

MORALS Principles HONEST Morals ACCOUNTABILITY HONORABLE Rectitude Right JUST VALUE HONOR FAIR
CORE VALUES Integrity Lawful VALUES IDEALS LIFE
Truth Strong FAIR UPRIGHTNESS WISE Good Character Moral Values
Honest Truthfulness Ethical Philosophy FAITH Live RIGHT TRU

Avoiding Ethical Missteps:

GaPSC - Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators 2025-2026



The Georgia Professional Standards Commission was created by the Georgia General Assembly July 1, 1991, to assume responsibility for the preparation, certification and **professional conduct** of certified personnel employed in Georgia public schools.

Mission Statement

To build the best prepared, best qualified and most ethical educator workforce in the nation.



Responsibility of the GaPSC

- The Commission is responsible for adopting standards of performance and a code of ethics for educators, which are generally accepted by educators of this state.
- The standards of performance and code of ethics adopted by the Commission shall be limited to professional performance and professional ethics. *This does not include one's personal life as long as it does not impact one's professional life.*

Commission Members

- Nine (9) Teachers (1 from private school)
- Two (2) Administrators
- Two (2) Higher Education Program Providers (1 private, 1 public)
- Three (3) Private Sector representatives

18 total members from across Georgia that are appointed by the Governor for three-year terms.



What is the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators?

- Defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct.
- Contains 10 standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession.
- Defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators, and assures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

Effective January 1, 2023

505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

(1) **Introduction.** The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

(2) Definitions.

- (a) "Breach of contract" occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the GaPSC.
- (b) "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the GaPSC.
- (c) "Child endangerment" occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.
- (d) "Complaint" is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the GaPSC alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A "complaint" will be deemed a request to investigate.
- (e) "Educator" is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the GaPSC and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, "educator" also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.
- (f) "Inappropriate" is conduct or communication not suitable for an educator to have with a student. It goes beyond the bounds of an educator-student relationship.
- (g) "Physical abuse" is physical interaction resulting in a reported or visible bruise or injury to the student.
- (h) "Student" is any individual enrolled in the state's public, or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the school year of graduation.

(3) Standards.

- (a) **Standard 1: Legal Compliance** - An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; of any other criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana as provided for in Chapter 13 of Title 16; or of any other sexual offense as provided for in Code Section 16-6-1 through 16-6-17, 16-6-20, 16-6-22.2, or 16-12-100; or any other laws applicable to the profession. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought; a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; and a situation where an adjudication of guilt or sentence was otherwise withheld or

Guidelines, Policy, and Law

Local Level

District or School
Guidance and
Policy

State Policy

Georgia Code of
Ethics for Educators

State Law

Official Code of
Georgia (O.C.G.A),
including Mandated
Reporter Law

Federal Law

Including Family
Educational Rights
and Privacy Act
(FERPA)

Code of Ethics Operational Definitions

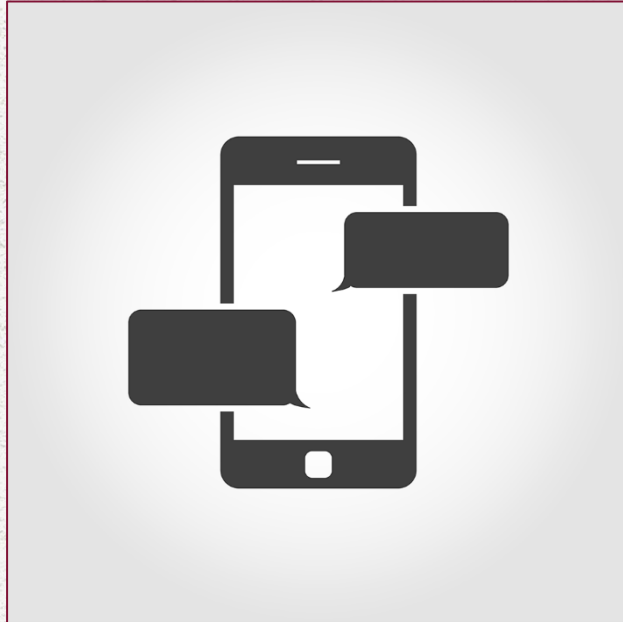
"Educator" is any teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the GaPSC and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate.

- For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, "educator" also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.

"Student" is anyone under the age of 18 **OR** a student enrolled in grades Pre-K to 12 in a public or private school.

- For the purposes of the Code of Ethics, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on **August 31 of the year of graduation.**

Student or Not?



