

Connecticut's Teacher Education And Mentoring Program

Ethical and Professional Dilemmas
for Educators

Participant's Workbook Module 5

Understanding the Code
of Professional Responsibility



TEAM



Introduction

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professionalism. Therefore, the educator accepts both the public trust and the responsibilities to practice the profession according to the highest possible degree of ethical conduct and standards. Such responsibilities include commitment to the students, the profession, the community and the family.

Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators 2010 Preamble.

Public school educators are held to high standards of behavior because they are entrusted with the well-being of their students. The public expects that their behavior exemplifies ethical and moral integrity. Teachers serve as role models who should recognize that their conduct, both on and off the job, can profoundly impact their professional image. Lapses in judgment can adversely impact students, damage teachers' credibility and erode public trust in schools and the profession. Additionally, with advances in technology and greater access to social media, the challenges educators are likely to encounter have increased in recent years. Consequently, educators must develop a keen awareness and sensitivity to a variety of dilemmas and circumstances they may encounter in their daily contact with students, families and the community. It is vital that educators make conscious ethical decisions to ensure that their professional practice meets the highest possible ethical standards of conduct and responsibility.

The purpose of this publication is to provide a collection of scenarios to help educators become more aware of the ethical dimensions of their profession. These brief scenarios provide educators the opportunity to engage in collegial discussions about situations that could result in career threatening consequences. Although the descriptions provided are fictional, they are based on actual situations and cases that have led to negative consequences ranging from personal and public embarrassment to license revocation, termination, criminal and civil liability.

Please note, this activity has not been designed to unduly raise fears or to prescribe a specific moral/ethical code. It is intended to be a resource for educators to help discuss, recognize and analyze situations that could result in public and professional harm. For the purpose of these discussions, "educator" includes superintendents, administrators, teachers, special services professionals, coaches, substitute teachers and paraprofessionals. Like most ethical challenges, some issues may have simple solutions while others will require educators to employ their best professional judgment.

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 1

Electronic Communications with Students

Ms. K is a veteran teacher who is very popular with her students. She frequently offers students extra help after school, so it's not uncommon to see students visiting her classroom after school. She has tutored one of her students, Melissa, in a variety of subjects over a two year period. During that time, Ms. K has emailed and texted Melissa's cell phone using her personal number and email address. At first, the exchanges were very general; sometimes unrelated to school work (e.g., asking Melissa about a sick family member, or how she was getting along with friends). Recently, the student began to text her teacher about more personal feelings.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

(I) Remain steadfast in guaranteeing equal opportunity for quality education for all children, and not unlawfully discriminate.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession, of teaching shall:

(A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession.

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

(D) Engage in any misconduct that would put students at risk.

Participant's Copy

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- 1. What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- 2. How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
- 3. In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- 4. What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

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I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 2 ***Transporting Students***

Ms. Z. is a veteran teacher and a popular coach for several sports. She is well known for her concern for the welfare of her students. Since the high school has limited resources to accommodate practices and games for some of its teams, students are responsible for their own transportation to other venues for practice and games. Consequently, it is not uncommon for Ms. Z. to provide personal transportation for one or more students to athletic events and back home after events.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school /district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

- (1) Remain steadfast in guaranteeing equal opportunity for quality education for all children, and not unlawfully discriminate*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession, shall:

- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional educator, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

- (D) Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk*

Participant’s Copy

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 3 *Contact with Students*

Mr. J. is very popular with the students. He often converses and jokes with the students in the halls between classes. It is common for him to greet female students and staff with a hug and male students and staff with a pat on the back. One student has complained to the administration that Mr. J.'s hugs or physical contact makes him uncomfortable. Mr. J. has been advised by the principal to stop all physical contact with students and staff. He agrees to try, but he can't promise anything because that is the way he is and he isn't doing anything wrong.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

- (A) Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession.*
- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

- (A) Sexually or physically harass or abuse students.*

Participant's Copy

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- 1. What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- 2. How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
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II. Situations Involving Professional Ethics

Scenario 1

Use of Social Networks

Mr. Y is a new teacher in his first 90 days of employment in his district. He has made friends with many staff members and invited them to visit his social network page. On his website, Mr. Y has listed quite a bit of personal information. One of his colleagues visited the site and became very concerned because the site included a statement that Mr. Y was sexually attracted to young girls, stating “the younger the better.”

