NEA Code of Ethics, MCEE Principles, or applicable state educator codes). For each example, provide:

1. **Citation and/or Link:** A source or link to the incident, such as an article, court case, or policy report.
2. **Description of the Issue:** A brief explanation of what happened and the context.
3. **How This Was Not in the Best Interest of Students:** Analyze why the actions or decisions were unethical or harmful.

4. **Two to Three Possible Solutions:** Propose multiple ethical and professional ways an educator could have handled the situation differently.
5. **Final Recommendation:** Choose the best ethical option from your proposed solutions and justify why it is the most appropriate course of action.

This artifact is an opportunity to engage deeply with real-world ethical challenges in education. By examining examples that resonate with your own values and professional responsibilities, you can practice ethical analysis and decision-making in a way that strengthens your commitment to student well-being.

Brief Example of an Issue: A district adopts a policy that disproportionately suspends students of color for minor infractions.

- **How It Harms Students:** Students lose access to instructional time, reinforcing inequities.
- **Solutions:** Implement restorative justice practices, revise disciplinary policies for bias, or provide cultural competency training for staff.
- **Recommendation:** Adopt restorative justice practices, as they address root causes of behavior while keeping students in the learning environment.

Note: This is a brief outline of an issue, but is not detailed enough to be a proficient response.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Action Plan	<p>Action plan includes three clear, specific goals aligned with job responsibilities and ethical standards.</p> <p>All components (skills, professional learning methods, timeline, and intended results) are detailed, actionable, and realistic.</p>	<p>Action plan includes two to three goals, but some lack clarity or alignment with job responsibilities.</p> <p>Components may be incomplete, vague, or not fully actionable.</p>	<p>Action plan includes fewer than two goals or goals that are unclear or misaligned with ethical standards.</p> <p>Components are incomplete, missing, or lack detail.</p>
Artifact 2: One-pagers	<p>All three one-pagers are concise, accurate, and well-organized. Each includes clear guidelines, actionable recommendations, and relevant examples.</p>	<p>Three one-pagers are provided, but some may lack clarity, completeness, or actionable recommendations. Examples may be limited or unclear.</p>	<p>Fewer than three one-pagers are provided, or the content is incomplete, inaccurate, or lacks actionable recommendations and examples.</p>
Artifact 3: Act in the Best Interest of Students	<p>Analysis of two examples is thorough, well-cited, and clearly explains ethical issues.</p> <p>Includes two to three realistic solutions for each example, with a well-reasoned final recommendation.</p>	<p>Analysis of two examples is provided, but may lack depth or clarity.</p> <p>Solutions and recommendations are present but may be vague or underdeveloped.</p>	<p>Analysis of fewer than two examples is provided, or examples are incomplete, lack citations, or fail to include realistic solutions or recommendations.</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 engaging with the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) and other ethical frameworks has influenced your understanding of professional competence and ethical decision-making. Address the following questions:

1. **Evolving Understanding:** How has your perspective on professional ethics and its role in daily practice changed because of this work?
2. **Risk Mitigation:** What specific actions will you take to reduce risks and uphold ethical standards in interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and the community?
3. **Impact on Practice:** How will these new insights enhance your ability to create a safe, equitable, and respectful educational environment?

Passing: Reflection provides clear evidence that the micro-credential has had a meaningful impact on the educator's practice and student success. Examples from personal or professional experiences are cited to illustrate growth. The response includes specific, actionable steps for applying new learning to future practices, demonstrating a commitment to fostering ethical, professional competence in education.