

# Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators

## Unit Objectives:

- Define the terms “ethics” and “ethics code” and “moral turpitude”
- Contrast a “job or occupation” with a “profession”
- Describe the difference between legal behavior and ethical behavior
- Locate the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct pertaining to all Georgia teachers
- Complete the Educator Ethics Knowledge Quiz questions
- Apply the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators using the provided case scenarios describing ethical dilemmas.

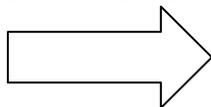
## Overview of Activities

- First, read the Handout “Ethical Decision Making for Teachers”
- Second, study the *Code of Ethics for Educators* on the website of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) located at <http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf>
- Third, read the other documents relating to ethics from the GAPSC web page (Disciplinary Action, The Hearing Process, Moral Turpitude and Frequently Asked Questions). These can be found at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) at the Ethics tab at the top of the web page.
- Fourth, Complete the Educator Ethics Knowledge Quiz at the following link:  
<http://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/EthicsQuestionnaire/frmEthicsQuestionnaire.aspx>

Which questions did you miss? (You will not be graded by the number of questions that you missed, so please be honest.)

- Finally, proceed to the Case Studies and choose **one**. **Then:**
  1. Locate the relevant section of the Georgia Code that applies to the suspected violation. List that section and write (copy) the wording of the section. (Use this as the framework for evaluating the situation.)
  2. Describe the problem in one paragraph.
  3. Decide if ethical violations have been committed in the case study that you selected. Explain your decision and thought process in one paragraph of at least 8 sentences.

How to Submit Your Assignment: **Post your answers in the drop box. There is a rubric located at the end of this module.**



**Let's begin and complete the module step by step:**

Module developed by Janet Burns, Ph.D. Georgia State University, updated 2013

## Activity 1 – Read the following:

### Ethical Decision Making for Teachers

Prepared by J. Burns, Ph.D.

#### Why Study Ethics Now?

“Ethics” refers to *a set of guidelines that provide directions for conduct*. The study of ethics has grown drastically in recent years as our society continues to change.

Our culture has become more mobile and complex, and in many communities we have become a “nation of strangers.” The availability of trusted advisors has diminished. It is increasingly difficult to find guideposts in a fast-changing world, yet moral guidance seems to be needed most during confusing times. As with other professions, ethical guidelines are essential to maintain the integrity of teaching.

#### What is a Profession?

The definition of a profession has two parts, and teaching fits both parts of the definition. First, a profession has been described as a unique body of knowledge with its members possessing specific skills or techniques based on this knowledge. The second part of the definition comes into play when a job or occupation turns into a profession and that is the development of an ethics code. A profession, such as teaching, requires an ethics code because society has a different relationship with a profession than with a commercial enterprise. For example, the public may hold the attitude of “let the buyer beware” when purchasing a washing machine or engaging the services of a repair shop. However, a profession is held to higher standards than a job. As professions developed, people began to expect professionals to be competent and trustworthy and to cause no harm.

#### What is an Ethics Code?

Ethics codes are moral guides that attempt to ensure that skills and techniques are used appropriately. Codes define the principles that spell out the responsibilities and rights of professionals in their relationships with each other and also with the people they serve. Ethics codes lay out the values of a profession.

#### How do Ethical Dilemmas Arise for Teachers?

While the majority of teachers are outstanding professionals, the news media all too often features a story about a teacher who has been accused of unethical or unprofessional behavior. Sometimes teachers willfully, even maliciously, engage in acts that are known to be in violation of the ethical standards of the teaching profession. Self-serving motives that blur judgments and boundaries are common among those guilty of ethical violations. Even well-meaning teachers are vulnerable to ethical dilemmas. Following are several ways dilemmas can arise for teachers:

- Inexperience and ignorance of specific ethical principles may be the cause. For example, in one case a Career and Technical Education teacher taught students how to use a specific skill. However, the teacher taught the students an inappropriate use of that skill.
- An ethical problem may not be adequately anticipated by the teacher. For example, a teacher may not understand the seriousness of a problem, and struggle with confidentiality issues. This dilemma could easily happen between two teachers.
- An ethical problem may arise whenever there are not guidelines relative to a specific situation, or the code is confusing.
- An ethical problem may arise when a teacher has to choose between legitimate loyalties.

## Law versus Ethical Standards

There is overlap between laws and ethics. Laws and ethics have almost the same purpose – to outline rules of conduct. There are differences between the two, however. For example, frequently laws deal with matters that are not moral concerns. Additionally, some laws have been overturned because they were immoral. On the other hand, many matters of morality and ethics cannot be sanctioned by law because of the impossibility of enforcement or inconvenience.