The colleague notified the principal of this information.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school /district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

(C) Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion or sexual orientation

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

(A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

(B) Sexually or physically harass or abuse students

(D) Engage in any misconduct that would put students at risk

(g) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession, shall not:

(C) Engage in any misconduct which would impair his or her ability to teach

Participant’s Copy

II. *Situations Involving Professional Ethics*

Scenario 2 *DUI Convictions*

Ms. B. is an educator with 20 years of service in the Connecticut public schools and seven years of service within her current district. Recently, Ms. B., along with several other colleagues from her school, attended a wedding reception for another staff member. During the evening, she consumed several alcoholic beverages and, on her way home, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence (DUI). On two prior occasions within the past three years, Ms. B. had been convicted of DUI offenses. This most recent event was reported by the local news.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the *Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a*

(c) *RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:*

(1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:*

- (A) *Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her action reflects directly upon the status and substance of the profession.*
- (D) *Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

(d) *RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY*

(1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the teaching profession, shall:*

- (A) *Be cognizant of the influence of educators upon the community-at-large; obey local, state and national laws.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall not:*

- (C) *Engage in any misconduct which would impair his or her ability to teach.*
- (1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the teaching profession, shall not:***
 - (B) *Be convicted in a court of law of a crime involving moral turpitude or of any crime of such nature that violates such public trust.*

Participant’s Copy

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1. *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
2. *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
3. *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
4. *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

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II. *Situations Involving Professional Ethics*

Scenario 3

Teacher Documentation

Mr. S was given the opportunity to coach the boys' track team, provided he receives a coaching permit prior to the first day of the season. A former track star himself, Mr. S assumed that he was fully qualified but failed to apply for the permit in a timely manner. Two weeks prior to the start of the season, after being questioned by the school's athletic director, Mr. S submitted his application for a coaching permit. During the application process he noticed that his CPR card had expired, so he immediately registered for the next available workshop. However, in order to "expedite" the application process, he changed the dates on his old card to make it appear valid, figuring that he would eventually meet this requirement.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

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(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:*

- (A) *Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her action reflects directly upon the status and substance of the profession*
- (D) *Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

(1) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the profession of teaching, shall:*

- (A) *Be cognizant of the influence of teachers upon the community-at-large, and, therefore, shall not knowingly misrepresent facts or make false statements.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) *The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall not:*

- (A) *Obtain licensure or employment by misrepresentation or fraud.*

Participant's Copy

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 1

Teacher Public Behavior

Mr. R, a single male teacher, plays baseball on a local sports team. One Saturday evening, he was with team-mates socializing and having a few drinks at a post-game barbecue at a local park. Later in the evening, several male and female students from his 12th grade science class arrived at the barbecue by car. They had all been drinking and continued to drink at the barbecue. As the evening progressed, a very friendly rapport developed between the teacher and the students.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her action reflects directly upon the status and substance of the profession.*
- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the teaching profession, shall:

- (A) Be cognizant of the influence of educators upon the community-at-large, and, therefore, shall not knowingly misrepresent facts or make false statements.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

- (B) Sexually or physically harass or abuse students.*
- (C) Emotionally abuse students.*
- (D) Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk.*

Participant’s Copy

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- 1. What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- 2. How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*
- 3. In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- 4. What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

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III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 2

Student Confidentiality

Ms. D, a third year 7th grade math teacher, complains to her next door neighbor about a difficult student in her class, identifying the child by name and providing specific details about the student's academic record. Ms. D says that the neighbor doesn't know the student personally, so there should be no problem discussing the student and the situation.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

(J) Maintain the confidentiality of all information concerning students obtained in the proper course of the educational process, and dispense such information only when prescribed or directed by federal or state law or professional practice.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

(A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession.

(D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

(D) Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk.

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 3

Teacher Using Position for Personal Gain

Ms. W., a fourth-grade music teacher, emails parents through the school's email, notifying them that she is available on weekends and after school to teach violin to students at a reasonable hourly rate. Several of her violin students have been struggling with their lessons. Ms. W. feels that the extra time out of school will benefit the students.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

(1) The professional teacher in full recognition of the public trust vested in the teaching profession, shall:

(D) Endeavor to secure equal educational opportunities for all children.

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

(A) Abuse his or her position as a professional with students for private advantage.

(2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the teaching profession, shall not:

(A) Exploit the educational institution for personal gain.

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*INTRODUCTION TO SITUATIONS INVOLVING BULLYING**

**Bullying*

Legislation effective in July 2011 Section 1. Section 10-222d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*)

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/TOB/S/2011SB-01138-R00-SB.htm>

- (1) "Bullying" means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture directed at another student that: (A) Causes physical or emotional harm to another student or damage to another student's property, (B) places another student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (C) creates a hostile environment at school for another student, (D) infringes on the rights of another student at school, or (E) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school, and includes cyber bullying;
- Such policies may include provisions addressing bullying outside the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school.
 - However, since every district has adopted its own policy and could have changed the definition slightly, it is important to review the definition of bullying included in your own school district's policy.

