

Connecticut State Department of Education
Teacher Education and Mentoring Program

Ethical and Professional Dilemmas for
Educators

Facilitator's Guide

Module 5

Understanding the Code
of Professional Responsibility for Educators



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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 responsibility to practice the profession according to the highest possible degree of ethical conduct and standards. Such responsibilities include a 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 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.

ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT OF THE ETHICAL SCENARIOS

Educators rarely can openly discuss many of the issues raised in the following scenarios. Consequently, facilitators may observe various levels of discomfort ranging from a heightened concern about having any student interaction that could be misinterpreted to personal disagreements about whether the examples provided truly represent ethical dilemmas. All reactions are legitimate. It is the fundamental nature of conversations like these to not only produce some discomfort, but also to offer opportunities for discussion, self-reflection, and learning.

Facilitated conversations are meant to raise teachers' level of awareness about responsible, professional behavior. Bringing beginning teachers, their mentors, as well as other staff members together to share perspectives will enhance the conversations and likely result in richer dialogue. Facilitators should establish an understanding with the group that the purpose of these discussions is to recognize that there are professional boundaries. The discussions are **not** meant to suggest that teachers should refrain from building and maintaining meaningful relationships with their students, colleagues, and community to promote school success.

The following scenarios are provided as a way for educators to carefully examine and discuss possible strategies for dealing with ethical dilemmas. Many have been taken from the media here in Connecticut and across the nation. These scenarios present an opportunity for teachers to outline specific issues raised in the scenarios, recognize possible consequences, and generate alternative considerations that would result in a more positive outcome.

The scenarios are organized in the following categories:

- I. Situations Involving Students
- II. Situations Involving Professional Ethics
- III. Situations Involving Community and Family
- IV. Situations Involving Bullying
- V. Situations Involving Professionalism
- VI. Situations Involving Culturally Competent Backgrounds of All Students
- VII. Situations Involving Artificial Intelligence

The scenarios are based on the structure of the [*Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators*](#) which should help guide the discussion and analysis of each scenario.

Facilitating the Conversations

Districts can select the facilitator for the discussion of the scenarios. It is recommended that the facilitator be knowledgeable about district policies and procedures as well as the [*Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators*](#) within the *Common Core of Teaching*. For example, facilitators could be:

- District Facilitators
- Human Resource Directors
- Building Administrators
- Central Office Administrators or
- Teacher Leaders.

USING THE SCENARIOS

There are numerous ways for districts to use these scenarios. You may organize Facilitated Conversations to best meet the needs of your district. Below is one process that may be used to facilitate the conversations within a two-hour timeframe. Each scenario discussion should take approximately 20 – 30 minutes.

Sample Facilitated Conversation Process:

1. Prior to conducting the facilitated conversations, instruct participants to review the [Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators](#) . Be sure participants have a copy of the Code.
2. Plan which scenarios you will discuss. **Legislation mandates that at least one of the scenarios includes a situation involving bullying (Category IV).** Select at least two to three additional scenarios which are most relevant to your district. **Provide each participant with copies of the selected scenarios and corresponding questions from the Participant’s Workbook. Create a sign-in sheet for your records.**
3. Use the PowerPoint provided to set the purpose for the facilitated conversations. You may want to ask participants to review the PowerPoint prior to the scheduled meeting or use it to frame the conversation at the start of the meeting.
4. Review the first selected scenario using the guiding questions. Instruct participants to respond to the questions in the order listed as the discussion will build from one question to the next. Participants may work in small groups to develop responses and then share several of their responses with the entire group.
 - *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 students and the school community?*
 - *What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive measures might be considered?*
5. Use the provided section of the [Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators](#) which relates to the specific scenario to develop a deeper understanding of the educators’ responsibility to students, community and the profession.
6. Close the discussion by summarizing the key points and strategies to effectively handle a similar situation. Use the discussion points provided in the guide to assist you in both small and large group discussions.
7. Repeat the process with the remaining scenarios.
8. **Final Reflection:** on page 28 of the Participant’s Workbook, there are six questions provided that can be used as a final reflection. You may select to have participants respond to one or more of the questions and collect their response as an exit ticket at the end of the session.
9. **Next Steps:** Direct beginning teachers to login to TEAM and complete the online questions. Once they have completed the online questions, they will have completed the Module 5 requirements for this year.

Please note: The discussion points provided in the guide are by no means exhaustive and it is not mandatory that all points are discussed. Your participants may raise issues, discuss potential negative consequences, and consider alternative actions beyond what is included in the guide.

Suggestions for Use of Participant's Workbook

The **Participant's Workbook** contains 22 scenarios available for use in facilitated discussions. Also included behind each scenario is a page for participants to collect their thoughts in response to the questions asked.

As you plan your facilitated conversation, you may wish to reproduce only some of the available scenarios to customize the workbook as you like. For example, you may reproduce one scenario from each of the categories listed below along with the final reflection page. Teachers can keep the completed workbook for reference during completion of the online survey, but you may wish to collect the final reflection page as feedback and documentation of attendance.

I. Situations Involving Students

- Scenario 1 – Electronic Communications with Students
- Scenario 2 - Transporting Students
- Scenario 3 - Contact with Students
- Scenario 4 – Providing Personal/Financial Support (2015)

II. Situations Involving Professional Ethics

- Scenario 1 – Use of Social Network
- Scenario 2 - DUI Convictions
- Scenario 3 - Teacher Documentation
- Scenario 4 – TEAM Program Completion (2015)

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

- Scenario 1 – Teacher Public Behavior
- Scenario 2 – Student Confidentiality
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- Scenario 1 – Emotional Bullying
- Scenario 2 – Cyberbullying
- Scenario 3 – Physical Bullying
- Scenario 4 – Promoting a Safe, Productive Learning Environment (2015)

V. Situations Involving Professionalism

- Scenario 1 - Professional Attire (2015)

VI. Situations Involving Culturally Competent Teaching and Behavior (2021)

- Scenario 1 – Dealing Justly and Fairly with Students
- Scenario 2 – The Importance of Names
- Scenario 3 – Recognizing and Respecting the Cultural Backgrounds of All Students

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 schoolwork (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:

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?*

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:

(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 which would put students at risk.

Context for communication with students through personal email and texting: Across the country, school officials are grappling with the growth of social media and the implications for their schools.

Technological communication between students and teachers outside of school is often at the heart of the problem. More and more, school officials are making ethical and policy decisions balancing the ease of communication with student safety and decorum. Scores of teachers have e-mailed or texted their way into the headlines, crossing the bounds of appropriate relationships with students by engaging in inappropriate emailing and/or texting. Often, the problem with this form of communication is that it can obscure the boundaries between teacher and student. It is important for educators to understand the benefits as well as the dangers of using electronic communication with students.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Although Ms. K has tried to make a personal connection with her student, Melissa, she is using her personal email and sending text messages that are non-school related that may be viewed as too personal and could lead to serious issues. Ms. K's conversations may be considered inappropriate. A teacher-student relationship can begin very innocently but then progressively become more personal in ways that are inappropriate. It is obvious that Melissa feels comfortable enough with Ms. K to engage in more personal issues and it is a challenge for teachers to find an appropriate balance.
- Teachers should be approachable, but they are professionals and should maintain a professional distance. The way Ms. K responds to the more personal issues can put her at risk of crossing the bounds of an appropriate relationship with a student.
- Ms. K is in a vulnerable position. If Ms. K continues to communicate with the student in this way, Melissa's family may accuse her of behaving inappropriately.
- Texts and emails are not private. They can be seen by others, forwarded and/or copied and printed. Out of context, they may appear to be inappropriate and lead to a violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators. Depending on how personal they are, a teacher may also be subject to investigation and possibly lose their certification.

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

- It is the teacher’s professional responsibility to create an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment. The personal nature of the email/texting conversations may produce an emotionally unsafe environment. Melissa may begin to feel uncomfortable being in Ms. K’s class after revealing information that is too personal.
- Ms. K has an obligation to report anything that may put a student at risk. If Melissa reveals personal information that may put her in danger, Ms. K. has an obligation to report it to the appropriate authorities.
- The community has an expectation that a teacher will behave in a professional manner. Ms. K’s behavior may be viewed as unprofessional and leave her open to possible claims of misconduct with a student.
- Many districts are developing policies regarding electronic communication with students. District policies around electronic communication must be shared with all staff. Ms. K may be in violation of her district’s policy.

Discuss your district’s policy regarding electronic communication.

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

- Although the communication with Melissa may be well intended, how the messages may be translated by others who may be privy to them (friends, parents, siblings etc.) can greatly vary. Depending on the nature of the personal information shared by both Melissa and Ms. K, even the perception of an inappropriate relationship can impact Ms. K’s reputation and continued employment if complaints are filed against her.

Share existing policies or brainstorm a list of possible rules governing the use of email and texting. Some ideas include the following, but allow your teachers to add their own ideas to the list:

- *Be careful if talking with students remotely – a good rule of thumb: “If it is inappropriate to say in person, it is inappropriate to text.*
- *Use common sense.*
- *Be sure your communication is transparent, and accessible.*
- *Keep it professional.*

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

- Texts and emails are not private. Ms. K should stop emailing and texting Melissa any kind of personal messages. However, she should make every attempt to maintain a relationship with the student and enlist assistance from colleagues to provide guidance.
- Ms. K is obligated to report anything shared by Melissa to district administrators if there is fear of harm. Teachers and other school personnel are considered “mandated reporters.” A mandated reporter who has “reasonable cause to suspect or believe” that a child is being abused, neglected, or placed in imminent risk of serious harm must follow DCF reporting procedures. Conn. Gen. Statute 17a-101a.
- Ms. K may need to examine her own intentions. Is she attempting to fulfill a personal need or void in her own life? The teacher must recognize the boundaries in the professional teacher/student relationship.
- Use school-based email to send messages to students and their families rather than personal emails or text messages.
- Issues pertaining to personal matters should not be discussed through text messaging. Face to face conversations, in school, with an open door, are most appropriate while still maintaining a level of student confidentiality.
- Consult another teacher/administrator and invite them to join the conversation with the student, if agreeable.
- Consult your district policy on the appropriate use of technology with colleagues, students, and families.