The student graduated in May of that school year. Over the summer, the educator received a text from the student asking for advice about a personal issue and asked to meet on a Saturday at the local coffee shop. As the student had graduated, the teacher decided to meet with the student.

Is the individual still considered a student?



Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators

Standard 1: Legal Compliance

An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of:

- Any felony.
- Misdemeanor crime involving moral turpitude.
- Criminal offense involving a controlled substance or marijuana.
- Sexual offense specified in Code Section 16.
- Any law applicable to the profession.

What is Moral Turpitude?



In its legal sense, it includes everything contrary to justice, honesty, modesty, or good morals.

All felonies and any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude have to be reported.

Examples of Moral Turpitude Offenses

The following offenses, or similar offenses, are crimes involving moral turpitude:

- Fraud or false pretenses in obtaining something of value;
- Larceny (includes shoplifting);
- Misdemeanor theft by taking;
- Larceny after trust;
- Murder;
- Soliciting for prostitutes;
- Voluntary manslaughter;
- Sale of narcotics or other illegal drugs;
- Pattern of failure to file federal tax returns in years that taxes are due;
- Criminal Issuance of a bad check;
- Making a false report of a crime;
- Sexual Battery; and
- Providing contraband to an inmate.



Offenses NOT Considered Moral Turpitude

- Public drunkenness;
- Driving under the influence;
- Carrying a concealed weapon;
- Unlawful sale of liquor;
- Fighting;
- Simple Battery;
- Simple Assault;
- Misdemeanor criminal trespass;
- Child abandonment;
- Misdemeanor offense of escape;
- Misdemeanor offense of obstructing a law enforcement officer;
- The federal misdemeanor offense of Conspiracy in Restraint of Interstate Trade and Commerce; and
- Possession of less than one ounce of marijuana.

Standard 1: Common Violations

- Not disclosing **minor charges** on Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs) in MyPSC Accounts, including shoplifting, misdemeanor marijuana, etc. Always tell the truth!
- **Not reporting convictions (any felony; any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude; any drug charge) within 10 days to the GaPSC.** Anyone who holds professional licensing/certificate must disclose within 10 days. Not disclosing may be automatic revocation. *No matter how old an offense, attest to it when completing Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs), applications, etc. It is critical to answer YES appropriately if there has been a conviction. YES answers are investigated under Standard 1: Legal Compliance. Not answering PAQs accurately also violates Standard 4 – Honesty.
- Conduct/ethics sanctions in another state must be self-reported to the GaPSC and/or disclosed on PAQs where appropriate.
- Failure to respond to the GaPSC requests for more information results in a **revocation**.
- *If the situation has already been addressed by the Ethics Division and you have received documentation, you do not have to re-report.

Standard 1: Scenario



A high school principal failed to issue the statutorily required discipline when hunting guns and beer were found in two students' trucks while parked on campus. The educator was unfamiliar with the GaDOE rule regarding mandatory student discipline and pursued a more lenient disciplinary action.

This is a violation of Standard 1. Violating GaDOE Rule 160-4-8-.15, which outlines mandatory student discipline, must be followed.

Standard 1: Scenario



An elementary teacher received her 2nd DUI within 5 years while driving in Florida during Spring Break.

This is not a violation of Standard 1: Legal Compliance. However, check your local board policy regarding required reporting.

Standard 1: Scenario



An educator answered “Yes” to the personal affirmation question asking if she had been convicted of a drug offense. The educator failed to respond to the investigator when asked for additional information about the incident(s) and a criminal history report. The educator received, read, and ignored multiple requests for the additional information, including one titled, “Final Request for Additional Information.”

This is a violation of Standard 1. The educator’s certification was revoked.

Standard 1: Scenario

An educator was arrested for Theft by Shoplifting in 2019. The educator pled guilty and was sentenced to 12 months on probation. The educator failed to disclose the arrest on his initial application for certification in 2023.

This is a violation of Standard 1: Legal Compliance for the conviction. It is also a violation of Standard 8: Required Reports for failure to disclose the arrest to the GaPSC.

Standard 1: Takeaways



- Follow the law.
- Read all applications carefully and adhere to the application requirements.
Offenses NOT Considered Moral Turpitude
- Anyone who holds an educator certification/license must disclose a controlled substance arrest/charge within 10 days - Official Code of Georgia (O.C.G.A § 16-13-.111). Failure to do so, may result in automatic revocation of certification/license.



Standard 1: Takeaways (continued)

- No matter how old an offense, attest to it when completing Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs), applications, etc. It is critical to answer YES appropriately as to if there has been a conviction. YES answers are investigated under Standard 1: Legal Compliance. Not answering PAQs accurately also violates Standard 4.
- Conduct/ethics sanctions in another state must be self-reported to the GaPSC and/or disclosed on PAQs where appropriate.
- Failure to respond to the GaPSC requests for more information results in a revocation.

