

THE VICTORIAN
TEACHING PROFESSION
CODE OF ETHICS AND
CODE OF CONDUCT

INTEGRITY
RESPECT
RESPONSIBILITY

THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF ETHICS

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning. We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are **integrity**, **respect** and **responsibility**.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our **integrity** by:

- acting in the best interest of students
- maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

We demonstrate our **respect** by:

- acting with care and compassion
- treating students fairly and impartially
- holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our **responsibility** by:

- providing quality teaching
- maintaining and developing our professional practice
- working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students.

The purpose of this code is to:

- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
- promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.

THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession. It identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher¹ by their colleagues and the community.

It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics, namely

Integrity

Respect

Responsibility

and draws on the Victorian Institute of Teaching's Standards of Professional Practice, and Codes of Conduct for teachers developed by schools and other registration authorities.

PURPOSE

The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to:

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of principles which will guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas
- affirm the public accountability of the teaching profession
- promote public confidence in the teaching profession.

The Code of Conduct is not a disciplinary tool.

The Code of Conduct will not cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by the sector/school in which the teacher works, or there may be specific issues that are covered by an industrial agreement or award.

SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students' parents (guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

PRINCIPLE 1.1: TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

- a knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- b maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- c accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- d having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents
- e considering all viewpoints fairly
- f communicating well and appropriately with their students.

PRINCIPLE 1.2: TEACHERS TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY

Teachers:

- a work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- b model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- c protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- d enhance student autonomy and sense of self worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values
- e respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is:
 - if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way
 - to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student)
 - as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
 - if the disclosure is required or mandated by law
 - to prevent a crime or enforce the law
- f refrain from discussing students' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- g use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students.

PRINCIPLE 1.3: TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers:

- a seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- b are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance
- c are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

PRINCIPLE 1.4: TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They:

- a interact with students without displaying bias or preference
- b make decisions in students' best interests
- c do not draw students into their personal agendas
- d do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

PRINCIPLE 1.5: TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

- a** has a sexual relationship with a student
- b** uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
- c** touches a student without a valid reason
- d** holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context
- e** accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents.

A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

- a** attends parties or socialises with students
- b** invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS), FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

PRINCIPLE 1.6: TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers:

- a** consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
- b** communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
- c** take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

PRINCIPLE 1.7: TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students' families and communities within those contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

PRINCIPLE 1.8: COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by:

- a** treating each other with courtesy and respect
- b** valuing the input of their colleagues
- c** using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- d** sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- e** respecting different approaches to teaching
- f** providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
- g** sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.

SECTION 2: PERSONAL CONDUCT

PRINCIPLE 2.1: THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

- a be positive role models at school and in the community
- b respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- c not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- d ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- e act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

SECTION 3: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

PRINCIPLE 3.1: TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

Teachers:

- a are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- b are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- c complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

PRINCIPLE 3.2: TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO:

- discrimination, harassment and vilification
- negligence
- mandatory reporting
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration.

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