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 sports venues. 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:

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?*

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:

(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 which would put students at risk.

Participant’s Copy pg. 6

Context for transporting students: Most district policies prohibit the use of personal vehicles to transport students. Transportation of students is limited to board authorized events and teachers are expected to act in accordance with school board policy. In school districts where transportation of students may be allowed under clearly defined circumstances, such transportation must usually be approved in advance and in writing with proof of licensure and necessary insurance provided by the driver.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Has Ms. Z consulted the board policy and procedures in place for the district? If Ms. Z is not otherwise employed by the district as a teacher, administrator etc., how does the district inform her of district policies and procedures?
- Other students/families that are providing their own transportation could view the coach's actions as a demonstration of favoritism.
- An accident or breakdown of the coach's vehicle could jeopardize the safety of the student(s) and the driver which would limit possible care and supervision of the students.

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

- If the coach's decision to transport students violates district policy, the coach's actions could result in a reprimand. Most district policies do not allow students to travel in a teacher's personal vehicle. Districts need to clearly communicate policies to all staff.
- Educators and coaches have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all students. What may start out as a well-intended gesture, transporting students without adhering to district policies, without parental permission or in an unsafe vehicle could lead to potential physical and emotional harm for the student.

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

- In the event of a false claim by the student and/or public perception about misconduct, the coach's professional reputation could be at stake.
- An accident could result in injuries to the passengers in the vehicle creating physical and/or emotional trauma for all involved. If the coach did not follow district policies, the coach may be personally liable for insurance claims. Claims against the district may also be filed.
- Students may feel obligated to ride in the coach's/teacher's vehicle despite a level of discomfort, feeling that agreement is necessary for continued participation in the sport.
- Beyond harm to the driver and passengers in a vehicle, violating district policies in the unfortunate event of an accident could result in suspension of a driver's license, loss of employment and/or legal claims.

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

- District policies surrounding transportation of students should be clearly communicated to staff. All staff should be aware of the policy prior to transporting students in a teacher's/coach's vehicle.
- Should there be circumstances where student travel in a teacher's /coach's vehicle is acceptable, all permissions/protocols should be closely adhered to for the protection of both students and staff. Having two teachers accompany students in a personal vehicle would be good practice.
- Informed consent from parents should be included in any policy where transporting students in a personal vehicle is acceptable.

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 isn't, doing anything wrong.

Discussion Questions:

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?

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

- (B) Sexually or physically harass or abuse students.

Participant's Copy pg. 8

Context for Contact with Students: Recognizing the unique and privileged relationships that exist between teachers and the students entrusted to their care, teachers must develop and maintain these relationships in a way that is professional, respectful, and appropriate. Appropriateness can look different in pre-school contexts as opposed to middle and high school contexts. Teachers need to exercise “common sense” with any physical contact or touching to eliminate possible misunderstandings.

Discussion Questions:

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

- As an outgrowth of Mr. J’s popularity and ease of conversation with students, Mr. J. has used physical touch to convey his friendship towards his students and to make them feel at ease with him. However, this kind of touching can be construed as inappropriate by some students who may feel that their personal space has been invaded or even worse, that the touching is sexual in nature.
- Although all teachers want to maintain positive rapport with students, teachers are not friends; they are professionals and should maintain professional interactions.
- In cases of obvious sexual or physical abuse, educators can lose their jobs and licenses if proven true. However, in some cases, the abuse could be misrepresented, and it is the accusation of one student that may put a teacher in a position of needing to defend him or herself regarding the accusation. This is the delicate balance of a very serious issue.

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

- The Code indicates that the professional educator must “create an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment for all students.” If students are uncomfortable with being touched, they do not feel safe, and this will impact their learning environment.
- The community has an expectation that a teacher will behave in a professional manner. The Code specifically reminds educators that their actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession. Mr. J’s behavior may be viewed as unprofessional if he is leaving him vulnerable to possible claims of misconduct with a student.
- The Code specifically states that the professional educator shall not “sexually or physically harass or abuse students.” Although the physical touching of students may not be intended as a sexual gesture, it may be perceived as such by the student.

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

- The consequences may vary depending upon whom and how many have expressed concern and the nature of their concern. In the most severe cases, a teacher could lose her/his job and/or teaching license or face criminal charges.
- Some districts have or are developing policies regarding physical contact between teachers and students and between students. Mr. J may be in violation of his district's policy.
- Although unintended, Mr. J may jeopardize his professional and personal reputation with students, families, and colleagues.

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

- A conversation with the principal should advise Mr. J to stop all physical contact with students and staff. The conversation and request should be documented in writing. The principal needs to continue monitoring Mr. J's interactions and report Mr. J's actions to district administrators should his behavior continue.
- In this kind of case, the students' perception of the nature of the touching must be taken seriously. However, it must also be balanced by the observations of others and the response of the teacher in question. Students must feel that they have been listened to and that efforts will be made to secure their environment.
- Generate alternative ways for Mr. J to demonstrate support and acceptance toward his students while respecting their personal space and avoiding physical contact.

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 4 *Providing Personal/Financial Support*

High School Scenario

Ms. J is a veteran teacher who has always shown an interest in her students, not just in their academics, but in knowing them as people beyond the classroom. She is aware of and shows an interest in their families, hobbies, sports activities, ambitions, and interests. Kevin is a student in her 12th grade social studies class. Ms. J learned that Kevin was interested in attending college but lacked the necessary financial support from his family. Ms. J felt that through the support of a concerned adult, Kevin could pursue his dream of attending college. She began emailing Kevin with information about the college application and financial aid process. Communications soon became more personal regarding his family life, finances, and Kevin's social life. Ms. J offered to pay for Kevin's college applications and as the year progressed helped him to prepare for college by purchasing things that he would need for his dorm room. Ultimately, Ms. J went as far as to help Kevin buy a car and place him on her insurance policy. Although not knowing the extent of her involvement, colleagues began to note her attentiveness to Kevin as inappropriate.

Elementary School Scenario

Mr. T is a third-grade teacher in an urban school. Mr. T has noticed that a little girl named, Molly, has come to school in clothes too thin for winter wear and without an appropriate winter jacket. He has been in touch with Molly's mother and knows that the family is struggling financially. While shopping in a local store, he sees children's winter jackets, gloves and hats for sale and decides to buy what he can for Molly. Molly's mother is very thankful for Mr. T's thoughtfulness and donation. This is not the first time Mr. T has done this. There have been other times in the past that he has bought clothing and discreetly donated it for one of his students.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 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 obligation to the teaching 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 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

Participant's Copy pg. 10

Discussion Questions:

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

- Although most teachers maintain caring professional relationships with their students, ethical boundaries of the teacher-student relationship have received a lot of negative press in the past decade. Personal/intimate relationships have been brought to national attention and, with that, increased suspicion when it comes to teachers' relationships with their students. Maintaining a professional relationship where boundaries are clearly established is necessary to protect both parties for the potential abuse of power, control and/or influence.
- In both scenarios, the teachers are likely well intended and deeply concerned about the welfare of their students. Whether providing funding for college applications or purchasing winter clothing, both actions could be perceived as a demonstration of favoritism. This could stir colleagues, parents, and/or students to call into question the teacher's intentions.

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

- The personal nature of emails, phone calls and personal involvement of Ms. J can create an emotionally unsafe learning environment for Kevin, as he is being singled out for attention that other students don't get. This may make him feel very uncomfortable yet indebted to the teacher at the same time.
- The school community and the community at-large have an expectation that teachers will behave in a professional manner. Ms. J's behavior may be perceived as unprofessional, crossing established ethical boundaries. Mr. T's behavior can also be perceived as "crossing the line" if the same "gifts" are not available for others. Although there is not a definitive source on ethical boundaries regarding teacher-student relationships, teachers should familiarize themselves with the Code of Professional Responsibilities as well as other school and district policies.

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

- Although Ms. J was well intended at the beginning, she crossed the line from her role as a teacher to involvement in her student's personal life. This leaves the teacher vulnerable to accusations of misconduct -- some of which may be true and some of which may not. For Mr. T, there could also be accusations of an inappropriate relationship with Molly's mother or with Molly herself. Both teachers' integrity could be questioned and lead to loss of job and/or license to teach.
- The parents may take legal action against Ms. J for interference in their son's life.
- Once financial support and/or gifts are given, the student may feel indebted to the teacher

- in ways that may make him/her feel uncomfortable.
- The community may lose confidence in their trust of educators in their school system.

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

- Teachers should not be afraid to connect with their students; they simply need to find ways that allow them to build caring, trusting relationships while maintaining a professional stance.
- Prior to becoming involved, Ms. J might have contacted the school counselor when she found out that Kevin needed assistance with college applications and financial aid. In this way, Ms. J would have provided the assistance necessary but remained within the role of Kevin's teacher.
- Ms. J may need to examine her own intentions. Is she attempting to fulfill a personal need or void in her own life through this relationship? The teacher must recognize the boundaries in the professional teacher/student relationship.
- Mr. T could start a school-based fund to support all students who may be experiencing any type of personal or financial crisis. Additionally, discussing the possibility of an annual clothing drive with the Parent Teacher Organization, whereby all students could both participate and benefit, could be a realistic and appropriate alternative.
- Texts and emails are not private. Personal texts and emails should be stopped immediately.

Reference:

Aultman, Lori Price (et.al). Boundary dilemmas in teacher-student relationships: Struggling with "the line." Teacher and Teacher Education. Vol.25 (2009) pp. 636-646.

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 page, Mr. Y has listed quite a bit of personal information. One of his colleagues “friended” him on the site and became very concerned because the site included a statement that Mr. Y was attracted to young girls, stating “the younger the better.”

The colleague notified the principal of this information.

