

Text of Proposed Amendments to 19 TAC

Chapter 247. Educators' Code of Ethics

§247.1. Purpose and Scope; Definitions.

- (a) In compliance with the Texas Education Code, §21.041(b)(8), the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) adopts an Educators' Code of Ethics as set forth in §247.2 of this title (relating to Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators). The SBEC may amend the ethics code in the same manner as any other formal rule.
- (b) The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty and good moral character. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community. This chapter shall apply to educators and candidates for certification.
- (c) The SBEC is solely responsible for enforcing the Educators' Code of Ethics for purposes related to certification disciplinary proceedings. The Educators' Code of Ethics is enforced through the disciplinary procedure set forth in Chapter 249 of this title (relating to Disciplinary Proceedings, Sanctions, and Contested Cases) pursuant to the purposes stated therein.
- (d) As provided in §249.5 of this title (relating to Purpose : Policy Governing Disciplinary Proceedings), the primary goals the SBEC seeks to achieve in educator disciplinary matters are:
 - (1) to protect the safety and welfare of Texas schoolchildren and school personnel;
 - (2) to ensure educators and applicants are morally fit and worthy to instruct or to supervise the youth of the state; and
 - (3) to fairly and efficiently resolve educator disciplinary proceedings at the least expense possible to the parties and the state.
- (e) The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.
 - (1) Abuse--Includes the following acts or omissions:
 - (A) mental or emotional injury to a student or minor that results in an observable and material impairment in the student's or minor's development, learning, or psychological functioning;
 - (B) causing or permitting a student or minor to be in a situation in which the student or minor sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the student's or minor's development, learning, or psychological functioning;
 - (C) physical injury that results in substantial harm to a student or minor, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the student or minor, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline; or
 - (D) sexual conduct harmful to a student's or minor's mental, emotional, or physical welfare.
 - (2) Applicant--A party seeking issuance, renewal, or reinstatement of a certificate from the Texas Education Agency staff or the State Board for Educator Certification.
 - (3) Code of Ethics--The Educators' Code of Ethics codified in this chapter.

- (4) Complaint--A written statement submitted to the Texas Education Agency staff that contains essential facts alleging improper conduct by an educator, applicant, or examinee, the complainant's verifiable contact information, including full name, complete address, and phone number, which provides grounds for sanctions.
- (5) Contested case--A proceeding under this chapter in which the legal rights, duties, and privileges related to a party's educator certificate are to be determined by the State Board for Educator Certification and/or the State Office of Administrative Hearings commencing when a petition is properly served under this chapter.
- (6) Disciplinary proceedings--Any matter arising under this chapter or Chapter 249 of this title (relating to Disciplinary Proceedings, Sanctions, and Contested Cases) that results in a final order or finding issued by the Texas Education Agency staff, the State Office of Administrative Hearings, or the State Board for Educator Certification relating to the legal rights, duties, privileges, and status of a party's educator certificate.
- (7) Educator--A person who is required to hold a certificate issued under the Texas Education Code, Chapter 21, Subchapter B.
- (8) Endanger--Exposure of a student or minor to unjustified risk of injury or to injury that jeopardizes the physical health or safety of the student or minor without regard to whether there has been an actual injury to the student or minor.
- (9) Good moral character--The virtues of a person as evidenced by patterns of personal, academic, and occupational behaviors that, in the judgment of the State Board for Educator Certification, indicate honesty, accountability, trustworthiness, reliability, and integrity. Lack of good moral character may be evidenced by the commission of crimes relating directly to the duties and responsibilities of the education profession as described in §249.16(b) of this title (relating to Eligibility of Persons with Criminal History [Convictions] for a Certificate under Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53 , and Texas Education Code, Chapter 21), or by the commission of acts involving moral turpitude, but conduct that evidences a lack of good moral character is not necessarily limited to such crimes or acts.
- (10) Intentionally--An educator acts intentionally, or with intent, with respect to the nature of his or her conduct or to a result of his or her conduct when it is his or her conscious objective or desire to engage in the conduct or cause the result.
- (11) Knowingly--An educator acts knowingly, or with knowledge, with respect to the nature of his or her conduct or to circumstances surrounding his or her conduct when he or she is aware of the nature of the conduct or that the circumstances exist. A person acts knowingly, or with knowledge, with respect to a result of his or her conduct when he or she is aware that the conduct is reasonably certain to cause the result.
- (12) Minor--A person under 18 years of age.
- (13) Moral turpitude--Improper conduct, including, but not limited to, the following: dishonesty; fraud; deceit; theft; misrepresentation; deliberate violence; base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or to gratify the sexual desire of the actor; drug or alcohol related offenses as described in §249.16(b) of this title (relating to Eligibility of Persons with Criminal History [Convictions] for a Certificate under Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53 , and Texas Education Code, Chapter 21); or acts constituting abuse or neglect under the Texas Family Code, §261.001.
- (14) Neglect--The placing or leaving of a student or minor in a situation where the student or minor would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm.
- (15) Recklessly--An educator acts recklessly, or is reckless, with respect to circumstances surrounding his or her conduct or the results of his or her conduct when he or she is aware of but consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that the circumstances exist or the result will occur.
- (16) Sanction--A disciplinary action by the State Board for Educator Certification, including a restriction, reprimand, suspension, revocation of a certificate, or a surrender in lieu of disciplinary action.

- (17) State Board for Educator Certification--The State Board for Educator Certification acting through its voting members in a decision-making capacity.
- (18) State Board for Educator Certification member(s)--One or more of the members of the State Board for Educator Certification, appointed and qualified under the Texas Education Code, §21.033.
- (19) Student--A person enrolled in a primary or secondary school, whether public, private, or charter, regardless of the person's age, or a person 18 years of age or younger who is eligible to be enrolled in a primary or secondary school, whether public, private, or charter.
- (20) Texas Education Agency staff--Staff of the Texas Education Agency assigned by the commissioner of education to perform the State Board for Educator Certification's administrative functions and services.
- (21) Worthy to instruct or to supervise the youth of this state--Presence of those moral, mental, and psychological qualities that are required to enable an educator to render the service essential to the accomplishment of the goals and mission of the State Board for Educator Certification policy and this chapter.

§247.2. Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.

Enforceable Standards.

- (1) Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices and Performance.
 - (A) Standard 1.1. The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.
 - (B) Standard 1.2. The educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.
 - (C) Standard 1.3. The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.
 - (D) Standard 1.4. The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.
 - (E) Standard 1.5. The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents of students, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.
 - (F) Standard 1.6. The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.
 - (G) Standard 1.7. The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other state and federal laws.
 - (H) Standard 1.8. The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.
 - (I) Standard 1.9. The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.
 - (J) Standard 1.10. The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.
 - (K) Standard 1.11. The educator shall not intentionally or knowingly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.

- (L) Standard 1.12. The educator shall refrain from the illegal use or distribution of controlled substances and/or abuse of prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.
 - (M) Standard 1.13. The educator shall not be under the influence of alcohol or consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.
 - (N) Standard 1.14. The educator shall not assist another educator, school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job as an educator or in a school, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, if the educator knows or has probable cause to believe that such person engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law.
- (2) Ethical Conduct Toward Professional Colleagues.
- (A) Standard 2.1. The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
 - (B) Standard 2.2. The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.
 - (C) Standard 2.3. The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.
 - (D) Standard 2.4. The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.
 - (E) Standard 2.5. The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.
 - (F) Standard 2.6. The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.
 - (G) Standard 2.7. The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC or who provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding under this chapter.
- (3) Ethical Conduct Toward Students.
- (A) Standard 3.1. The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
 - (B) Standard 3.2. The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.
 - (C) Standard 3.3. The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent facts regarding a student.
 - (D) Standard 3.4. The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.
 - (E) Standard 3.5. The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.
 - (F) Standard 3.6. The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.
 - (G) Standard 3.7. The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or

guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

- (H) Standard 3.8. The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.
- (I) Standard 3.9. The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
 - (ii) the subject matter of the communication;
 - (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
 - (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
 - (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
 - (vi) whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.