Standard 2: Conduct with Students

An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

- committing any act of child abuse, including physical and **verbal abuse**;
- committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
- committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
- engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
- soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, **electronic**, or physical relationship with a student;
- furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
- failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).

Standard 2: Common Violations

- Physical discipline – putting hands on a student in an aggressive way.
- Inappropriate restraint – not following approved restraint measures.
- Verbal abuse depending on the degree – may be handled locally.
- *Offenses NOT Considered Moral Turpitude*
- Becoming too friendly with a student or group of students (treating students as peers).
- Having inappropriate conversations with peers where students can overhear.
- Inappropriate use of social media.

Standard 2: Scenario

The educator, a high school science teacher and athletic coach, resigned from the school district after an investigation concerning inappropriate conduct with a student. A student athlete reported the educator showed favoritism to the student and provided a photo of the student and educator “cuddling” on a bus ride home from a sporting event. The educator also gave rides to the student and took the student to a fast food restaurant occasionally.



This is a violation of Standard 2: Conduct with Students. An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Standard 2: Scenario

The educator, a high school teacher, participated in an inappropriate electronic relationship with a student (Student 1). The Educator made another student (Student 2) feel uncomfortable being in the educator's presence, because of the inappropriate relationship with Student 1. The educator indicated the reason was just trying to talk "hip" with Student 1, had no ill intentions, and the messages were taken out of context.



This is a violation of Standard 2: Conduct with Students. The majority of Conduct with Student cases involve some type of electronic communication.

Standard 2: Scenario

A student had a meltdown and was physically aggressive toward the teacher. The student was endangering himself and others. The educator restrained the student in compliance with training provided by the school district.

This is not a violation of the Code of Ethics. It is important to know and follow local school policies and guidelines regarding restraining and/or touching students.



Standard 2: Scenario

An educator accepted a Facebook friend request from a student and posted a picture of herself on her overseas trip with her friends drinking alcohol. A parent reported the conduct to the principal, superintendent, and board of education members.



While not a violation of the COE, always follow your school policy regarding electronic communications with students on social media platforms. Educators should refrain from befriending students on Facebook or following them on social media platforms.

Considerations for General Online Behavior

1. Are my online activities consistent with my role in the educational community?
2. Am I taking the time to think about what I am doing online, or am I allowing myself to get caught up in a digital frenzy of emotional posts, retweets, and likes?
3. Have I taken a break from digital technology recently? Have I given my eyes, my mind, and my emotions a chance to recalibrate?
4. What digital tools do I need to do my work and communicate with friends and family, and what digital tools can I shut down or discard?
5. Have I taken the time recently to talk to a trusted family member, friend, or colleague about my use of digital technology and any personal concerns I might have?

[GaPSC_Social Media and Remote LearningGuidelines_12-20-21.pdf](#)

Ethical Use of Social Media

Who -

- a. Who am I? What is my role in the school community? What are the personal or professional issues with which I am dealing right now?
- b. Who am I communicating with? Is the conversation appropriate for my role as an educator or member of the school community?
- c. Who might see the conversation? Would I be embarrassed if my comments and/or contents were revealed to a colleague, supervisor, parents, community member, or the general population?

What –

- a. What am I saying to the other person in the conversation?
- b. Is my language appropriate?
- c. Am I communicating professionally?

Online Behavior (Continued)

Where –

- a. Where is the conversation taking place?
- b. If I am communicating directly with a student, am I doing so on a service that can be archived (i.e. school email or archived message service)?
- c. If I am using a direct messaging service (texting, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.), is the conversation transparent (i.e. another adult is part of the conversation)?

When –

- a. At what time of the day (or night) is the conversation taking place?
- b. Is the conversation occurring at a time that might raise concerns about your judgment or your motives?

Online Behavior (Continued)

Why –

- a. Why is the conversation taking place?
- b. Am I discussing classwork, homework, activities, etc., or am I discussing personal issues?
- c. Put another way, what are my motivations for having the conversation? Are those motivations consistent with my role as an educator or a member of the school community?

Standard 2: Takeaways

- Be friendly, but not a friend.
- Respect physical and other boundaries.
- Choose appropriate settings and times for communication, avoiding direct electronic communications where possible.
- Use appropriate conduct and language when interacting with students on and off campus.
- Avoid social media pitfalls with students or about students.
- Any sexual contact with a student will result in a revocation.



Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs

An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Being on school premises or LUA/school district premises or a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages.
2. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity sponsored by the school or school system.

Under the Influence

For the purposes of this Standard, an educator may be considered “under the influence” if the educator exhibits one or more of the following indicators, including but not limited to:

- slurred speech,
 - enlarged pupils,
 - bloodshot eyes,
 - general personality changes,
 - lack of physical coordination,
 - poor motor skills,
 - memory problems, or
 - concentration problems, etc.
- Offenses NOT Considered Moral Turpitude*

Standard 3: Common Violations

- Consuming or using alcohol or drugs prior to going on campus, on campus, on school field trips at any time, or any other school-sponsored event or activity.
- Allowing students access to alcohol at any time, including in your own home.
- Gifting alcohol on campus to other co-workers.
- *Offenses NOT Considered Moral Turpitude*
- Drugs used legally in other states yet are still in the educator's system when in a Georgia school or at a school-sponsored event or activity.
- Not disclosing minor charges on Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs) including misdemeanor marijuana.
- Anyone who holds a professional license/certificate must disclose drug convictions within **10 days**. Not disclosing may be automatic revocation.

Standard 3: Scenario



The educator, a social worker, smelled of alcohol during a Professional Learning Plan (PLP) meeting with administrators.

The educator exhibited other signs of intoxication and tested positive during a reasonable suspicion breathalyzer. The educator admitted to the school system HR and GaPSC of intoxication at school from drinking a lot of tequila the night before. The educator denied drinking alcohol on school premises.

Being on school or school district premises or at a school/school district related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs is a violation of Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs.

Standard 3: Scenario

The Special Education (SPED) paraprofessional participated in a drug test after having an accident at school. The educator tested positive.



This is a violation of Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs. An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Standard 3: Scenario

A physical education teacher fell during a volleyball class and injured a knee. The following day, the educator was in great deal of pain. A coworker, who recently had surgery and was prescribed hydrocodone for pain, offers one to the educator. The educator takes it and later filed a Workers' Compensation claim. During treatment, the educator received a mandatory drug test that revealed use of controlled substance without a prescription.



This is a violation of Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs. Hydrocodone is a controlled substance; therefore, possessing or consuming it without it being legally prescribed to you is a violation.

Standard 3: Scenario

The educator, a paraprofessional, drank a beer at an off-site lunch, while being paid by the complainant school system and returned to work in the afternoon. The lunch occurred the day before the first day of school. Multiple witnesses observed this behavior, and the educator admitted drinking alcohol at lunch to the Assistant Principal



This is a violation of Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs.

Standard 3: Takeaways



- Even if you think you are not affected, do not use drugs or consume alcohol at school, on school grounds, or prior to or at any school or school-sponsored activity.
- Ensure no drugs or alcohol are in your possession, including in your automobile, on campus.
- Just as with any arrest, report any drug or alcohol arrest promptly.

Standard 4: Honesty

An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

1. professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history;
2. information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies;
3. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel;
4. reasons for absences or leaves;
5. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; or
6. information submitted in the course of professional practice.

Standard 4: Common Violations

- Due to dishonesty, many Standard 1: Legal Compliance violations regarding Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs) are also Standard 4 violations.
- Falsifying Individualized Education Plan (IEP) documents, such as documenting a meeting that was not held, falsifying signatures, backdating meeting dates, etc.
- Submitting falsified documentation to the GaPSC during a Certification or Ethics request.
- Witness tampering and suborning false testimony.

Standard 4: Scenario



The educator, a middle school teacher, provided a fraudulent educator certificate to a prospective employer. The employer reached out to the GaPSC Certification Division after they could not verify the validity of the certificate. The educator admitted to uploading the fraudulent certificate to the employer's portal. The educator requested consideration of a second chance.

Submitting false records in order to obtain certification is a violation of Standard 4.

Standard 4: Scenario



The educator, an elementary school teacher, was discovered clocking in a paraprofessional on several days when the paraprofessional was late to work.

This is a violation of Standard 4: Honesty. An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Standard 4: Scenario

The educator signed Individualized Education Plan (IEP) documents for a meeting that did not take place. The educator asked the paraprofessional to sign the paraprofessional was present at the meeting.



Falsifying records is a violation of Standard 4: Honesty.

Standard 4: Scenario

The educator, a high school teacher, conceded that an assignment completed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) was submitted as the educator's own work for the Georgia Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy, (GaTAPP) program's Exceptional Child course.



Submitting unoriginal work as your own shows lack of academic integrity, is dishonest, and violates Standard 4: Honesty.



Given the speed with which Artificial Intelligence (AI) is developing and the complex issues it presents, educators face rapidly shifting ethical challenges regarding its use in P-12 classrooms.