Discussion Questions:

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 helpful?*

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 teacher, 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.*

(i) *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.***

Participant’s Copy pg. 12

Context for use of social networks: The prevalence of the use of social media has greatly impacted the educational community – including teachers, administrators, students, and their families. A new generation is growing up with social networks as an integral part of life. Personal information that was once considered private is increasingly being shared online. The public sharing of information obscures the normal boundaries between teacher and student and teacher and colleagues. Young teachers are especially vulnerable to the consequences of putting out personal information and pictures that may implicate them morally and professionally. In the same way that email and texting communications between educators and students may result in the crossing of the bounds of appropriate relationships.

Discussion Questions:

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

- As the use of social networking has become embedded in everyday life, the line between personal and professional has become blurred. Not only has Mr. Y shared a good deal about his personal life with colleagues, but he has also expressed an inappropriate interest in young girls. This is highly alarming considering that as a teacher he has daily contact with young girls.
- Mr. Y can be perceived as a possible risk to students.
- Personal rights vs. role of a public figure may be raised. Teachers are held to a higher standard of conduct than an average citizen. Online “posts” and communications can reach beyond an intended audience and impact the level of confidence held by students and community.

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

- The Code states that the professional educator shall “conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession.” Mr. Y’s posted information on the web has clearly overstepped the boundaries of professionalism in making his personal and social life open to not only his colleagues, and possibly his students.
- The Code specifically states that the professional educator shall not “sexually or physically harass or abuse students.” Although there may be no current evidence that this has occurred, Mr. Y’s comment about being sexually attracted to young girls, “the younger the better,” is a serious concern that needs to be addressed immediately. Inappropriate conduct that would put students at risk is implied.

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

- Mr. Y has put himself in a vulnerable position that could result in the loss of his job and teacher certification. Expressing his interest in young girls, using a public forum, has exposed a potential threat to young female students that will be taken seriously by the school community.
- Colleagues, students, and families who are aware of the posted comment or have viewed it themselves may seek suspension of Mr. Y due to inappropriate conduct.
- Mr. Y's reputation in the school community may be permanently tainted, having far reaching impact on future employment.

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

- Engage teachers in the development of a district policy regarding the use of social networking sites if one does not already exist.
- Create professional development activities to explore the risks and the benefits of social networking sites for personal and professional use.
- Provide an orientation for all teachers to inform them about the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators.
- Specifically outline the process for reporting inappropriate behavior or abuse of a student by any adult.

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.

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

Discussion Questions:

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?

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

Context for Convictions: School districts in Connecticut must require that each applicant for employment state whether he or she has ever been convicted of a crime and whether criminal charges are pending at the time of application. (Connecticut General Statute 10-221d). The statute also specifies that an employer may not discriminate against any applicant or employee based on arrest/conviction records that have been erased. In this scenario, it does not appear that any records have been erased, although the teacher has been employed for the past seven years. Connecticut state statutes also outline several reasons for contract termination. For example, moral misconduct (10- 151 (d) (3) may be cited after documentation. District policies and procedures will need to be reviewed regarding the pattern of behavior that has emerged.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Ms. B’s current arrest combined with two prior convictions, demonstrates a pattern of inappropriate conduct. She may face serious criminal consequences and loss of employment.
- Relationships with students and families may be compromised.
- Colleagues, students and families may develop a lack of trust in the teacher who they perceived to be a role model. Judgment may be questioned regarding personal and professional decision making.
- If other issues have occurred with the DUI (other vehicles involved, injuries or moving violations) then, it might impact district decision making regarding future employment.
- Ms. B may have a problem with alcohol which may impact her ability to be an effective teacher.

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

- The teacher’s behavior could negatively reflect upon the “status and substance of the profession” as stated in the Code of Professional Responsibility and commonly stated in most district policies.
- In the realm of misconduct as outlined in the CCT, the teacher may be found to be “impaired in his or her ability to serve effectively in the profession.”
- Should the teacher be convicted “in a court of law involving moral turpitude or of any crime of such nature that violates public trust” further employment in her current or any other public school district may be in jeopardy.

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

- Legal issues leading to incarceration.
- Legal issues that could lead to frequent absenteeism due to attendance at court proceedings and/or rehabilitation creating consistent instructional interruptions.
- District consequences include possible suspension or loss of employment.
- Possible revocation of teaching certificate.
- Reduced confidence in Ms. B's ability to teach effectively by colleagues, students, and school community.

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

- Ms. B's two previous DUI offenses may have triggered the district to offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at an earlier date. Ideally, if Ms. B received the support and treatment necessary prior to this incident, this third arrest may have been avoided.
- Additional counseling, treatment and evaluation may be recommended, if Ms. B has been suspended, with conditions attached prior to her return to work.

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, 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:

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?*

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 profession, 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.*
- (B) *Misrepresent his, her or another's professional qualifications or competencies.*

Participant's Copy pg. 16

Context for forging a document to obtain a coaching permit: The public trusts that coaches have the qualifications, knowledge, skills, and judgment to instruct students participating in team sports. Coaches have the responsibility of conducting themselves in a manner that is worthy of this trust and consistent with the profession’s expectations. Falsifying information to obtain a coaching permit violates this trust.

“We are on the field and in the locker room to teach our players how to win. Not just on the gridiron, but in any profession they choose. We want to impart habits that will lead them to excellence throughout their lives. Most of all, we want to teach them the value of loyalty, integrity, and teamwork. Once you know how to work with people, you can accomplish anything” (Winning Every Day: The Game Plan for Success, Holtz, 1998, p. 52).

Discussion Questions:

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

- Mr. S misrepresented his qualifications when he changed the expiration date on his CPR card to indicate that his card was valid to obtain a coaching permit.
- Mr. S attempted to obtain a permit using a false credential and if detected, this could result in the denial of his application for a coaching permit.

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

- It is a violation of the “Code” to obtain a certificate, authorization or permit issued by the State Board of Education using false credentials.
- It is the expectation of the community that an educator or coach will conduct himself or herself in a professional manner and use the highest level of professional judgment. Falsifying information to obtain a coaching permit breaches the public’s trust and displays a lack of professional judgment.
- An educator or coach has an obligation to create a physically safe and healthy environment for students. Employment as a coach without CPR certification creates an unsafe environment for students.

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

- Submission of an application for a certificate, authorization, or coaching permit, requires that an applicant sign an attestation confirming that the information contained in the application and accompanying documentation does not contain any misrepresentations, falsifications, or omissions. Misrepresentation of information may result in the denial or revocation of a certificate, permit or authorization and possibly result in criminal charges.
- If Mr. S obtained a coaching permit under false pretenses, and without the required medical certification, and a student he was coaching had a serious injury, Mr. S. and the school district may assume legal liability for the accident.

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

- Mr. S could have contacted the school district to inform them of the oversight and they may have worked with him to resolve the problem.
- If needed, Mr. S could have withdrawn his application for a coaching position rather than falsify a document to obtain a permit.
- Mr. S should have researched the requirements for a coaching permit to ensure he was eligible for the permit and submitted his application in a timely manner.
- Mr. S should have obtained a coaching permit prior to applying for a coaching position.

II. *Situations Involving Professional Ethics*

Scenario 4 *TEAM Program Completion*

Ms. B is a third-year teacher who is required to complete the requirements of Connecticut’s Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program to be eligible for continued certification. As part of the program, Ms. B is assigned to a mentor to work with her through the five-module professional growth process. However, Ms. B has frequently canceled scheduled time to meet with her mentor and has been inattentive to her expected completion date displayed on her TEAM online dashboard. During her third year of teaching, Ms. B was sent a letter from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) providing notification of her impending deadline and its impact on continued certification. Although this letter was sent months in advance, Ms. B chose to ignore it until a month prior to her final deadline date. At that point, Ms. B created four Professional Growth Action Plans (PGAPs) within several days that were approved by the building principal. Four reflection papers were submitted for review within a three-week timeframe.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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.
- (E) Assume responsibility for his or her professional development.

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.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Failure to adhere to program requirements and timeframes could result in the loss of the Initial Teaching Certificate with no opportunity for renewal. Without a teaching certificate, a teacher can no longer be employed in a public school. In Connecticut, teachers are eligible for an Initial Teaching Certificate when recommended by an accredited college/university preparation program. Once hired, teachers are required to enroll in the TEAM Program. Teachers are assigned a mentor, and most are expected to complete the program in two years with a third year possible for extenuating circumstances. It is the teacher's responsibility to create a TEAM profile and create an online workspace. It is the district's responsibility to assign a dedicated mentor and support the teacher through the induction process. Generally, each module takes 8-10 weeks of focused attention, reflection, and application in the classroom.
- All teachers are provided with an orientation to the program and should be aware of the requirements and the module process. This teacher has disregarded the process and created reflection papers that do not likely represent collaborative work with a mentor over an extended period as defined in the TEAM Program Guidelines.
- The principal signing off on multiple professional growth action plans at one time may indicate a lack of understanding about TEAM Program Guidelines and requirements. Additional support may be necessary from the District Facilitator and/or Regional Education Service Center (RESC) field staff members to clarify misunderstandings and, therefore, prevent additional teachers from thinking that this is acceptable practice.

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

- As a teacher, holding a certificate granted by the State Department of Education, Ms. B must comply with legislation adopted to address requirements for those holding the certificate. Teachers who do not successfully complete the TEAM Program within their given timeframe are disregarding their professional responsibility and jeopardize continued employment in the profession.
- Ms. B's judgment regarding her obligation to TEAM may indicate a pattern of unprofessional and/or negligent behavior. This can impact her overall evaluation within the domain of professional responsibility and teacher leadership.
- Ms. B entered all four module reflection papers for a program that should have been completed over a two-year period using data collected from students in her classroom while engaged in the four-step module process. Thus, the reflection papers were not likely an authentic representation of her work with her mentor, or her students nor was it reflective of the teacher's development of new learning over time. This could be interpreted as a misrepresentation of her students, her teaching and her professional development and prohibit the advancement of her certification.

