

Connecticut State Department of Education
Teacher Education and Mentoring Program

Ethical and Professional Dilemmas for
Educators

**Participant's
Workbook
Module 5**

Understanding the Code
of Professional Responsibility



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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.

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 1

Electronic Communications with Students

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

Use this page to record thoughts and ideas shared during facilitated conversations.

- 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?*

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 2 *Transporting Students*

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

Use this page to record thoughts and ideas shared during the facilitated conversations.

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?*

I. Situations Involving Students

Scenario 3 *Contact with Students*

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

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:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

II. *Situations Involving Professional Ethics*

Scenario 1 *Use of Social Networks*

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

The colleague notified the principal of this information.

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

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

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

II. *Situations Involving Professional Ethics*

Scenario 2 *DUI Convictions*

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

II. Situations Involving Professional Ethics

Scenario 3

Teacher Documentation

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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 teaching, shall:*

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

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:

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

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

(C) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 1

Teacher Public Behavior

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 2

Student Confidentiality

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

- (1) The professional teacher in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall:**
- (J) Maintain the confidentiality of all information concerning students obtained in the proper course of the educational process, and dispense such information only when prescribed or directed by federal or state law or professional practice.*

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

- (1) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the profession of teaching, shall:**
- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her actions reflect directly upon the status and substance of the profession.*
- (D) Strive to exercise the highest level of professional judgment.*

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- (2) The professional teacher, in full recognition of his or her obligation to the student, shall not:**
- (D) Engage in any misconduct which would put students at risk.*

III. Situations Involving Community and Family

Scenario 3

Teacher Using Position for Personal Gain

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(d) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

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

(A) Exploit the educational institution for personal gain.

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

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. Students at the school have been joining this group and posting various types of negative comments regarding Jesse. Recently, cell phone pictures have been taken and posted of Jesse’s buttocks while she was walking in the hall. Three weeks later, he notices other pictures are beginning to appear in which Jesse’s face has been Photoshopped® onto other inappropriate images.

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT*

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

- (D) *Emotionally abuse students*

IV. Situations Involving Bullying

Scenario 3

Physical Bullying

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

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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

(c) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION:

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

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

UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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

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

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:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

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:

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

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

(C) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION

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

- (A) Conduct himself or herself as a professional realizing that his or her 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

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 (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:

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

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

(b) RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STUDENT:

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

- (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.

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.

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.

Discussion Questions:

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

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

(b) Responsibility to the Student:

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

- (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.

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:

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

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

(b) Responsibility to the Student:

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

(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.

Final Reflection

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

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

Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies

Section 10-145d-400a

(a) PREAMBLE

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

The Code adheres to the fundamental belief that the student is the foremost reason for the existence of the profession.

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professionalism. Therefore, the educator accepts both the public trust and the responsibilities to practice the profession according to the highest possible degree of ethical conduct and standards. Such responsibilities include the commitment to the students, the profession, the community and the family. Consistent with applicable law, the Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators shall serve as a basis for decisions on issues pertaining to certification and employment. The Code shall apply to all educators holding, applying or completing preparation for a certificate, authorization or permit or other credential from the State Board of Education. For the purposes of this section, "educator" includes superintendents, administrators, teachers, special services professionals, coaches, substitute teachers and

(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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