Consult GaPSC's

*Ethical Considerations in the
Appropriate Use of AI for Educators*
*to help navigate the use of AI and
avoid missteps.*

Standard 4: Takeaways

- Honesty is the best policy.
- Pay attention to your MyPSC account when submitting applications and answer Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs) honestly and appropriately. Do not hide prior offenses.
- Do not falsify records, including grades, sick/personal leave, IEP documents, etc.
- Disclose any unsatisfactory performance evaluations.
- Respond to GaPSC requests.

Standard 5: Public Funds & Property

An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. misusing public or school-related funds;
2. failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
3. submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay (including fraudulent or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);
4. co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; and
5. using school or school district property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee.

Standard 5: Common Violations

- Using school system property improperly (violation of acceptable use policy).
Ex. Watching a movie while at work.
- Pawning or stealing school property, such as weight room equipment and musical instruments.
- Co-mingling of funds; inappropriate handling of fundraiser fees, student activity funds, and athletic fees.
- Collecting funds but not using receipt books; using personal cash apps.
- Use of school email, etc. to sell for personal benefit or promote political candidates or political issues.

Standard 5: Scenario

The educator admits opening a private bank savings account in which school system funds were deposited.

When the account was discovered, the educator contended the previous superintendent gave permission to open the account and deposit system funds into the account. There were no receipts available for the expenditures.



Depositing funds into a personal bank account is a Standard 5: Public Funds and Property violation.

Standard 5: Scenario



A high school teacher used the school-issued laptop to access his personal email and a Facebook account, which was maintained under a pseudonym. The educator's Facebook account included posts containing profanity, political arguments, and content of a sexual nature. The educator initially denied ownership of the Facebook account.

Using school or school district property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee is a violation of Standard 5: Public Funds and Property.

Standard 5: Scenario



The educator, a former elementary school teacher, admitted to creating an “OnlyFans” account using the school computer, taking pornographic photos of herself and posting them online for profit. It was brought to the district by the parent. The educator told the GaPSC Investigator the family was in a difficult financial situation after the husband was injured at work. The educator decided to create the account to help the family financially.

An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. This is a violation of Standard 5: Public Funds and Property.

Standard 5: Scenario

A high school teacher used an app on a personal smartphone to collect money from students and make purchases. The app used the educator's personal account to conduct peer-to-peer transactions. The educator continued to use the app after being told it was prohibited.

Unauthorized use of apps like Venmo or Cash App is a violation of Standard 5. Make sure that you are aware of your systems policies regarding these applications.



Standard 5: Takeaways

- When handling money, make sure to receipt it; know your school's financial guidelines.
- Do not mix funds; one cannot reimburse later for monies taken and deposited.
- Understand and follow local school policy regarding use of a school/organization item, equipment, vehicles, kitchens, athletics facilities, etc.
- School policy can determine if the use is a violation, such as if permission was granted for use.

Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct

An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Soliciting students or parents of students, or school or LUA/school district personnel, to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;

Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to (continued):

3. Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. Coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involve students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association (GHSA).

Standard 6: Common Violations

- Getting paid for two or more jobs during school time.
- Conducting personal business for profit during school hours.
- Not receiving prior approval from your school district to provide additional services to students for payment, such as coaching or tutoring.

Standard 6: Scenario



An elementary teacher signed up for an Amazon wish list that solicited public donations of supplies for her classroom. The educator posted the donation link on Facebook.

This is not a violation of Standard 6. The educator was not receiving a financial benefit. Educators should check with their employing district regarding solicitations.

Standard 6: Scenario

A middle school coach provided tennis lessons to a student during the summer months without the approval of the district.



This is a violation of Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct. Always obtain permission before providing any additional services, such as tutoring, coaching, lessons, etc.

Standard 6: Scenario

A school district's Chief of Operations accepted gifts from vendors and subordinates. The gifts included firearms, financial kickbacks, and other items of value. A criminal investigation resulted in the educator, some co-workers, and others being charged with RICO (racketeering) Act violations. The investigation revealed misappropriation of more than \$6.3 million dollars of school system funds.



This is a violation of Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct. The educator solicited school personnel to purchase items that benefited him and accepted gifts that appeared to be a conflict of interest.

Standard 6: Takeaways

- Check and abide by school policy regarding accepting payment, gifts, etc.
- Avoid the potential perception of favoritism and/or inappropriate relationships that may result by providing services to only a few.
- Obtain approval from the appropriate personnel, if you are coaching, etc., students in your own system and from whom you receive normal compensation.