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

- Ms. B has not taken advantage of professional learning opportunities that have been offered to her as part of her enrollment in the TEAM Program and may be limiting her own opportunities for enhancing her professional practice.
- Teachers who do not successfully complete all five TEAM modules by the end of three full years in TEAM are neither eligible for renewal of the Initial Educator Certificate, nor eligible to advance to the Provisional Educator Certificate. In such case, to earn eligibility for the reissuance of the initial educator certificate, teachers would need to fulfill the requirements of intervening study and experience (CGS, Sec. 10-145f) as approved by the State Board of Education.
- TEAM was developed to provide personalized, guided support to early career teachers to advance professional practice and recognize improved student learning/performance. Choosing not to engage in this opportunity (and requirement) can adversely impact student success, as well as the opportunity for continued employment.

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

- All beginning teachers have a TEAM Program Dashboard which assists them in navigating the program requirements in collaboration with their mentor. Clearly displayed for all beginning teachers is the TEAM Program expected completion date. Teachers can “backward plan” from their expected completion date to determine a reasonable timeframe for module completion. Most teachers complete two modules in their first year and two modules in the second year. Module 5 is often offered by the school district facilitator as a group professional dialogue during the school year.
- Districts need to be proactive in monitoring and ensuring that their teachers are engaging in the TEAM Program process. It is necessary that all beginning teachers are oriented to the TEAM Module Process and assigned a mentor to support them through the entirety of the program. The TEAM Program Handbook (available on www.ctteam.org) is a valuable resource for all TEAM participants and should be shared and referenced often. Other resources, to include sample reflection papers, are also available for teachers and mentors to explore together.
- District Facilitators have an enhanced dashboard that allows for greater monitoring of individual teacher progress through the module process. Additionally, building principals can monitor progress via their online dashboard. Monthly/Bi-Monthly meetings led by the District Facilitator or designated facilitator will keep TEAM conversations current and allow for conversations about connecting the work for TEAM to other district initiatives e.g., teacher evaluation, Connecticut Core Standards, curriculum design, Smarter Balanced Assessments etc. Scheduled “check-ins” via email, with reminders about district and state-imposed deadlines, would create a record of communication for all parties involved (DF, beginning teacher, mentor, principal).

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 teammates 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:

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?*

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.*

Context for teacher public behavior: Teachers are at the center of the educational process and uniquely in a position of trust and influence. Although there is much debate across the country about whether a teacher’s behavior in a public place, away from school property or school activities, should be considered under the Code of Professional Responsibility, teachers can find themselves in a situation where public perception and opinion can lead to a disruption in the educational process.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Should Mr. R be drinking in a public venue or in the district where he is employed?
- Are there adults directly responsible for the students also attending the barbeque?
- Did Mr. R or his teammates provide any alcoholic beverages to the students?
- The boundaries between teacher and student may be blurred in a social, adult situation outside of the school day and/or calendar.
- Mr. R may be placing himself in a position where students/parents/community might misinterpret, even well intended, actions. The potential for charges of inappropriate conduct are significantly increased.

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

- Is there a town ordinance prohibiting drinking in public parks that the teacher may be violating? The teacher must be “cognizant of the influence of educators upon the community at large, obey local, state and national laws” (Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators).
- The students are under the legal age to drink alcoholic beverages. The teacher, as well as any other responsible adult, should attempt to prevent the students from drinking and contact law enforcement to report illegal behavior.
- The teacher and the students may be subject to arrest for illegal consumption of alcoholic beverages in a local park.

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

- The teacher's rapport with the students could imply approval of behavior, sending a mixed message.
- The teacher's behavior at the barbeque could be embellished and/or exaggerated through photos, videos, text messages etc. creating a negative image of the teacher in the wider community. The teacher's reputation may be permanently scarred.
- Should the students drive away from the barbeque intoxicated and get into a car accident, the teacher could be held responsible for injuries or loss of life for failing to report. The teacher is putting students at risk of harm.
- Under the worst of circumstances, the teacher could be arrested, lose his job, his driver's license and his teaching certificate for violating the law, the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators and the public's trust.

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

- Although Mr. R may not have invited the students to the barbeque, it is his responsibility to put an end to the situation and ensure that the students arrive home safely.
- The teacher should avoid drinking in public places to avoid the possibility of violating the law and meeting up with students and/or their families. In the given situation, the teacher should have left the park immediately and called law enforcement to report the underage drinking by the students observed.
- The teacher could report the incident to district administrators. Follow-up phone calls to parents/families and possible face-to-face meetings could be organized according to district policies.

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:

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?*

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.*

Participant's Copy pg. 22

Context for student confidentiality: Federal law requires educational agencies to guarantee each student basic privacy rights. To maintain these rights, schools are required to have guidelines for collecting, maintaining, disseminating, and verifying the accuracy of information that they collect. As a rule, discussions about pupils should concern only their educational goals and appropriate instructional strategies and those conversations should be exclusive to the school personnel directly related to the student’s educational program.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Ms. D is not exercising professional judgment by discussing a student outside of school with someone who is not directly related to the student’s educational program.
- Ms. D may be revealing confidential information, which may violate public trust and privacy laws. Also, Ms. D may not recognize that the person she is sharing the information with may have a relationship with the child which may now be compromised.

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

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), also known as the Buckley Amendment, requires that any personally identifiable information contained in educational records be kept confidential, unless consent for disclosure is given by a parent/guardian. School districts are obligated to maintain the confidentiality of personally identifiable student information. Ms. D may be in violation of this law.
- The “Code” supports FERPA by stating that the professional educator must “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.” School and district policies are written to comply with the law and the “Code” and would have policies in place to comply with federal and state statutes.

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

- In addition to legal violations, Ms. D may be sharing information about a student that will now be distributed to the wider community. The student's privacy will be violated, and the student could be subject to unwanted concern, curiosity, or ridicule.
- The student's learning environment could be compromised due to continued harassment by classmates. The student may no longer feel emotionally or physically safe, which may affect attendance and academic progress.
- Colleagues, students, and families may develop a lack of trust in Ms. D leading to a break in collaborative efforts. Colleagues may be less interested in working together, students may become increasingly mistrustful, and families may lose confidence in Ms. D's capabilities to be an effective teacher.
- Continued complaints about Ms. D to administration regarding breaches of student confidentiality could lead to written reprimands and possible dismissal proceedings.

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

- Sharing the FERPA law, reviewing the Code of Professional Responsibility and supporting district policies and procedures at the start of every school year would serve as a reminder for all staff to refrain from discussing students outside of the educational community directly involved with educational programming.
- Using personally identifiable information, whether in writing or conversation, should be avoided unless it is specific to the student's educational program.

III. Situations Involving Community and Family
Scenario 3
Teacher Using Position for Personal Gain

Ms. W, a fourth-grade music teacher, emails parents using 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:

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?*

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.

Context for teacher using school position for personal gain: There are many things that we use in both our personal and our professional lives. For educators, these could include teaching supplies e.g. paper, calculators, manipulatives, or models as well as technological resources e.g. computers, DVD players, Internet, email, course- related equipment, video production equipment, kitchen appliances, microscopes, lab, or shop equipment and even time during the school day. Educators need to be conscious about using resources available to them as an educator for the purposes of teaching and learning and not using resources provided by their school or district for personal use or personal gain.

Discussion Questions:

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

- While Ms. W may have her students' interests in mind, she is using the Internet access provided on a school computer to solicit business from which she will profit financially.
- She is using email addresses that parents have provided to the school for school related communication, not for private solicitation.
- Ms. W may also be setting herself up for a possible conflict of interest situation by receiving money for assisting struggling students for whom she will need to provide a course grade.

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

- Ms. W would be violating the part of the "Code" that states that the professional educator shall not abuse his or her position as a professional with students for private advantage.
- Many districts have, or are developing, acceptable use policies for the use of computers, networks, and the Internet. Ms. W may be in violation of her district's acceptable use policy.

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

- The consequences may vary depending on the district's acceptable use policy. Examples of possible ways to address the situation could include discussion with administrator to enhance Ms. W's awareness of the district's acceptable use policy, and/or providing Ms. W the opportunity to participate in training about acceptable use of school computers, networks, and the Internet.
- If Ms. W continued the practice of contacting parents through the school's email to elicit private tutoring or otherwise using her position as a teacher for personal gain, consequences could include: a written reprimand in her personnel file, suspension, or termination of access to the Internet at school, or disciplinary actions according to school or district policy.
- Encourage staff to ask a colleague to proofread communications that go out to parents. This could be for the purposes of ensuring clearly communicated messages, avoiding spelling and grammatical errors, as well as sending appropriate messages to parents.

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

- Engage teachers in a discussion about district policies regarding emails sent to school district employees, parents/guardians, and students.
- Engage teachers in a discussion about appropriate and inappropriate use of sending emails to current, former, and future students.
- Discuss proper procedures to follow in the event you are the recipient of an inappropriate email.
- Discuss district policies for using other technological and/or electronic devices, including, but not limited to: Cell phones and Smart phones, iPhones, iPods and iPads, Kindles, or Nooks, etc.
- Discuss possible implications for use of technology at home (or outside of school), for example, content shared on social networking sites, viewing inappropriate and/or illegal websites, content of electronic messages/blogs that originate with you.
- This situation could have been avoided by providing an annual training/professional development for all staff regarding the district's acceptable use policy.

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 must 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 Ph.D., 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 because she is asked to repeat the instructions once again, continues passing out materials and ignores Josh and the other students.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 pg. 27

Context for emotional bullying: The harmful effects of bullying can include experiencing physical symptoms and illnesses, poor school performance, and lowered self-esteem. In extreme cases, bullying has been linked to violence and suicide. There are ways to help those who inflict cruelty learn better ways of interacting; to help those who are bullied learn strategies for coping; and to help witnesses learn to stand up to being bullied and deprive them of an audience. If left unchecked, mean-spirited students get the message that cruel behavior is acceptable to adults. Creating open lines of communication and support networks at home and at school, teachers, parents, and students can work together to create a safer school community.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Ms. H has the responsibility to maintain a classroom culture and climate that is respectful and tolerant of all people.
- Ms. H's allowance of the ridicule may imply approval.
- Behavioral expectations may not be clearly communicated.
- Ms. H's own frustration may be causing her to ignore the needs of her students.
- Ms. H may be neglecting accommodation for Josh.
- If Josh is repeatedly being "made fun of" during this class period, Ms. H may be contributing to an environment of bullying.