Joann Freiberg, an Educational Consultant with the Connecticut State Department of Education who manages the wide arena of Bullying, Improving School Climate and Character Education, recommends focusing on **meanness** instead of using the word bully.

"Not only is the word (bully) itself alienating, but also, focusing on "bullying" is fundamentally not at all helpful in managing the epidemic of meanness that is at the heart of the problem addressed today. No one knows exactly what to look for, and since "bullying" implies some kind of repeated-over-time pattern of hurtful behavior, we adults tend not to stop things until we are sure they are really verified acts of bullying. This is far too late in the escalating cycle. And many schools shun claiming they host any bullying most likely for fear of being labeled a "persistently dangerous school" by community members.

If we stop using the words "bully" or "bullying" and use "mean" or "cruel" instead, we will have a much easier time in practice. No child wants to be told he or she is a bully or is engaged in bullying, and the same is true for parents and guardians about their children. Everyone understands "mean" and are much more likely to admit they are mean from time to time than that they are a bully.

Keynote for the School Safety Conference

3-27-08, CCSU

IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 1 ***Emotional Bullying***

Ms. H. teaches ninth grade English. She gives the class directions for a writing assignment that is to be completed by the end of the period. Josh isn't paying attention and missed the directions. He frequently bothers his classmates by humming, tapping his pen, reminding them of the rules or speaking out of turn. He asks for the directions to be repeated. The other students in the class begin to make fun of Josh and ridicule him for not paying attention once again. Ms. H., feeling frustrated she is asked to repeat the instructions once again, continues passing out materials and ignores Josh and the other students.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

- (A) Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students.
- (C) Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.
- (J) Create an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment for all students;

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.

Participant's Copy

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1. *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*

2. *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*

3. *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*

4. *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

5. *What are some classroom management strategies a teacher could employ to address a situation such as this?*

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IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 2 Cyberbullying

Discussion Questions:

Mr. S. a sixth grade teacher discovers that there is a Facebook group called “I hate Jesse,” a student in his fourth period art class. Students at the school have been joining this group and posting various types of negative comments regarding Jesse. Recently, cell phone pictures have been taken and posted of Jesse’s buttocks while she was walking in the hall. Three weeks later, he notices other pictures are beginning to appear in which Jesse’s face has been Photoshopped® onto other inappropriate images.

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school /district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

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- (A) *Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students.*
- (C) *Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientations.*
- (J) *Create an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment for all students.*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

- (D) *Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT*

(f) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

- (D) *Emotionally abuse students.*

Participant’s Copy

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2. *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school/district policies?*

3. *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*

4. *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*

5. *What are some classroom management strategies a teacher could employ to address a situation such as this?*

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IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 3 Physical Bullying

Mr. L. would frequently catch his students high-fiving each other as they made up names to describe a female student in their class who they thought was unattractive. He would give students a disapproving look, but their behavior didn't stop. On more than one occasion, he witnessed them kick her in the back of the knees or trip her. When the female student complained to Mr. L., he explained to the student that this type of behavior will stop if she simply ignores it.

Discussion Questions:

- *What possible issues/concerns might this scenario raise?*
- *How could this situation become a violation of the law, the “Code” or other school /district policies?*
- *In this situation, what are some potential negative consequences for the teacher, for the students and the school community?*
- *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*
- *What are some classroom management strategies a teacher could employ to address a situation such as this?*

Consider the following sections of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10-145d-400a

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

- (A) *Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students.*
- (C) *Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:

- (D) *Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(f) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:

- (C) *Emotionally abuse students; or*
- (D) *Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk.*

Participant's Copy

Final Reflection

Your facilitator may ask you to complete one or more of the following questions as a final reflection following the facilitated conversations.

1. What new insights or understanding have you gained from participating in the discussions about various ethical and professional dilemmas with your colleagues?
2. What does ethics mean to you and how does it affect your work?
3. How can you, as a teacher, prepare to address potential ethical dilemmas in your work?
4. If you are unsure about how to address a challenging situation involving ethics and professional responsibility, what could you do to help make the right decision?
5. What are some potential challenges that educators in your school/district might face and what are some strategies you will use to address the situation and avoid a negative outcome?
6. Which of the discussions about ethical and professional dilemmas prompted you to reflect the most upon your actions, district policies and possible consequences for educators? Why?

Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies

Section 10-145d-400a

(a) PREAMBLE

The Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators is a set of principles which the education profession expects its members to honor and follow. These principles set forth, on behalf of the education profession and the public it serves, standards to guide conduct and the judicious appraisal of conduct in situations that have professional and ethical implications. The Code adheres to the fundamental belief that the student is the foremost reason for the existence of the profession.

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professionalism. Therefore, the educator accepts both the public trust and the responsibilities to practice the profession according to the highest possible degree of ethical conduct and standards. Such responsibilities include the commitment to the students, the profession, the community and the family.