A teacher who is found guilty of a felony can have his/her teaching certificate revoked. However, conviction on a misdemeanor will usually not be handled in the same manner, unless the offense also involved the violation of an ethical principle as well. In some instances fully legal conduct would be defined unethical according to the teaching profession's code. Ideally, ethical behavior should conform to the law and not defy it. General criminal and civil law do not adequately protect students from unethical conduct of teachers. Ethical professional standards expect behavior that is more correct or more stringent than is required by law. Ethical standards are higher than the law.

## The *Code of Ethics for Educators* in Georgia

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) issues teaching certificates in the state of Georgia, and has adopted ethical standards which must be complied with by all Georgia teachers. The GAPSC is responsible for enforcing the standards and has the power to revoke teaching certificates. The *Code of Ethics for Educators*, as well as other information regarding ethics, such as reporting violations and disciplinary action can be found at <http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf>.

**Proceed to Activity 2 on next page.**

## Activity 2 –

Study the *Code of Ethics for Educators* on the website of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) located at <http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf>

## Activity 3 –

Read the other documents relating to ethics from the GAPSC web page (Disciplinary Action, The Hearing Process, Moral Turpitude and Frequently Asked Questions). These can be found at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) at the Ethics tab at the top of the web page.

## Activity 4 –

Complete the Educator Ethics Knowledge Quiz at the following link:

<http://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/EthicsQuestionnaire/frmEthicsQuestionnaire.aspx>

Which questions did you miss? (You will not be graded by the number of questions that you missed, so please be honest when you list them in the drop box.)

## Activity 5 –

Proceed to the Case Studies and choose **one**. **Then:**

Locate the relevant section of the Georgia Code that applies to the suspected violation. List that section and write (copy) the wording of the section. (Use this as the framework for evaluating the situation.)

Describe the problem with each situation in one paragraph.

Decide if ethical violations have been committed in the case study that you selected. Explain your decision and thought process in one paragraph of at least 8 sentences.

**Proceed to Next Page**

# Professional Ethics Cases – New Teacher Institute

Directions: Read through the case incidents and choose **one**.

1. Locate the relevant section of the Georgia Code that applies to the suspected violation. List that section and write (copy) the wording of the section. (Use this as the framework for evaluating the situation.)
2. Describe the problem with the situation in **one** paragraph.
3. Decide if an ethical violation has been committed. Explain your decision in one paragraphs of at least 8 sentences.

## Case Incidents

**Case 1:** Teacher A and Teacher B have known each other personally and professionally for many years. After an unfortunate personal dispute leads to dissolution of their friendship, Teacher A complains to the Georgia Professional Practice Commission because Teacher B is telling other professionals that Teacher A is a Nazi and a homosexual.

**Case 2:** Ms Urban, and Ms. Rural were both nominated for office in a national professional organization. Both were invited to submit statements reflecting their qualifications and positions on major issues. Neither had access to the other's statement until the ballots were mailed, at which time Ms Rural became outraged. Apparently, Ms Urban had cited some direct quotations from a paper written by Rural and used these to contrast her own position. Rural believed that the statements were unfairly cited out of context and noted that the goal of providing candidates' statements was to offer a positive basis for selection rather than a unilateral attack. She filed ethics charges for uncolleagial behavior against Urban, including a verbal tirade of her own and she sought to void the election, which she lost.

**Case 3:** Mr. Grudge responded to negative comments made about him by one student to other students by entering "unflattering data" into the student's academic evaluation file. After a lengthy investigation by the Assistant Principal, the "data" were proven to be completely without substance.

**Case 4:** Mr. Ire, became enraged at the incompetent performance of a student while preparing a faculty luncheon and knocked the student to the ground with such force that the student required medical attention.

**Case 5:** Ms. Analyst was annoyed by the persistent questioning of a student during what was supposed to be a "short" lecture before going to the laboratory. When the student challenged one of her statements, she embarrassed the student by commenting, "It's too bad that you haven't managed to work out your hatred for your mother by this point in your life." The student fled the class in tears.

**Case 6:** Mr. Choice had recently been divorced by his wife. When he discovered that he and one of his Seniors were both dating the same woman, he terminated the student's access to laboratory equipment.

**Case 7:** Ms Ratchet, a Healthcare Science Technology Education teacher, has been supervising a student in a clinical setting. After completing the program, the student is to receive advanced placement at a Post-Secondary institution. At the end of the clinical internship, the student is shocked to read an evaluation by Ms Ratchet describing him as insensitive and rude in his relationships with his peers. He is afraid that these comments will hurt his chances of completing a degree and asserts that they are unethical, since he heard nothing about them earlier.