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

- Legislation speaks specifically to "the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district." If Ms. H consistently allows other students to be disrespectful in this manner, she can be cited to be in violation of the Connecticut statute.
- The "Code" clearly describes the professional educator's obligation to students. Specifically, teachers must "recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings." Teachers are obligated to deal justly and considerately with all students.
- School districts develop policies to comply with legislation and the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators. Teachers who are found to be out of compliance can be subject to written reprimand or dismissal.

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

- Tacit approval by the teacher could encourage continued cruelty toward the student outside of the classroom where there is greater opportunity for escalation.
- The student may feel physically and emotionally unsafe in the classroom or school building which may negatively impact academic performance.
- Some students may be mistrustful of the teacher, thinking that they could be a future target of ridicule and cruelty if the teacher refuses to address the behavior.
- Parents and families may lose confidence in the effectiveness of Ms. H. as their children's teacher. Josh's family could choose to pursue legal action against the school district which may jeopardize the teacher's continued employment.

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

- If Ms. H is experiencing continued frustration with one or more students' behavior, it is the responsibility of the teacher to request support from a colleague, school counselor, social worker and/or building administrator.
- Should a building administrator observe tacit approval of unacceptable behavior by a teacher, the administrator would be obligated to provide immediate assistance to the victimized student, counseling for the students engaging in the ridiculing and further direction for the teacher.
- Ms. H might want to contact Josh's family and the families of the offending students to maintain an open line of communication.
- Develop/adopt district training for all teachers around creating a positive classroom climate that encourages respectful and tolerant behavior. Current legislation requires districts to engage teachers in these conversations to be in compliance.

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

- Facilitate discussions to learn what students are thinking, feeling and doing about teasing and bullying. Involve students in developing a code of conduct for acceptable behavior in and out of the classroom.
- Ms. H should determine why Josh is having difficulty following directions in her class. She could discuss his current behavior with previous teachers, as well as other subject area teachers, to gather additional information that might initiate some change in management strategies.
- Ms. H, together with support colleagues, might discuss, model, and role play conflict resolution strategies to allow all students to experience the role of bully, victim and witness.
- Establish a trusting relationship with students to encourage the sharing of experiences within the bullying arena. Use a concerned and supportive approach and carefully document the conversation.

IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 2 Cyberbullying

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. Some students at school have been joining this group and posting negative comments about 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 appearing online in which Jesse’s face has been Photoshopped® onto other inappropriate images.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 orientations.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

(D) Emotionally abuse students.

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

Context for Cyberbullying: " Cyberbullying" is defined as any act of bullying using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephones or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications according to Connecticut State Statute, Section 10-222d. Cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying in terms of form and technique. First, victims may not often know who the bully is or why they are being targeted. Second, the hurtful actions of a cyberbully can go viral resulting in a cyber-attack by many. Third, cyberbullying can be done from a physically distant location and finally, many adults lack the technological know-how to monitor online activity. (Cyberbullying Research Center www.cyberbullying.us)

Discussion Questions:

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

- The challenge for educators who are faced with an incident of cyberbullying is to recognize its potential to escalate and its impact on the victim, the bully, and the educational community.
- Mr. S has a professional responsibility to report knowledge of the Facebook group to his building principal.
- Legislation states that school districts must appoint a safe school environment specialist/team in the building to develop policies and procedures around cyberbullying while building and maintaining a positive school culture. Mr. S may be able to access additional support from team members to determine appropriate actions.
- Mr. S has not intervened, and the situation has escalated. Mr. S has a responsibility to protect Jesse from emotional attacks.

2. How could this situation become a violation of the law, the "Code" or other school/

- Current legislation states that any type of bullying that creates a hostile environment, infringes on the rights of students, and substantially disrupts the educational process is against the law.
- The "Code" also addresses bullying in several sections specific to the professional educator's responsibility to students. The code asks teachers to nurture a lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion or sexual orientation.
- Districts should have a safe school environment plan in place that outlines the policies and procedures for dealing with bullying situations.
- A possible lawsuit could be brought against the cyberbully for defamation of character or libel.

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

- If the situation continues unreported, the consequences for Jesse can be significant. Being constantly “e-connected” can leave some students susceptible to victimization as well as acting on mean intentions toward others.
- According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, targets of cyberbullying report feeling depressed, sad, angry, and frustrated. Feeling hurt both physically and mentally has also been reported and has, at times, led to suicide.
- Students report being afraid or embarrassed to come to school. Research also reports a link between cyber bullying and low self-esteem, family problems, academic difficulties, school violence and delinquent behavior.
- Teachers who are aware of cyberbullying and fail to act upon the knowledge could be perceived as complicit and/or liable for acts resulting in student harm.

4. What responses/actions will result in a more positive outcome and/or what proactive

- Mr. S should talk with Jesse to discuss her personal reactions and develop a plan for ongoing school support.
- Mr. S has an obligation do whatever it takes to prevent bullying legally, safely, and ethically in his classroom.
- Mr. S could teach his students how to respond to cyberbullying and discuss effective strategies for dealing with situations. He could have ongoing talks with students about the devastating effects of cyberbullying.
- Mr. S should be well informed about his school’s bullying policy. If there isn’t a plan for the school, he should ask how he can participate in developing one.
- Victims of bullying are often fearful or embarrassed to come forward. By building a trusting relationship with his students, Mr. S will encourage students to feel comfortable bringing forward instances of bullying.
- Contacting the parents of the student being bullied and letting them know exactly what is happening and how Mr. S is handling it will assure them that he is watching out for his students.

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

- One of the keys to effective classroom management is to build trusting rapport with students. Developing a climate of acceptance leads to students feeling connected.
- Mr. S should have a classroom management plan that addresses bullying, and he should send a copy of it to parents along with the district policy which is likely to be included in the student and family handbook.
- Post clear computer use policies in the computer lab or at each computer workstation to remind students of the rules of acceptable use.
- Mr. S can participate on the school’s bullying intervention committee recognizing that it is critical to maintain a school climate of respect and integrity for all within the school community and where violations result in clear consequences.
- Research supports the idea that the most preventative step that schools can take is to educate the school community about responsible internet use. Mr. S needs to engage his students in conversations to continually remind them that all forms of bullying are wrong and that anyone who engages in threatening or harassing behaviors will be subject to disciplinary actions that are clearly outlined.

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:

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?*

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.*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional educator, 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 educator, 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 pg. 31

Context for physical bullying: The myth that schoolyard bullying is a rite of passage is, fortunately, past. However, bullying continues to be pervasive in our society. Bullying can take many forms and has been categorized in many ways to include physical aggression, social alienation, verbal aggression, intimidation, and cyber bullying. Bullying can be direct or indirect, overt, or subtle and range in degree of severity. Those who witness bullying can be traumatized as well and can be afraid to report an incident and even participate in the bullying for fear of being the next victim. Adults who witness bullying must take on a responsible role to stop its occurrence. School personnel must take an active role in engaging the community in developing intervention programs to help reduce bullying and eventually eliminate it altogether.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Mr. L's lack of attention to the students' taunts could be perceived as supportive of the behavior.
- Since the female student has complained to Mr. L. about the students' behavior, Mr. L may be held responsible should she be harmed in any way.
- Mr. L may not be following district policy regarding the reporting and documentation of cruelty witnessed toward students.
- Are there clear procedures in place for students to report incidents of cruelty toward and from their peers?

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

- Current legislation states that any type of bullying that creates a hostile environment, infringes on the rights of students, and substantially disrupts the educational process is against the law.
- The "Code" also addresses bullying in several sections specific to the professional educator's responsibility to students. The code asks teachers to nurture a lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion or sexual orientation.
- Districts should have a safe school environment plan in place that outlines the policies and procedures for dealing with bullying situations.
- In a severe case, should the female student report physical harm, assault charges could be brought against the boys and possibly a report to supervisors, law officers and/or DCF about the teacher's neglect to intervene.

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

- Legal action could be taken against the boys, their families and school personnel for failing to document and report.
- Mr. L's failure to take the female student's complaint seriously may send the message that a reported concern from a female student does not warrant a reaction. Other female students could begin to view this as discriminatory.
- Should this female student be continuously victimized, she runs the risk of experiencing long term effects which may include but not be limited to low self-esteem, depression, poor academic performance, exclusion from social circles, fearfulness, and self-injurious behavior.

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

- Mr. L needs to share his concerns with the school climate specialist, school administrator, social worker, guidance counselor and/or other school personnel. He must seek assistance to deal with the situation immediately.
- Mr. L and all staff need to engage in district provided training around creating a positive classroom climate that encourages respectful and tolerant behavior. Current legislation requires districts to engage teachers in these conversations through the development of a safe school environment plan that outlines the policies and procedures for dealing with bullying situations.
- Create a bullying intervention plan that implements immediate disciplinary consequences for intimidation and aggressive behavior. The plan should include training for students, families, and school personnel to learn how to prevent, detect and react to bullying. The plan should be created by staff, students, and families.