Consistent with applicable law, the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators shall serve as a basis for decisions on issues pertaining to certification and employment. The Code shall apply to all educators holding, applying or completing preparation for a certificate, authorization or permit or other credential from the State Board of Education. For the purposes of this section, "educator" includes superintendents, administrators, teachers, special services professionals, coaches, substitute teachers and paraprofessionals.

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

(1) The professional educator, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:

- (A) Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students;
- (B) Engage students in the pursuit of truth, knowledge and wisdom and provide access to all points of view without deliberate distortion of content area matter;
- (C) Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation;
- (D) Foster in students the full understanding, application and preservation of democratic principles and processes; and
- (E) Guide students to acquire the requisite skills and understanding for participatory citizenship and to realize their obligation to be worthy and contributing members of society.

- (F) Assist students in the formulation of worthy, positive goals;
- (G) Promote the right and freedom of students to learn, explore ideas, develop critical thinking, problem solving, and necessary learning skills to acquire the knowledge needed to achieve their full potential;
- (H) Remain steadfast in guaranteeing equal opportunity for quality education for all students;
- (I) Maintain the confidentiality of information concerning students obtained in the proper course of the educational process, and dispense such information only when prescribed or directed by federal or state law or professional practice;
- (J) Create an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment for all students; and
- (K) Apply discipline promptly, impartially, appropriately and with compassion.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional educator, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession, shall:

- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession;
- (B) Uphold the professional educator's right to serve effectively;
- (C) Uphold the principle of academic freedom;
- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment;
- (E) Engage in professional learning to promote and implement research-based best educational practices;
- (F) Assume responsibility for his or her professional development;
- (G) Encourage the participation of educators in the process of educational decision-making;
- (H) Promote the employment of only qualified and fully certificated, authorized or permitted educators;
- (I) Encourage promising, qualified and competent individuals to enter the profession;
- (J) Maintain the confidentiality of information concerning colleagues and dispense such information only when prescribed or directed by federal or state law or professional practice;
- (K) Honor professional contracts until fulfillment, release, or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties to contract;
- (L) Create a culture that encourages purposeful collaboration and dialogue among all stakeholders;
- (M) Promote and maintain ongoing communication among all stakeholders; and
- (N) Provide effective leadership to ensure continuous focus on student achievement.

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

(1) The professional educator, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the profession, shall:

- (A) Be cognizant of the influence of educators upon the community-at-large; obey local, state and national laws;
- (B) Encourage the community to exercise its responsibility to be involved in the formulation of educational policy;
- (C) Promote the principles and ideals of democratic citizenship; and
- (D) Endeavor to secure equal educational opportunities for all students.

(e) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT'S FAMILY

(1) The professional educator in full recognition of the public trust vested in the profession, shall:

- (A) Respect the dignity of each family, its culture, customs, and beliefs;
- (B) Promote, respond, and maintain appropriate communications with the family, staff and administration;
- (C) Consider the family's concerns and perspectives on issues involving its children; and
- (D) Encourage participation of the family in the educational process.

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT*

- (f) The professional educator, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:**
- (A) Abuse his or her position as a professional with students for private advantage;
 - (B) Discriminate against students;
 - (C) Sexually or physically harass or abuse students;
 - (D) Emotionally abuse students; or
 - (E) Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk; and
- (g) The professional educator, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession, shall not:**
- (A) Obtain a certificate, authorization, permit or other credential issued by the state board of education or obtain employment by misrepresentation, forgery or fraud;
 - (B) Accept any gratuity, gift or favor that would impair or influence professional decisions or actions;
 - (C) Misrepresent his, her or another's professional qualifications or competencies;
 - (D) Sexually, physically or emotionally harass or abuse district employees;
 - (E) Misuse district funds and/or district property; or
 - (F) Engage in any misconduct which would impair his or her ability to serve effectively in the profession; and
- (h) The professional educator, in full recognition of the public trust vested in the profession, shall not:**
- (A) Exploit the educational institution for personal gain;
 - (B) Be convicted in a court of law of a crime involving moral turpitude or of any crime of such nature that violates such public trust; or
 - (C) Knowingly misrepresent facts or make false statements.

Unprofessional conduct is not limited to the descriptors listed above. When in doubt regarding whether a specific course of action constitutes professional or unprofessional conduct, please seek advice from your school district or preparation institution.

(i) Code revision

This Code shall be reviewed for potential revision concurrently with the revision of the Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations, by the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards. As a part of such reviews, a process shall be established to receive input and comment from all interested parties.

Diana R. Wentzell
Interim Commissioner of Education

Nancy L. Pugliese, J.D., Chief
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