Standard 7: Confidential Information

An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
2. Sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;

Standard 7: Confidential Information

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to (continued):

3. Violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and
4. Violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Examples of Confidential Information

- Annual performance evaluation records of school personnel.
- Health services provided to insured.
- Individual student performance data, information and reports.
- School records of students with disabilities.
- A student's educational record.

Standard 7: Common Violations

- Sharing confidential information on social media platforms.
- Sharing information outside appropriate settings and with inappropriate personnel.
- Sharing confidential information with appropriate personnel but within the hearing of others.
- Using personal email to send/receive a student's educational record(s).

Standard 7: Scenario



The educator, a middle school special education teacher, had two students shred documents, including but not limited to sensitive information such as IEPs, tube feeding action plans, behavior plans, and spreadsheets with student data. The principal witnessed this and collected the documents. The teacher stated the students were to shred a different stack containing non-sensitive items and they must have inadvertently shredded the wrong stack.

This is a violation of Standard 7: Confidential Information. Academic and health records, are considered confidential.

Standard 7: Scenario

A non-renewed charter school administrator used a personal device to access Infinite Campus, and then sent confidential student information, staff personnel information, and various other sensitive documents to her personal email address. The educator said the information was collected to defend against potential allegations of wrongdoing.



Sending any confidential information, outside of authorized digital environments, is a violation of Standard 7: Confidential Information.

Standard 7: Takeaways

- Keep confidential information within secure, school platforms.
- Ensure school records and school files are protected.
- Respect the information and data of your students.
- Avoid social media posts of students and the classroom.
- Be aware of others who may be able to overhear confidential information.
- Student information, including and especially Individualized Education Plan (IEP) information, is to be protected and only discussed with appropriate individuals when needed and in a private setting.
- Any information located in a student's school file should be protected and never disclosed to anyone in public.

Standard 8: Required Reports

An educator shall file with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Failure to report to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission.
2. Failure to make a required report of an alleged or proven violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and

Standard 8: Required Reports

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to (continued):

3. Failure to make a required report of any alleged or proven violation of state or federal law as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

Reporting Timelines



- School Districts have their own reporting policies, guidelines, and timelines, which are important to know and follow.
- State policy requires the following reporting timelines:
 - The Mandated Reporter Law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5) requires reporting of actual or suspected student abuse within **24 hours** to the Local Education Agency (LEA), Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and/or the District Attorney's Office.
 - O.C.G.A. § 20-2-984.2 requires the district to make a report to the GaPSC within **30 days** if an educator is accused of sexual abuse of a student.
 - O.C.G.A. § 16-13-111 requires reporting of controlled substance convictions within **10 days**.
 - O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1184 requires an **immediate** report when students commit specified crimes (weapons, drugs, sex offenses, etc.)
- State policy requires reporting violations of the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators to the GaPSC within **90 days**.

Mandated Reporting

All teachers, administrators, school counselors, school social workers, or school psychologists must report actual or suspected abuse (physical or sexual) to the appropriate school personnel within 24 hours.

Standard 8: Scenario



A middle school student confided to an educator about being abused at home, by his mother. The educator utilized a Google phone number to communicate and make a record of their conversations, as well as counseled the student. The educator did not report the suspected child abuse to any authority.

The State Mandated Reporter Law requires suspected or actual sexual abuse must be reported promptly and no later than within 24 hours.

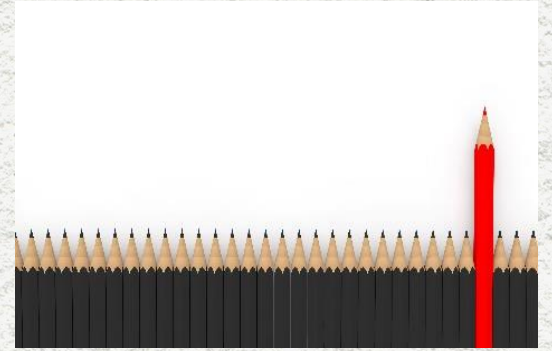
Violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act

- Certified individuals must report any conviction of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana.
- Must report to the Georgia Professional Standards within 10 days following the conviction.
- Certification is subject to revocation if the individual fails to report the conviction.

Standard 8: Common Violations

- Not reporting abuse or suspected abuse to appropriate personnel and within specified timelines.
- Not reporting suspected violations of the Georgia Code of Ethics and within specified timelines.
- Not disclosing past and current convictions and within specified timelines.