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

- Involve students in establishing classroom rules of behavior. Students are more likely to follow the rules they helped to create.
- Establish consequences for failing to abide by the established rules of behavior.
- Hold regular classroom meetings so that students can clarify or change rules as necessary.
- Develop and/or use a curriculum that promotes positive assertiveness, communication, respect for others, camaraderie, and friendship within the classroom.
- Talk regularly with parents to inform them of how their child is behaving as well as their performance in school. Inform parents of any bullying occurring to or from their child and discuss how actions taken to help their child are or are not working

IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 4 Promoting a Safe, Productive Learning Environment

By mid-year, Andrew no longer wanted to go to school. He frequently complained to his mother that the teacher was “mean,” but Andrew’s mother thought her son meant that the teacher placed higher expectations on her students than they had been used to in the past. Getting ready for school in the morning, Andrew complained of stomach aches. He didn’t want to go to school. When Andrew’s mother met with his teacher, Ms. H, to discuss her concerns, Ms. H said that Andrew was inattentive and often refused to do the work assigned. She did not address Andrew’s mother’s primary concerns. Andrew began to share more details with his mother about Ms. H. “She picks on me and always seems mad. Yesterday she said to the class, ‘If you want to fail this quiz, just do what Andrew does. Nothing.’ I was so embarrassed! I try to pay attention, but I’d rather put my head down than look at her angry face.” Andrew shared that his teacher would frequently try to get his attention by slamming her hand on his desk, often startling him. Andrew’s mother requested a meeting with the principal immediately. A paraprofessional who works in the classroom has questioned Ms. H about the way she treats Andrew several times without satisfaction. The paraprofessional is going to the principal with her concerns.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 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.
- (G) Promote the right and freedom of students to learn, explore ideas, develop learning skills and acquire the necessary knowledge to achieve their full potential.

c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

(1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or 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:

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

Discussion Questions:

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

- Teachers can be involved in bullying situations in three ways: as observers, as perpetrators or as victims. This scenario speaks to the teacher as perpetrator. When a teacher may be verbally or physically disrespectful and/or abusive, it is often public and blatant, but rarely called bullying. This can reinforce the false notion that only children can be bullied.
- The absence of statistics on adult school “bullies” may be partly because this kind of negative behavior by a teacher, principal, coach, or any school personnel is complex to identify, address and rectify. It may be difficult to determine what crosses the line from basic discipline to regularly berating, intimidating, humiliating, or physically abusing a student so much that s/he is afraid to be in school.
- The teacher is contributing to the promotion of a negative classroom climate by modeling sarcasm, humiliation, and aggressive behavior. If students perceive this to be acceptable by their teacher, they are more likely to behave similarly with peers and other adults.

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

- If a bully is identified as the “grown-up in charge,” or the teacher, in this scenario, an investigation by the school district is likely to occur. Most school districts have “Codes of Conduct” in addition the CCT Code of Professional Responsibility featured here. The behavior described in this scenario is clearly in opposition to treating students with respect and dignity.
- In addition to Andrew reporting Ms. H’s behavior to his mother who has already met with the teacher once to share concerns, a paraprofessional in the classroom has questioned Ms. H several times without seeing a change in the way Ms. H seems to target Andrew with sarcasm, belittling remarks and behavior teetering on abusive. Ms. H’s dismissal of concerns expressed by Andrew’s mother and the paraprofessional is escalating this situation and could lead to disciplinary action.

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

- If, through an investigative process, Ms. H’s actions are determined to be harmful and abusive, Andrew’s family could choose to pursue legal action. Whether the investigation is internal and/or external, Ms. H could be suspended, dismissed from employment and/or have charges brought against her.
- Students in this situation are vulnerable and, most often, ill-equipped to explain and defend their position. If a student does respond to the teacher’s actions and vents his frustrations, this could be perceived as a threat toward the teacher and the student could

be suspended. As Andrew's mother is already concerned, this could escalate the situation and create divisiveness within the school community and the community-at-large.

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

- Teachers are faced with challenging situations each day and most teachers respond to those challenges in a way that promotes respect and consideration for all students. It is normal for new teachers to experience higher levels of stress during their first years in the classroom. Having a support system in place within the school setting as well as outside of the school setting can help to lessen the burdens teachers may feel.
- Ms. H needs to take Andrew's behavior and the concerns of his mother seriously. During the initial conference, Ms. H may have needed to listen more intently to the concerns Andrew's mother expressed about his disinterest/fear of coming to school each day and brainstorm solutions as to how they could work together to minimize Andrew's anxiety and engage him more actively in the school day. Andrew's physical and emotional response to school is impacting the family and Ms. H is not addressing this immediate need to problem solve. Additionally, Ms. H should be attentive to the paraprofessional's questions about the way she interacts with Andrew. Ms. H may have a specific rationale for some of her interactions with Andrew that would be helpful for the paraprofessional to understand. By dismissing her questions, the paraprofessional now views Ms. H's actions as harmful.

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

- Ms. H may need to seek professional advice to assist her in dealing with daily challenges more appropriately. With additional support, Ms. H can develop a stress reduction plan that identifies strategies for managing the challenges of the workday that do not include disrespectful, inappropriate, or abusive behavior toward her students.

Reference:

<http://www.apa.org/ed/schools/cpse/teacher-stress-brochure.pdf>

V. *Situations Involving Professionalism*

Scenario 1 *Professional Attire*

High School Scenario: Mr. B is an 11th grade science teacher who works in a suburban high school. Mr. B is a valued member of the science department and is well respected by his colleagues and students. Most days Mr. B arrives for work professionally dressed in dress shoes, slacks or khakis, a button-down collared shirt (tucked in) and, on most occasions, a tie. To raise funds to support extra-curricular clubs, the building principal implemented a Dress Down Friday policy where teachers could elect to pay a nominal fee to wear jeans. Throughout the fall and winter months, teachers abided by the Friday dress down policy, incorporating jeans into their dress down attire. As warmer weather arrived, Mr. B noticed that colleagues were beginning to become more casual in their dress down attire. On one warm spring day, Mr. B arrived to work on Dress Down Friday wearing cargo shorts, flip-flops and a graphic t-shirt which exposed several tattoos, including one with explicit language. When addressed by his administrator, Mr. B responded that he felt his attire was no less casual than his other colleagues.

Middle School Scenario: Ms. S recently graduated from college and began her first teaching job working in a small district. A young 8th Grade teacher, Ms. S strived to exemplify a dedicated professional. She arrived early to prepare her classroom, typically stayed beyond the school day and volunteered to supervise a variety of afterschool and community outreach activities. As colleagues interacted with Ms. S and watched her engage with her students, she quickly built a reputation as a dedicated and competent professional. Though Ms. S was cognizant of appropriate professional attire, she closely followed contemporary fashion trends. Ms. S would often wear V-neck tops complimented with a cardigan sweater, though often she would remove the cardigan while working with her students. As the fall season approached Ms. S began wearing leggings. On several occasions grade-level team members commented to Ms. S that her attire was sometimes revealing “too much on the top” or “too much on the bottom.” Ms. S simply responded to her team members that her outfit was fashionable and fit within the guidelines of the districts’ dress code policy.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 actions reflects directly upon the status and substance of the profession;
 - (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment;
- (2) ***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

Discussion Questions:

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

- Although in both scenarios the educators appear to be well-respected and competent classroom teachers, their professionalism is brought into question because of their attire. Both Mr. B and Ms. S are not outrageously dressed, but they do bring into question what professional dress attire in education is. Teachers need to be cognizant of their appearance and how it may reflect on the profession, their district and/or their school. What is professional attire? What does casual professional dress look like? Additionally, if the district has a published dress code for teachers that is being disregarded, both Mr. B and Ms. S may need to re-examine their decisions or face possible consequences.

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

- It is important for educators to be aware that “Dress Code Policies” are typically a locally controlled decision, established by Human Resources and the Board of Education. Due to local control, dress code policies fluctuate greatly across the state, and it is the responsibility of district leadership and individual educators to make themselves aware of their own policy details.
- Some educators may argue that school dress code policies violate their ability to express themselves freely and, as such, violate their first amendment rights. When teachers have challenged dress code policies through the courts, most often the courts have sided with the district’s ability to create a professional dress code policy if it does not create a discriminatory effect. Two cases to reference would be: *East Hartford Ed. Assoc. v. Bd. of Education*, 562 F.2d 838 (Connecticut 2nd Circuit Court, 1977) and; *Mt. Healthy City School District Board of Education v. Doyle*, 429 U.S. 274 (United States Supreme Court, 1977)
- When assessing a particular dress code, courts will generally focus on two issues. First, the courts must find that the provisions of the code promote legitimate educational interests. Such educational interests include the need to avoid disruption of the educational process, student safety, or maintenance of the physical plant.
(From: *A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law*, Thomas B. Mooney)

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

- Although Mr. B is clearly an established educator in his building, he must consider what image his attire sends towards the administration, his colleagues, and his students. Often, teachers use their attire to help maintain clear professional boundaries with students, something a graphic t-shirt may diminish.
- What is the nature of Mr. B’s tattoos? Is it acceptable to reveal a tattoo with explicit

language? Do they create an unwarranted and/or distracting discussion among the students? Could they be perceived as unprofessional by students, staff and/or community members within the building?

- While Ms. S' clothing options may be fashionable, they may be inappropriate for working with adolescents and young teens. If the clothing is of a revealing nature, it could potentially make her students feel uncomfortable and/or bring her professional judgment into question.

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

- District leadership and educators should have regular and open conversations regarding the expectations of professional attire and how it relates to their district's dress code policy.
- Teachers, new and veteran should take the time to familiarize themselves with the CT Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators and their district's and/or building's dress code policies.
- Both Mr. B and Ms. S may need to examine how others view their attire. While he/she may feel it is professionally appropriate, both must take the time to reflect on whether their attire presents the professional image they have worked hard to establish.

References:

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Introduction to Culturally Competent and Culturally Responsive Teaching Context for Discussing Bias

Often people interpret and react to situations based on assumptions about others. We all hold some form of bias due to socialization and cultural stereotypes that may be positive and manifest as unearned advantages, or negative which manifest as unearned disadvantages.

According to the Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. It is the opposite of explicit bias, which refers to attitudes or beliefs that we fully admit to in our discussions and actions, and intentionally drawn on and act on. Bias--implicit and explicit--leads to unearned advantages and unearned disadvantages, which can produce barriers to student performance, engagement, and behavior. These beliefs and attitudes impact how we relate to students and families. Unchecked, our biases can influence and determine whom we humanize and value. Studies have revealed that bias can impact how teachers view students, perceive their behavior, and respond to student behavior. Biased perceptions of students and their actions result in racial disparities in student discipline, particularly for discretionary, nonviolent school policy offenses. Bias can have a powerfully negative impact on teacher expectations, educational access and opportunities, academic achievement, and discipline referrals.

Cultural competence is understanding and having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. Developing cultural competence helps us understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. It supports respectful, trusting relationships.

Cultural responsiveness is the purposeful action taken to allow all students to share and take pride in their unique differences. Culturally responsive teaching means that the teacher is invested in and committed to making meaningful connections between what students learn in school and their cultures, languages, and life experiences. To do this requires educators to take the time to learn about each student and family. Authentic, respectful connections between students and help students understand the relevance between what they learn in school and their lives beyond school.

An important part of being culturally responsive is not only the ability to build trusting relationships with all students and their families, but also affirming them and validating their experiences. That means as culturally responsive educators we educate ourselves about all forms of bias – how it operates and what we can do to interrupt it wherever and whenever it manifests. Being culturally responsive encourages students to feel a sense of belonging and helps to create safe spaces where all children feel seen, valued, respected, and heard by teachers with high regard and expectations for them.

In this new section, we will explore several scenarios involving cultural competence and bias. In each situation, the outcome of the incident depends upon the judgment of the teacher which can be influenced by implicit and/or explicit bias. Negative outcomes are often the result of poor judgment on the behalf of teachers.

These scenarios are intended to offer an opportunity for self-reflection and examination of your own thoughts and beliefs, as you determine what the most appropriate course of action should be. Some of these scenarios may touch on sensitive areas. This is an opportunity to share your thoughts in a respectful and professional manner. We should all be committed to lifelong learning—especially to enhance the learning experiences of our students.

VI Situations Involving Culturally Competent Teaching and Behavior (2021)

Scenario 1

Dealing Justly and Fairly with Students

Mr. G is a 9th-grade math teacher who has a generally good relationship with his students. He runs a tight ship and has a zero-tolerance rule for policy violations. A male student, D came to class wearing a hat. Students are not allowed to wear hats in his class. Mr. G gave him a disapproving look and told him, "Take off the hat!" D just lowered his head and said in a very soft but polite voice, "I don't want to." Mr. G responded in a raised voice, "You know what the rule is in this class! Take off that hat!" By now all the students were looking at D to see what was going on. Some boys in the back of the class were whispering and laughing. D was generally a cooperative and respectful student. He again said but in a slightly louder voice, "Mr. G, please, I don't want to." Mr. G was now furious and told D if the hat didn't come off, he was going to the principal's office. D pleaded with Mr. G, "Please, I don't want to take off my hat. Can't I just keep on for today? You let M keep her hat on last week. Mr. G grew angrier and wrote him up for insubordination and sent him to the office.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 orientations.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

- (D) Emotionally abuse students.

Discussion Questions:

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

- The hat rule is Mr. G's classroom rule, which he does not enforce fairly or consistently since a female student in the same class was allowed to keep her hat on the week before.
- The fact that D is generally cooperative begs the question, why is he refusing to remove his hat? Mr. G has not asked D why he does not want to remove his hat.
- Mr. G created and escalated the issue. This resulted in lost instructional time for all students, particularly D, and likely damaged any relationship he might have had with D.
- Mr. G may have allowed his emotions and need for control to cause him to take such a stand.
- Besides losing instructional time, Mr. G escalated the issue by engaging in a verbal altercation with D in front of the entire class. This may have embarrassed D in front of his classmates.
- Mr. G didn't recognize, respect, or uphold the dignity and worth of D and deal justly and considerately with him.
- The way a teacher enters the classroom and conducts it establishes a culture and climate that can be humanizing or oppressive for some or all the students in the class.

Educator and psychologist Haim Ginnott wrote: "I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized."

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

- D's reason for refusing to remove his hat was never probed or considered by Mr. G. Had he asked why D didn't want to remove his hat, he would have learned that D's father had given him a bad haircut and he was embarrassed. Mr. G may have implicit biases that caused him to behave differently toward D than he did toward M. We don't know the name or the race of the student. Do you think it would matter if the student was a White male? Would he have been referred for discipline? A Black or Hispanic/Latino male? *National and Connecticut discipline data tell us that Black and Hispanic/Latino students are punished more often and more harshly than their White peers for the same offense. Educational research confirms that Black and Hispanic/Latino students do not misbehave more than their White peers—so what do you think accounts for irrefutable racial disparities in student discipline sanctions?*
- Mr. G is not "[recognizing], respect[ing] and uphold[ing] the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal[ing] justly and considerately with all students—regardless of race, ethnicity, color, gender." If the facts are that Mr. G let a M keep her hat on, then some students are perceived by their teacher to be less

equal--why? Gender? Race? Bias? Racism? D may have felt embarrassed in front of his classmates. Mr. G's rule does not allow for any digression.

- Mr. G's professional judgment may be in question because he confronted D in front of the whole class and allowed the incident to escalate, losing valuable class time doing so.
- Mr. G may have implicit biases that influenced how he exercised his discretion and that was unfair and detrimental to the student's self-worth and dignity.

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

- Sending D to the principal's office worsened the situation. Black or Hispanic/Latino students are suspended and expelled three times more often than white students. Sending D to the office may result in suspension and a loss of trust on D's part -- which was caused by Mr. G's inconsistently enforcing his own rule. As a result, D may be subjected to more scrutiny by Mr. G who has demonstrated bias against him.
 - *Research: National and state data is irrefutable that Black children do not misbehave more than White children but are universally punished more often, and with harsher sanctions for the same offense resulting in more classroom and school pushout, and increased likelihood of contact with police and/or the judicial system.*
 - *For students, unfair and/or racially disparate discipline can be traumatizing. Being pushed out of class and school by educators and administrators who are punitive rather than equitable and humane in their discipline practices, makes classrooms and schools unwelcoming, uncaring, unsafe spaces. Unfair discipline practices may result in student disengagement from school which can increase the likelihood that they will not return to school.*
- When teachers do not interact respectfully with all students, it results in a loss of trust and respect necessary to form a connection between the teacher and students.

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

- Mr. G could have taken D aside, away from the attention of the entire class, and asked him why he didn't want to take his hat off. If he had, he would have learned that D's father gave him a bad haircut and he felt self-conscious and afraid the other students would make fun of him. But neither Mr. G nor the principal asked him why he had a hat on. He did not volunteer the information about the haircut because he didn't think the reason mattered to either of them since they had already labeled him insubordinate.
- Mr. G could focus on seeing all students as human beings, as children, and adolescents who are trying to find their way and their place in a world that does not always give them grace to do it. He can spend some time getting to know his students to form a trusting, caring, and respectful relationship with them. If he had compassion for his students, and connection to all his students -- particularly D -- Mr. G may have had a different attitude about and approach to the situation.
- Mr. G should examine his own personal attitudes and beliefs. Is he fairly implementing his no hat policy? Is his policy punitive? Is the goal strict compliance? Research shows that given the racial disparities in school discipline, zero tolerance policies most often negatively impact Black and Brown students and have contributed greatly to the

expansion and maintenance of a school to prison pipeline for Black and Brown students.

- Please note: many schools adopt zero-tolerance policies for a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to vaping or drug possessions. These policies are often intended to protect the safety and well-being of students. This scenario is not intended to challenge zero-tolerance policies, but to call attention to how teachers fairly implement discipline policies in their classrooms.

5. *What are some classroom management strategies a teacher could employ to address a situation such as this? How can teachers, maintain appropriate standards of behavior, while being culturally responsive to their individual students?*

- Mr. G could work with students to develop a fair system of classroom rules that all students agree with. Asking students to participate is a good way to give students' voice. Creating rules with your students helps establish a learning environment built on mutual respect and affirmation (Bicard, 2000).
- Classroom management strategies should be simple, compassionate, and caring, not punitive. They should promote a classroom that is inclusive, welcoming, and mentally, physically, intellectually, racially, linguistically, and culturally safe.
- In classrooms where students are engaged, stimulated, valued, and respected, behavior issues are less likely.
- Does Mr. G view his students with a deficit and/or punitive lens? Teachers should be willing to engage in self-reflection about their practice, and the culture and climate they establish.
- As classrooms become more diverse, teachers must humanize students, prioritizing authentic connections that honor and respect students from various cultures and backgrounds. Teachers need to be affirming and culturally responsive to all students.
- Culturally responsive classroom management means building good teacher-student relationships that respect all students' backgrounds.
- Mr. G could meet students at the door and welcome them as they enter the classroom. He could then privately address the hat issue with D as he entered the classroom. This would have spared D the embarrassment of being called out in front of the whole class. D would have had an opportunity to explain why he didn't want to take off his hat.
- Setting high expectations for behavior is good practice, but it is also important to adopt an instructional approach to discipline in a way that is fair and that preserves students' dignity.
- Try seeing things from the student's point of view. Consider how you would respond if you were in the same position. Ask yourself, what factors might contribute to how a student is acting in a particular setting or situation? Using an approach such as this can help to de-escalate a situation and help teachers build better relationships with students.

VI Situations Involving Culturally Competent Teaching and Behavior (2021)

Scenario 2

The Importance of Names

Ms. P teaches grade 6. She was taking attendance at the start of the day when a new student came into the classroom. Ms. P showed the young girl where to place her coat and belongings and instructed her to take a seat. She then asked the girl her name. The young girl replied in a soft voice, Chardonnay. The teacher looked bewildered and asked the girl to repeat her name. Thinking the teacher didn't hear her the first time, the student repeated her name a little louder "My name is Chardonnay." The teacher looked up and began to laugh. She then said, offhandedly and in disbelief, "like the wine? I know what your parent must have been doing!" All the students in the classroom also laughed. Chardonnay blushed, looked down at the floor, and moved quietly to her seat.

Discussion Questions:

- 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?*

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 orientations.

(c) Responsibility to the Profession:

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

(D) Emotionally abuse students.