**Case 8:** An anonymous caller to Mr. Fury claims that one of his students is being abused by his father. The caller refuses to give her name, but wanted to pass the information along to a teacher since "this is a person of authority." Mr. Fury decides not to forward the information since he doesn't know who reported the situation.

**Case 9:** A female student requested assistance with problems she was having understanding the course content from Mr. Macho Mann. He told her that woman did not belong in this particular course because they were not suited to the field. He refused to answer her specific questions. Rather, he continued to refer to the unsuitability of women in general in his course and cited her difficulties in understanding the course material as evidence.

**Case 10:** A female student complained that Mr. Torpid made jokes at her expense during class. She alleged that he would tease her about such things as her clothing, fingernail polish, hairstyle and big purse. Mr. Torpid was surprised by her formal complaint. He thought her customary shy, giggling responses were indications that she enjoyed his "gentle chiding."

**Case 11:** A teacher planned to dispose of student files that were several years old. They were tied in plastic trash bags and inserted in an outdoor receptacle, intended for trash pick-up. Neighborhood dogs tore several bags open; the wind blew out many items bearing student names. Many of the students and their families whose records were strewn about still resided in the same neighborhood community.

**Case 12:** Mrs. Fluster was charged with incompetence by a student's parent who expressed outrage over the quality of education their daughter was receiving the class. The student claimed that Mrs. Fluster always arrived late, had no apparent lesson plan for each class session, and rambled in an unconnected fashion about the course content. The parents asserted that since they are taxpayers, their child is entitled to a better course.

**Case 13:** Ms. Droid, a Healthcare Science Technology Education teacher, did not have a full program and was therefore told by her supervisor that she must teach two sections of Physical Science. On the first day of class she joked that she "did not know anything about Physical Science" but since no one else was available to teach the course, she was asked to do it. One student, who aspired to attend a university, wrote to the

Georgia Professional Practices Commission charging Ms Droid and her supervisor with disregard for his legitimate academic needs.

**Case 14:** Mr. Mauve was complained against for making derisive statements about Jews during a class about work attitudes. Mr. Mauve allegedly listed a number of traits sometimes attributed to Jewish people, such as large noses, pushiness, and ruthlessness in business practices.

**Case 15:** Mr. Flam Boyant consistently used ‘four-letter words’ in describing just about everything he talked about. A student complained about his teaching style as being unprofessional and serving as a poor role model for other students, as well as making light of the skills being taught.

Grading Rubric Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators (Used in the Desire2Learn Module)	Points Available	Points Earned
<b>Educator Ethics Knowledge Quiz</b>	4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) Listed questions that were missed on quiz in drop box</li> </ul>		
<b>Case Study</b>	16	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) Located the relevant section of the Georgia Code that applies to the suspected violation.</li> <li>• (4) Listed the section of the Georgia Code and copied the wording of the section</li> <li>• (4) Described the problem in one paragraph</li> <li>• (4) Decided if an ethical violation had been committed and explained reasoning in one paragraph of approximately 8 sentences</li> </ul>		
<b>Total Points Earned</b>		

Following is another example of a grading rubric that can be used for this module (Rubric developed by Dr. Mary Arial, Georgia State University):

**ETHICS MODULE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC (used in the Live Text Module)**

	<b>Acceptable (100 points)</b>	<b>Incomplete (75 points)</b>	<b>Unacceptable (0 points)</b>
<b>ETHICAL ISSUE: Case Scenario I (2.000, 50%)</b>	Locates, lists, and copies the relevant section of the Georgia Code that applies to the suspected violation; describes the problem.	Addresses some, but not all, of the requirements for the assignment; chooses the incorrect section of the Georgia Code that applies to the case.	Missing all or most of the requirements for the requirements for Case Scenario 1.
<b>Case Scenario I (1.000, 25%)</b>	Clearly describes whether an ethical violation has been committed; makes cogent argument for the position.	Defense of position is weak, vague, or poorly described.	Fails to determine whether an ethical violation has been committed or the decision on whether an ethical violation has been committed is incorrect.
<b>ETHICAL ISSUE: Quality of writing (1.000, 25%)</b>	Content of narratives is clear and well-organized, narratives conform to recommended writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, grammar).	Narratives are somewhat inadequate, vague and/or disorganized; narratives contain numerous mistakes in writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, grammar).	One or more required parts of the narratives are missing; writing is very poorly written in terms of content and writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, grammar).
<b>Overall Rating</b>	All ratings of Acceptable = Acceptable	One or more ratings of Incomplete = Incomplete	Any ratings of Unacceptable = Unacceptable