Standard 8: Scenario



An educator had been certified in Georgia since 2013. The educator was arrested in 2014 for possession of marijuana less than one (1) ounce. The educator pled guilty, served probation, completed a risk reduction program, and paid a fine. In 2021, the educator answered “Yes” to the personal affirmation question about having been convicted of a drug offense (felony or misdemeanor) on an application for a Certification transaction. This was the first notice to the Commission of his drug offense while certified, 7 years after the arrest. The educator failed to provide the requested certified court documents and fingerprinting for this investigation.

This is a violation of Standard 8. An educator must report drug convictions within 10 days of the conviction. Failure to do so or respond to the GaPSC for more information resulted in a revocation.

Standard 8: Scenario

During the state standardized testing, the teacher was observed by the paraprofessional assisting students with the various questions on the Math End of Course Test. The paraprofessional did not report this to the testing coordinator.



Not only was the teacher violating Standard 10: Testing of the Code of Ethics by assisting students with test questions, but also the paraprofessional violated Standard 8: Required Reports by not reporting the teacher's actions.

Violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act

- Certified individuals must report any conviction of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana.
- Must report to the Georgia Professional Standards within 10 days following the conviction.
- Certification is subject to revocation if the individual fails to report the conviction.

Standard 8: Takeaways



- ❑ It is important to report abuse or suspected abuse to appropriate personnel within specified timelines. The Mandated Reporter Law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5) requires reporting of actual or suspected student abuse within 24 hours to the Local Education Agency (LEA), Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and/or the District Attorney's Office.
- ❑ It is important to disclose past and current convictions within specified timelines.

- An educator must report to the GaPSC any alleged or proven violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge.
- The report must be made as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner.

Standard 9: Professional Conduct

An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

- a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract;
- any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position; or
- behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students; or failure to supervise a student(s).

Standard 9: Common Violations

- Breaching a contract without a reason that falls into the specified Commission-approved guidelines:
 - Spousal Transfer – Unreasonable Commute
 - Documented Illness of the Educator or Immediate Family Member
 - Promotion in the Education Field
 - Increased Job Responsibility
 - Increased Prestige
 - Appropriate and Reasonable Increase in Pay
- Verbally disrespecting students.
- Any conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of the student.
- Failure to supervise students.

Standard 9: Scenario

The educator signed an employment contract with the complainant school system for the school year 2024-2025, and resigned from the position on 06/20/24. The educator received another teaching position offer from another school system and signed a contract with them. The complainant school system determined the educator's new position would not be a promotion and denied the request for the educator to be released from her contract.



This is a violation of Standard 9: Professional Conduct. Conduct. A breach of contract occurs when the educator does not professionally honor a valid signed contract, the system does not release the educator from his/her contract, and the resignation does not meet the criteria established by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for resignations submitted after June 1.

Standard 9: Scenario

The educator, an elementary school teacher, admitted to posting inappropriate nude photos and videos on an online platform. The educator admitted to posting some of the photos and videos from the school classroom during school hours while no children were around, and with the doors locked. The content was discovered by an anonymous reporter who sent screenshots to school administrators.



An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.

Standard 9: Scenario

During football practice, the coach was heard using profane and inappropriate language with the student athletes.

This is a violation of Standard 9: Professional Conduct.

Standard 9: Takeaways

- Be a professional. Observe personal and professional boundaries.
- Supervise students appropriately and obtain supervisory approval when needed.
- Be aware of those following you on social media and those you follow. Monitor your own page and the comments that are posted on your page.
- Show respect for colleagues and students.
- Use social media appropriately, including showing respect for colleagues and students.
- Honor your contractual obligations.

Standard 10: Testing

An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Committing any act that breaches test security; and
2. Compromising the integrity of the assessment.

Standard 10: Common Violations

- Intentional errors in the testing process.
- Blatant cheating to influence the outcome.
- Paraphrasing or prompting students' responses.

Standard 10: Scenario

A first-year ESOL teacher used Google translate to translate standardized testing instructions to a student who did not understand English. The translation was in audio format from the educator's phone so the student could hear it, but so could the remaining three students in the class. Trying to assist a student who was a newcomer to the country and could not speak English was the educator's reason.



This is a Standard 10: Testing violation.