Context for Scenario 2: Names have meaning. Our names tell a unique story about who we are and where we come from. Correctly pronouncing, spelling, and respecting a student's name affirms the student's identity. When teachers mispronounce a student's name or make fun of it, it can have a lasting impact on the student's success, both within and outside the classroom. Culturally responsive educators know how important it is to respect their students' diverse cultures which includes respecting their names. Students who come from different backgrounds may have names that are not common.

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Discussion Questions:

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

- An adult who is a teacher has embarrassed a child/student with behavior that signals to the student and the other children in the class that there is something funny or odd about the student's name.
- The teacher has not created a safe or respectful space for this student.
- Ms. P did not uphold the dignity or worth of Chardonnay when she openly disparaged her name. Additionally, the teacher's behavior signaled to the students in the classroom that it is permissible to ridicule an aspect of a person—like their name.
- This is her first impression of her new school, teacher, and classmates. Chardonnay was not welcomed or made to feel like this teacher's class will be a place where she will be valued, treated with respect, and appreciated for who she is. The teacher has not created a classroom climate for Chardonnay that sets her up for a positive school year. The teacher has not created a classroom climate that encourages other students to be accepting and welcoming to new students, or students who have names or attributes that may be different from all the other students in the class. A result might be that the other students tease or bully Chardonnay about her name and other things that might make her seem different from them. The effect would be that Chardonnay is reluctant to attend school because no one has made any effort to foster a positive connection with her. She may attend school but become shy and withdrawn for fear of other adults and children making fun of her.
- Teacher's actions and words have consequences. The consequences can be long-lasting for this student. As an adolescent in middle school, students are trying to figure out who they are, and understand their place in the world. Trusting, affirming, respectful teacher-student relationships support a student's ability to feel safe, to explore and exist in the world in a way that fuels their genius and their dreams.

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

- Ms. P has failed to recognize, respect, and uphold the dignity and worth of Chardonnay as an individual human being and has not treated her considerately. As a result, the student is left feeling embarrassed and unwelcome.
- Ms. P's comments may reflect a racial bias or stereotype. Judging a student based on race, ethnic origin, or social class is a violation of the code of professional responsibility.
- The teachers' professional judgment was poor. Her comment was hurtful and

disrespectful to the student.

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

- Ms. P has failed to establish a good, trusting relationship with Chardonnay. As a result, it may be impossible to build a positive relationship with the student. A good teacher-student relationship starts with the student's name. Culturally responsive educators know how important it is to respect their students' diverse cultures which includes respecting their names. Students who come from different backgrounds may have names that are not common. Reacting to a name as Ms. P did establishes a culture and climate that is dehumanizing and oppressive for some or all the students in the class.
- Parents may perceive Ms. P as unfit to teach 6th graders.
- Her principal may write her up, which will go into her personnel records. If she has a pattern of saying or doing inappropriate things, her career may be in jeopardy. She could lose her job, be suspended without pay, and depending on the degree of her behavior, she could lose her certification.
- While students may laugh in the moment, they may also lose respect for their teacher. If Ms. P makes such comments on a regular basis, students may fear that they may be the subject of one of her comments. The teacher-student relationship may erode over time and Ms. P may face challenges managing her class.
- The school community may be concerned about their children having Ms. P as a teacher. Parents may request that their child not be placed in Ms. P's class.

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

- Ms. P could have said nothing about the student's name. Instead, she could have said, "Chardonnay that is a pretty name." She should have made Chardonnay feel welcome and demonstrated respect for the student and her name.
- Her very public disparagement of her student as reflected in her laughter and her question "like the wine?" can have a lasting negative impact on Chardonnay and make any positive teacher-student relationship impossible because Ms. P did not make Chardonnay feel that the classroom is a safe space for all children.
- Ms. P should apologize to Chardonnay in front of the class, stating that she provided a very poor example of how to greet and welcome a new student. She needs to let them know that it was inappropriate for her to make such a comment, and she can demonstrate that by asking Chardonnay if they can begin again. Then she should model what would have been a better way to greet and invite Chardonnay into the class.

VI Situations Involving Culturally Competent Teaching and Behavior (2021)

Scenario 3

Recognizing and Respecting the Cultural Backgrounds of All Students

Ms. R is a 4th-grade teacher. It is early December, and Ms. R has brought in books about Christmas and put up some holiday decorations in her classroom for the season. One poster showed different holiday celebrations around the world. Most of the other decorations in the classroom are Christmas-related. She also created several worksheets with "fun" Christmas themes. She loves to tell her students how much she loves Christmas and talks about her own family traditions. In her class, there are four students from Vietnam, one Russian student, eleven African American students, one student from Ethiopia, and two from India.

Discussion Questions:

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?*

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 orientations.

(c) Responsibility to the Profession:

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

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

(e) Responsibility to the Community:

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

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

Context for Scenario 3: “There’s evidence that when children have a strong, positive racial identity, they’re more academically and socially successful,” says Ali Michael, director of K–12 Consulting and Professional Development at the Center for the Study of Race & Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Raising Race Questions: Whiteness, Inquiry and Education*.

Discussion Questions:

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

- Although Ms. R hung up a single poster about different holidays, she has not invited her students to share their own family traditions. Instead, she has emphasized the importance of her traditions. Rather than take the time to learn about and affirm the holiday traditions of all of her students she chose to center and promote her own Christmas stories. In our society, it’s common for people either to hold cultural biases or to fail to acknowledge the differences in cultures around us. While she may love her own traditions and want to share them with her students, she has not recognized, made space for, or affirmed the experiences and traditions of her students.
- Because Ms. R’s lessons were not inclusive and reflective of the experiences, traditions, and faiths of her students and families, students from different cultures may feel unseen, uncomfortable, and unsafe. Some students may feel pressured to disavow themselves of their cultural beliefs and norms to assimilate into the majority culture. In this situation, students may feel that the clear message is that Christmas is the norm. This may reinforce societal standards, practices, and expectations that create racial stress and trauma and can interfere with their emotional and cognitive development resulting in school failure (Sheets, 1999). Relating competence in an urban classroom to ethnic identity development in R. Sheets (Ed.), *Racial and ethnic identity in school practices: Aspects of human development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ms. R is missing a valuable opportunity to ask questions and be open to hearing stories from her students about their own holiday traditions. This is a perfect opportunity for students to teach one another something, in turn! You cannot become culturally competent if you don't learn about other cultures or about one another.

ASK PARTICIPANTS: This was obviously a diverse class of students, but would the concerns be different if the students were all white?

- Being culturally responsive does not only apply to students who come from diverse backgrounds. Every student comes with their own cultural background. While students and the teacher may share similar holiday traditions, how much richer would the discussions be if all students had the chance to share their own family traditions and cultures. Students would feel that they were valued, and their own stories were appreciated. It would be an opportunity to teach students that everyone is unique in their own way.

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

- By failing to recognize and embrace the different cultural traditions of her students, Ms. R is not recognizing, respecting, or upholding the dignity and worth of each individual student.
- Ms. R’s behavior may appear that she is not nurturing in her students’ lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientations.
- Her actions ignore the various cultures of her students. While she may think she is recognizing them with the one poster in the room, she has not provided them with opportunities to share their own cultural traditions. She is not providing an equal educational opportunity to her students.
- Inviting students to share their own stories, incorporating the various cultures into her lessons would enrich her lessons and provide all her students with a broader sense of one another and the world we live in.

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

- Her students’ families may feel that their family's religious and/or cultural customs and beliefs are not welcomed or respected, especially when students bring home the Christmas-themed worksheets. The Christmas-themed worksheets may create an unequal opportunity for students because the content may be unfamiliar to them.
- Ms. R might be perceived as biased and culturally unaware. It could also reflect negatively on the school, creating the wrong impression.
- Students may be less engaged in the lessons because they do not have prior experiences to draw upon.
- The class may feel that Ms. R does not respect their diverse backgrounds. This can lead to a lack of trust because students and families may interpret her actions as disrespectful and indifferent to their families’ heritage. They may feel that she does not value their cultures and are less likely to feel safe in her classroom.

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

- Ms. R should have created classroom space and lessons which were inclusive and reflective of the experiences and faiths of her students and families.
- The practice of co-creating with students hears and honors their experiences, ideas, and insights. It recognizes and respects students as assets.

In the book, Dreamkeepers, author and researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings identifies and discusses the three dimensions of culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teachers are aware and thoughtful about how they show up in spaces; demonstrate and strive for connectedness with students and families; and cultivate a community of learners based on the premise that knowledge should be two-way sharing that values diversity and difference by taking them into account. Children process content more effectively when their cultures and

languages have places in the curriculum. Ms. R should have integrated the various traditions from all the diverse cultures in her classroom.

- Ms. R should celebrate the rich cultures in her class. She needs to develop a learning environment that is relevant to and reflective of her students' social, cultural, and linguistic experiences. The environment should acknowledge, recognize, and celebrate all of her students regardless of their background. She could have asked her students to share their backgrounds by creating their own posters or projects reflecting their heritage and customs. She could invite families to share their traditions with the entire class.
- Being able to recognize cultural differences not only helps to form a safe and comfortable environment for open communication between the teacher and, her students and their families, but it will also help her to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom to ensure every student learns to their fullest potential.

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

(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;
- (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;
- (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) Strive to develop within students fundamental critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques;
- (I) Remain steadfast in guaranteeing equal opportunity for quality education for all children, and not unlawfully discriminate; and
- (J) 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.

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

(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;
- (B) Uphold the professional educator's right to teach effectively;
- (C) Uphold the principle of academic freedom;
- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment;
- (E) Assume responsibility for his or her professional development;
- (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; and
- (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.

(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;
- (B) Misrepresent his, her or another's professional qualifications or competencies; or
- (C) Engage in any misconduct which would impair his or her ability to teach.

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

(1) The professional teacher, 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 children.

(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; or
- (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.

(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 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.

(f) CODE REVISION

Although there is an updated Code within the revised Common Core of Teaching 2010, the Code featured in this document is the code currently within state regulations section 10-145d-400a.

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.

Charlene Russell Tucker
Commissioner of Education

Shuana Tucker, Ph. D., Chief Talent Officer,

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