Standard 10: Scenario

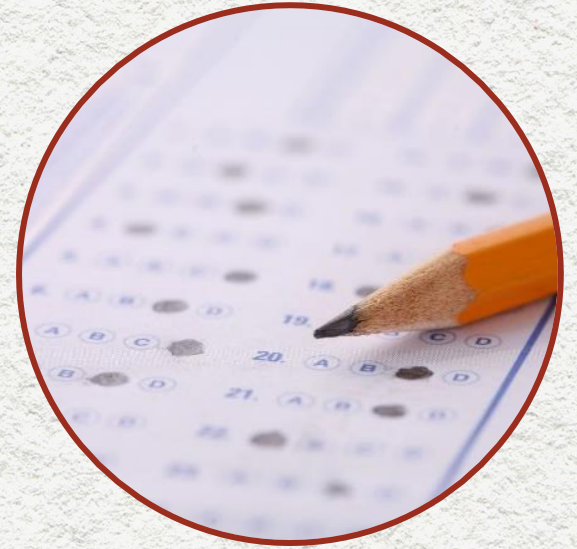


The educator, a middle school teacher, committed testing violations related to the Georgia Milestone Assessment System End of Grade assessment. The educator admitted failing to verify testing materials and failing to verify each student received the correct test ticket for the correct section as scheduled. The educator also left testing material unattended in an area to which others had access, failed to notify anyone of a testing irregularity; and allowed students to complete testing in the incorrect content area.

This is a violation of Standard 10: Testing. An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically.

Standard 10: Takeaways

- Know testing procedures and policies; follow protocols.
- Acknowledge any mistakes; do not hide them.
- Establish an environment conducive to student learning and test score improvement.
- Report testing irregularities or suspicion of testing irregularities.
- Know that test security is paramount.





Complaints & Sanctions

Filing Complaints



- Any Georgia citizen can file an ethics complaint as long as it is signed. The General Complaint Form can be found on the GaPSC website: www.gapsc.com
- Know the protocol of the school district for reporting alleged violations, which may be to report the allegation to your immediate supervisor.
- Submit in writing, even if a verbal report was made to the employer.
- Non-employees should contact the district superintendent's office, if applicable.

Potential Sanctions

- Warning
- Reprimand
- Suspension-1 day to 3 years
- Revocation
- Denial
- Sanctions are permanent and remain on the certificate
- Suspensions and higher are reported to national database





Reminders and Resources

Ethics Information at www.gapsc.com



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). The header features the GaPSC logo and tagline "Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning" on the left, and social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and buttons for "MyPSC Login" and "Register" on the right. A search bar is also present. The navigation menu includes links for Home, Georgia Educators, Certification, Educator Assessment, Educator Preparation, Ethics, and Commission. Below the navigation menu is a "Quick Links" section with ten icons representing various services: How to Become a Teacher, How to Apply, How to Renew Your Certificate, How to Transfer Out-of-State Certification, Educational Leadership, Upgrade Your Certificate Level, Georgia Approved Programs, Paraprofessional Licensure, GaTAPP, and Title IV Compliance. The main content area features a large banner for "Teach in the Peach" with the website teachinthepeach.org. To the right of the banner is a "Certification Status" section with a message about processing complete application packages and a list of links for Application Status and Public Certification Lookup.

Georgia Professional Standards Commission
Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning

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Home Georgia Educators Certification Educator Assessment Educator Preparation Ethics Commission

Quick Links

- How to Become a Teacher
- How to Apply
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- Paraprofessional Licensure
- GaTAPP
- Title IV Compliance

Teach in the Peach
teachinthepeach.org

Certification Status

We are currently processing complete application packages received on or before . If any documentation was received by our office after that date, please be patient, and wait at least two weeks after completing your application before contacting our office with any concerns.

- Application status checks are not provided by phone or email.
- Documents must be submitted electronically as outlined [here](#).
- [Application Status](#)
- [Public Certification Lookup](#)



**Georgia Professional
Standards Commission**

Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning

Ethical Considerations in the Appropriate Use of AI by Educators



https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/Downloads/GaPSC%20Ethical%20Considerations%20in%20the%20Appropriate%20Use%20of%20AI%20for%20Educators_6-16-25.pdf

GaPSC Video Series

Available Now at
www.gapsc.com

- Eight instructional videos are currently posted, focusing on:
 - Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs)
 - About MyPSC (registering, resetting passwords, changing names, checking applications)

GaPSC Video Series



A growing collection of videos featuring essential information on GaPSC policies, processes, and more.

Explore now »

Resources

- [The Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators \(505-6-.01\)](#)
- [Suggested Guidelines for Ethical Use of Social Media and Ethical Remote Learning](#)
- GaPSC Webinar Series
 - Ethics Reporting Process and New Documentation
 - Ensuring Effective Ethics Investigations
 - Hot Topics: Social Media, Part 1 & 2
- Available at: https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/Ethics_Resources.aspx



Contact Information

The GaPSC's website is an important source of information.

www.gapsc.com

If additional assistance is needed, contact information is available at www.gapsc.com/ethics/contact



**Georgia Professional
Standards Commission**

Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning