MCEE
MODEL CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

The Power of Professional Conversations:
Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)
An accompanying guide to the MCEE Video

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

National Council
for the Advancement
of Educator Ethics

NASDTEC
National Association of State Directors
of Teacher Education and Certification

The Power of Professional Conversations: Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)

The Power of Professional Conversations video series is a free, downloadable resource for pre-service and in-service educators to foster conversations about ethical decision-making in a complex, fast-paced profession. It is composed of five video segments, a discussion guide, and extended professional learning plans related to professional ethics, and more specifically, the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE).

This interactive series provides opportunities for engaging in collegial conversations based upon the profession's collective norms as articulated by MCEE. This program:

- Includes engaging learning videos and activities based on real-life scenarios and research;
- Provides relevancy to a variety of professional and community settings, including teacher and administrator preparation programs, school faculty and staff meetings, as well as training for other stakeholders within the educational community;
- Allows for individual or group exploration by providing a cohesive pedagogical framework to discuss professional ethics; and
- Offers the flexibility to adapt or incorporate this training into existing pre-service coursework or in-service professional learning with ease of facilitation.

Each component of the video series, as well as the accompanying discussion guide and professional learning plans, can be downloaded and used without restriction.

Discussion Guide

The following Discussion Guide is aligned to the video series, with expansion activities and engaging discussion points. It also includes the video transcript with time stamps.

This resource is not a collection of lesson plans but provides the opportunity for educators to construct creative approaches to engage with professional ethics and the Model Code of Ethics for Educators.

The Power of Professional Conversations:
Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE)

Discussion Guide

VIDEO SEGMENT 1: Exploring Professional Risks

At the beginning of Segment 1 of the video, you heard from ten educators about dilemmas they are facing. Each one of those situations comes with risks and potential consequences.

Research indicates educators face many non-trivial decisions every day. Some non-trivial decisions may result in unintended consequences and professional risks.

Reflection and Discussion: *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 0:47 – 4:08)*

Summarized below are the scenarios provided in Segment 1 of the video. For reference, the full scenario is available here. Select one or more and discuss the unintended consequences, or in other words, "What could possibly go wrong?"

- A colleague who is routinely late for supervisory duties
- Parents continually contacting the kindergarten teacher through text and social media
- A paraprofessional disagrees with the supervising teacher
- A colleague who spends an inordinate amount of time with a student
- An exhausted first-year middle school teacher
- An educator field-testing tech products in the classroom
- A high school coach making tough decisions regarding transporting student athletes
- Administrative concerns regarding the classroom competency of a veteran teacher
- A student teacher contemplates the appropriateness of over-involvement in the personal lives of students

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Identify examples of non-trivial decisions routinely made by educators.
2. Discuss the potential unintended consequences of those decisions.

Read the following statement from the video and reflect on how it applies to your professional decision-making:

Research indicates most educators use personal morality or policy to make their decisions, but while important and necessary, neither personal morality nor organizational policy are good enough and here's why. Policy is typically written at a high level and does not cover most of the daily classroom situations educators face, and using personal values introduces too many inconsistent variables. (Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 4:23)

Reflection and Discussion:

The scenarios did not deal with violating policy but rather the uneven terrain of everyday decision-making. Most practitioner decisions are not about right or wrong but rather about how to best operate within the gray.

Reflection and Discussion:

In the scenarios, educators are experiencing competing tensions – trying to discern priorities while weighing several options.

For example, the situation with the teacher who is feeling pressured to participate in social media must make her decisions while examining several sets of competing tensions - open parental communication versus student confidentiality concerns or separating professional and personal profiles. *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 1:05-1:22)*

What strategies will the educators utilize in determining a course of action?

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Reread each of the scenarios and identify the competing tensions present in each one.
2. Why is it important to be able to identify competing tensions in professional decision-making?

MCEE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT
Segment 1: Exploring Professional Risks

Video Playing Time: 7 minutes. 16 seconds

TIME STAMP	SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPT
OPENING		
[0:18]	Narrator	Here's the deal. Education is a very rewarding profession, but as we all know, it's also filled with complexities and risks. So how many decisions do you think you make in day directly impacting students? It may vary between roles. As an example, one researcher estimates teachers make over 3,000 non-trivial decisions a day. I am here to tell you something you already know – every role is complex and filled with professional risks. Let's listen to some educators.
SCENARIOS		
[0:47]	Elementary Teacher	I'm stuck in an awkward position. Another third-grade teacher is late for every supervisory duty. I cover for her regularly. Why don't I tell the principal? In our small community, there are lots of reasons to keep it to myself and not appear to be critical of a colleague.
[1:05]	Kindergarten Teacher	Some of my kindergarten parents are forever texting me about their kids. I'm beginning to feel like I have crossed a line, replying to their questions and comments sent to me on social media. But to say 'no' at this point in the school year, well, it almost seems like they would perceive it as a hostile act.
[1:23]	Paraprofessional	I'm a paraprofessional, and I have worked with the same group of low-incidence, self-contained students for six years. The teachers come and go – a revolving door. But I know these kids and their needs far better than my supervising teachers. Yet, I have to support their choices even if I don't agree.
[1:41]	Teacher	Teachers often build informal relationships with students. That's important, but how far is too far? My colleague seems to always have this one student in his classroom before and after school and sometimes during lunch. I know they have lots in common other than school, but when does it become too personal and not professional?
[2:00]	Middle School Teacher	I'm new – a first-year middle school teacher. I don't think I can do this much longer. I'm exhausted, and I am losing myself. As the rookie teacher, I feel like I have been assigned the most difficult load. I'm coaching three sports, chaperoning dances and sponsoring student activities. I want my colleagues and my school administrators to believe I can handle it, but honestly, I don't know if I can handle it.

[2:29]	High School Teacher	We have this great teacher at our school – I mean rock star teacher. But she signed a contract with a well-known EdTech firm. They totally provided her with high tech teaching products and a stipend. In return, she writes blog articles promoting the company's products. Is this a conflict of interest? Think about it – drawing two salaries by field testing products on children without their parents' permission.
[2:54]	High School Coach	As a high school coach, I face the same tough decision several times during the season. There is always that one student who doesn't have a ride home late at night after a competition. I fear for the student's safety by making her walk several miles to get home. Yet our district policy states employees are not to place students in their personal vehicles. So here is my question. How do I weigh a student's safety against district policy? I don't want to lose my job, but placing a student in jeopardy?
[3:23]	Middle School Principal	I'm the principal of middle school who is struggling with one of my physical education teachers who is in his 38th year of teaching. His classes routinely play flag football, dodgeball and basketball – and not much else. I allocated money for Coach to attend the state conference for physical educators. He declined the offer and said he knows how to best instruct his students. Oh, did I also mention he has been a highly respected coach at our school for many years?
[3:49]	High School Student Teacher	My cooperating teacher is known as the one students go to if they have personal issues. Today she told me she talked on the phone all night with a kid about his personal issues. I know I am only a student teacher, and we are expected to act as mentors to kids, but aren't we taking huge risks by diving headfirst into our students' lives?
	DECISION-MAKING	
[4:09]	Narrator	As we all know, the profession of education is indeed complex. How do educators currently handle these decisions? How are we making those decisions? What do we rely on as a benchmark in making those decisions in the ever-changing educational landscape?
		Research indicates most educators use personal morality or policy to make their decisions, but while important and necessary neither personal morality or organizational policy are good enough and here's why. Policy is typically written at a high level and does not cover most of the daily classroom situations educators face, and using personal values introduces too many inconsistent variables.
		So how are we to make these thousands of daily non-trivial decisions? If personal values and organizational policies aren't adequate for our important work, what's missing? What's missing are the collectively agreed upon standards to help inform our professional decision-making. That's called professional ethics, and that's the way other professions have been doing it for a long time.

|		
		Unlike policy or statute, professional ethics is not necessarily about defining right or wrong but rather choosing the most appropriate course of action given the situation. As odd as this may sound, what might be appropriate in one school, might not be appropriate in another school. Every context is different. Professional ethics empowers practitioners to thoughtfully weigh and consider every situation-well before any policy has been transgressed. Perhaps that is why we rarely discuss professional ethics, or even worse confuse it with other terms such as morality, dispositions or codes of conduct. If you will think back to those real situations described by educators, they didn't deal with violating policy. They dealt with the uneven terrain of everyday decision-making. As an experienced educator, I can assure you most daily decisions in our profession are not about right or wrong, but rather about how to best operate within the gray.
ABOUT THE MCEE VIDEO		
[6:08]	Narrator	We hope what you experience in the four remaining segments of this video series is relevant, impactful and relates to your practice. Although this video is primarily intended for pre-service and in-service educators, we invite you to consider who else in your educational community can benefit. Throughout the series you will have the opportunity to stop the video at predetermined places and engage in discussion. In addition to the video, there is an accompanying guidebook that provides opportunities for additional professional learning. It includes discussion prompts, scenarios, instructional activities, additional resources and much more. Please use these resources however you think best fits into your context. Our goal is to prompt conversation among the real experts – you, the educators in the field – about how to best navigate the gray.
CLOSING QUESTION		
[6:58]	Narrator	Other professions have created codes of ethics to deal with risks in their professions. What might that look like in education? In Segment 2, we will be sharing three specific risks we might encounter in our profession.

MCEE DISCUSSION GUIDE

VIDEO SEGMENT 2: Exploring Professional Ethics

In the first video segment, educators shared dilemmas they encountered. Segment 2 will develop a common lexicon to assist educators in having meaningful discussions about professional risks, blind spots, blurring of roles, and unintended consequences.

RISK: *(Video Reference: Segment 2. Time stamp 1.22 – 2:42)*

In the video, the narrator shared some examples of professional risks. Using the scale below, assign a level of risk for each of the following student situations:

①————————②————————③————————④————————⑤
low
risk

high
risk
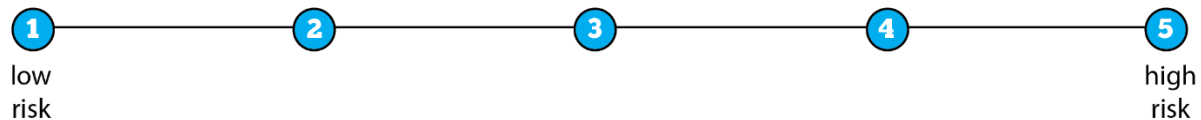
- *Texting a student*
- *Asking a student to babysit*
- *Sharing an opinion about a colleague to students*
- *Stating an opinion to a student about personal issues*
- *Offering guitar lessons to a student in the home*
- *Serving as the classroom teacher to a best friend's child*

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Discuss the rationale for your rating.
2. Discuss the possible unintended consequences of that particular situation.
3. How might the risk level change in a different situational context (e.g., grade level, educator role, family circumstances, district policy)?
4. Discuss how the risk level could be lowered.

BLIND SPOTS: *(Video Reference: Segment 2. Time stamp 2:43—3:04)*

It is common for practitioners in all professions to have blind spots preventing them from recognizing professional risks. Blind spots are often the result of personal experiences that influence professional decision-making. In a profession like education, well-intended practitioners can develop blind spots based on their care for students which may invite unintended consequences.

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Describe the personal circumstances in each of the following situations that may lead to a blind spot:

   - A recently divorced teacher mentors a student whose parents are going through a divorce.
   - A paraprofessional whose son has experienced addiction is becoming consumed by the needs of a student who is facing similar circumstances.
   - A principal, who herself was raised on federal assistance, provides money to a student's family who is uncomfortable seeking financial assistance for needed school supplies.

2. Identify and discuss any unintended consequences that may result from each of the educator's acts of care and compassion.

BLURRING OF ROLES: *(Video Reference: Segment 2. Time stamp 3:05—3:59)*

Educators often act outside of their contracted roles in their efforts to support students. This may result in the blurring of roles which may result in confusion for students and their families.

1. Describe how the following blurred roles may escalate the possibility of risk:

   - A coach assumes the role of a "big brother" outside of the school environment to a student whose father is recently deceased.
   - An educator offers a place to stay for a runaway student.

2. Identify and discuss any unintended consequences that may result from each of the educator's care and compassion.

3. Describe an additional situation in which roles are commonly blurred that can escalate the level of risk.

CODE OF CONDUCT/ETHICS *(Video Reference: Segment 2. Time stamp 5:00—7:31)*

Our profession is governed by not only district policy but also licensure regulations and laws to protect everyone within the schooling community. Often, policies or statutes might be called a code of ethics – but, in actuality, it is a code of conduct. Anytime a standard includes the phrase, "An educator shall not," often indicates it is a standard within a code a conduct. Codes of conduct define a boundary that cannot be crossed and articulate possible sanctions.

Codes of ethics, on the other hand, do not tell us what to do or not to do. Instead, they provide the collective voice of the profession giving guidance and considerations as we navigate the difficult decisions inherent in our daily practice.

Unlike policy or law, codes of ethics can be contextualized to fit the unique nature of every school and community. The differences that exist between districts, schools, and even classrooms necessitate diverse solutions.

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Does your state have a code of conduct that governs an educators' professional license? If so, what is it called? What exposure have you had to that code in your pre-service or in-service experience?

2. Examine the following statements and determine if each represents a code of conduct or code of ethics. What specific language leads you to believe it is a code of conduct?

   a. The educator shall not accept a gift that is valued greater than $50.00.
   b. Refrain from professional or personal activity that may lead to reducing one's effectiveness.
   c. Advocate for equitable opportunities for all students.
   d. The educator shall not submit fraudulent reimbursement for expenses.
   e. The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless required by law.

For Analysis and Synthesis: *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 0.47 – 3:48)*

Choose **one** of the following scenarios from Segment 1 of the video and consider and consider the subsequent questions.

> *"I'm stuck in an awkward position. Another teacher is late for every supervisory duty. I cover for her regularly. Why don't I tell the principal? In our small community, there are lots of reasons to keep it to myself and not appear to be critical of a colleague."*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 0:47 – 1:04)*

> *"I'm a first-year teacher. I don't think I can do this much longer – I'm exhausted and am losing myself. As the rookie teacher, I feel like I have been assigned the most difficult load, I'm coaching three sports, chaperoning dances and sponsoring student activities. I want my colleagues and school administrators to believe I can handle it – but honestly, I don't know if I can handle it."*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 2:00 – 2:28)*

> *"I'm the principal of a middle school who is struggling with one of my physical education teachers who is in his 38th year of teaching. His classes routinely play flag football, dodgeball and basketball – and not much else. I allocated money for Coach to attend the state conference for physical educators. He declined the offer and said he knows how to best instruct his students. Oh, did I also mention he has been a highly respected coach at our school for many years?"*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 3:23 – 3:48)*

Determine and discuss which of the following concepts applies to the selected scenario:

    a. Professional Risks
    b. Blurring of Roles
    c. Blind Spots
    d. Unintended Consequences

MCEE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT
Segment **2**: Exploring Professional Ethics

Video Playing Time: 10 minutes. 08 seconds.

TIME STAMP	SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPT
		OPENING
[0:04]	Narrator	In the first video segment, we explored the varying complexities of the education profession. In this segment, we will work together to frame a common understanding of professional ethics.
		DEFINING ETHICS
[0:13]	Narrator	What is our common understanding of ethics? In order to explore this question, we went to a college campus and talked with pre-service educators early in their program and asked them to define ethics.
[0:28]	Pre-service educator #1	Uh – doesn't it have something to do like morals?
[0:31]	Pre-service educator #2	Ethics is the thing a person believes in - what they think is right and the rules they live their life by?
[0:39]	Pre-service educator #3	So, is it like morals?
[0:43]	Pre-service educator #4	I'm not really sure. I haven't taken that class yet.
[0:45]	Pre-service educator #5	Ethics, isn't that where you think that it's right or wrong?
[0:50]	Narrator	Did you notice the definitions they provided reflected more of personal values? Often those definitions fall short when placed in the context of daily decision-making within the classroom. Most daily decisions in our profession are not about right and wrong, but how to best operate within the gray – and that is the core of professional ethics. Professional ethics are traditionally encapsulated into a code – a set of standards by which practitioners of a profession agree are important. But we are going to come back to our professions' code of ethics in just a few minutes.

RISKS		
[1:23]		At the beginning of this video series, several educators shared authentic situations from their daily practice. Every one of them is loaded with varying degrees of risk. What do we mean by risk? Risks to the educator's credibility or career, and yes, even risks to the well-being of those we serve – our students. Consider the notion the courts have granted us *in loco parentis* –which literally means "in the place or role of a parent," – yet at the same time we are also granted search and seizure power similar to that of law enforcement officials. Consider the vulnerability of minors in a setting where adults have the vast majority of power. Consider what we all know – the greater the relationship of trust between educators and students, the greater the capacity for learning and, at the same time, the greater the risk of violating that position of trust. And that's just the beginning. Rarely do we consider how our care for students and care for ourselves are two sides of the same coin, and both must be rooted in a sound understanding of professional ethics. Let's be frank-rarely do we consider our profession is inherently risky; however, if we can't recognize the risks how can we mitigate or navigate them?
BLIND SPOTS AND BLURRING OF ROLES		
[2:43]	Narrator	In the field of professional ethics, it is common to assume that practitioners may have blind spots, which may prevent us from recognizing professional risks, even though our actions are well-intended. As strange as this may seem, our willingness as educators to assist students in every aspect of their growth and development may actually be one of our most prominent blind spots. As we all know, there are often expectations that we assist students in their personal, social, emotional and physical growth, as well as their academic growth – and that's what makes our profession fulfilling. But at the same time, as we engage students outside of our area of expertise we increase the opportunity for missteps. If we consider the array of responsibilities teachers often assume are outside their contracted duties and areas of expertise – providing students advice and mentoring, assisting with personal issues and needs, and providing a variety of opportunities for student growth and development – we can begin to understand how the blurring of roles occurs. This may create risks for educators and confusion for students and the students' families. An educator's identified role within the schooling structure, as well as the time and place when interaction occurs with students, establish parameters that ensure safety, security, and predictability.

STOP AND DISCUSS		
[4:00]	Narrator	Now we have the first of several opportunities for reflection and discussion. Simply pause the video and consider examples of how an educator might experience the risks related to blind spots or the blurring of roles. Restart the video when you are ready to resume.
[4:28]	Narrator	As you may have discussed, educators often grapple with varying risks, blind spots or even the blurring of their various roles. But this is not unique to the field of education. Other professions also face similar issues. However, many of these professions have historically relied upon a code of ethics to navigate the professional risks that are present every day. To further understand codes of ethics, let's first differentiate codes of conduct from codes of ethics because the phrases are often used interchangeably, but they are really not the same.
CODES OF CONDUCT VS CODES OF ETHICS		
[5:00]		As we know, our profession is governed by not only district policy, but also licensure regulations and laws to protect everyone within the schooling community. But here's where it might seem a little confusing. Often, policies or statutes might be called a code of ethics, but, in actuality, it's a code of conduct. Anytime a standard includes the phrase, "An educator shall not," it's a sure sign it is a code a conduct. Codes of conduct define a boundary that cannot be crossed and defines possible sanctions. Codes of ethics, on the other hand, don't tell us what to do or not to do, but rather provide the collective voice of the profession giving guidance and considerations as we navigate the difficult decisions inherent in our daily practice. Unlike policy or law, codes of ethics can be contextualized to fit the unique nature of every school and community. The differences that exist between districts, schools and even classrooms necessitate diverse solutions. A code of ethics allows for that. As you may recall, one of the educators was trying to determine how to respond to parental social media expectations not covered in policy. To navigate these gray areas, an educator should consider consulting the profession's code of ethics – the professional norms to inform decision-making. In other words, navigating through the difficulties of our profession goes far beyond just knowing the policies, statutes or laws … and that's where ethics comes into play.

		But here's what is important – our professional decisions should not be based on our own personal values. It should be based on the agreed upon norms of our profession – a Code of Ethics. Just to clarify, codes of conduct are designed to protect all stakeholders within the school community. They establish basic boundaries that cannot be crossed without consequence. Professional ethics, on the other hand, are collectively agreed upon standards that prompt, guide and inform decision-making. Codes of conduct and codes of ethics are both vitally important in framing our practice as educators. They help to define a standard that can bear scrutiny and inspire confidence as we act in the public's best interest. And why is that important? Our actions need to be professionally defensible, and that can't always happen if unless it's based on a common standard of practice that is informed by both policy and ethics. In other words, policy and ethics become the minimal acceptable standards of professional practice.
SCENARIO: WHAT COULD GO WRONG?		
[7:32]	Narrator	But guess what? Ethical decision-making doesn't end by making a singular decision. But you already knew that. There are always unforeseen issues that emerge. Each decision may necessitate another decision-making process. Do you remember the concerns the student teacher had about her cooperating teacher spending all night on the phone with a student? While that phone conversation may have assisted the student with an immediate problem, there are other issues that may emerge: • How would a sustained late night phone call between a minor and an adult be viewed by a parent? • Imagine if the content of the conversation was posted online by the student. • Could there be perceptions of bias, favoritism? • Is there the potential the student could be harmed by advice from a person with no training in counseling?
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[8:17]	Narrator	Okay, now you discuss what could possibly go wrong. In other words, how could this phone call between a student in need and a caring teacher actually lead to unanticipated consequences?

[8:43]	Narrator	How does the student teacher respond to the knowledge of the cooperating teacher's actions? Remember, what might be appropriate for one educator may not be an appropriate response for another in a different situation. Situations are contextualized, not a singular application.
		It is important to remember a singular decision does not negate future risk. Often resolving one ethical dilemma may actually lead to other dilemmas. Remember, often complex decisions don't reside in a vacuum.
		It all comes down to this – choosing the most appropriate course of action given the situation's unique variables. But that course of action, it needs to be defensible.
		And we don't have to go about it alone.
		Many of us know the benefits of thoughtful, professional conversations with our colleagues. Imagine if these conversations, could be extended across the profession.
		That is exactly what codes of ethics do – they link together the experiences and knowledge of past and current educators.
		There is good news!
		We now have such a code, called the Model Code of Ethics for Educators, to assist in professional decision-making.
CLOSING QUESTION		
[9:53]	Narrator	So how might such a code of ethics be created? That is exactly what we are going to discuss in Segment 3.

MCEE DISCUSSION GUIDE

VIDEO SEGMENT 3: Exploring the Model Code of Ethics for Educators

In the second video segment, we discussed core concepts in professional ethics. Segment 3 introduces the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) as a tool to assist in navigating the complexities of our profession.

In this video segment you learned more about how the MCEE was developed and its potential impact on the profession. Additional 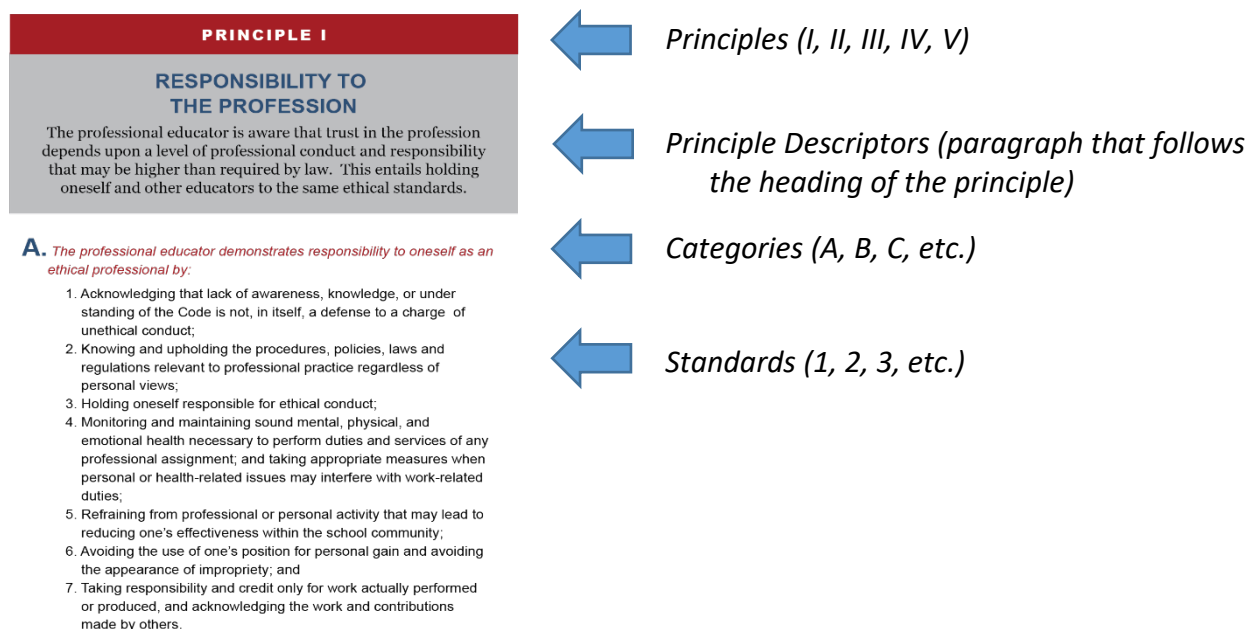information can be found in the following resource: Hutchings, T., (July 6, 2020), June 25, 2015: *Shifting the Narrative*

Reflection and Discussion: MCEE Development

MCEE Development

1. Why was it important the MCEE Task Force consisted of Pre-K through Grade 12 practitioners?
2. Why was it important to utilize practitioners on the Task Force representing various educational roles, certification/licensure areas, gender/race/ethnicity, and different geographic regions?

Also in this video segment, you learned about the organization of the MCEE, outlined as follows:
(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 2:18 – 4:17)

Principles (I, II, III, IV, V)

Principle Descriptors (paragraph that follows the heading of the principle)

Categories (A, B, C, etc.)

Standards (1, 2, 3, etc.)

MCEE Principles and Descriptors

1. Read the descriptive paragraphs that follow each of the five MCEE Principles.
2. Choose one descriptive paragraph and discuss the foundational importance of this MCEE Principle to the profession.

MCEE Categories

Each category has a one-sentence description introducing the standards.

1. Read the categories and the subsequent standards.
2. Using the previously selected MCEE Principle, compare the one-sentence descriptions that are used to introduce the standards. Discuss their differences.

MCEE Standards

Read each of the standards for the selected MCEE Principle. Choose **one** and discuss the following:

1. What is the relevancy of that standard to an educator's practice?
2. What are some possible situations educators may encounter relevant to that standard?

Reflection and Discussion: Application of the MCEE Standards

One approach when utilizing the Code is to first identify the tension(s) encountered by the educator within the situation. The following scenario in Segment 1 of the video, for example, highlights an educator's concern regarding parental texting: *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 1:05 – 1:22)*

> *"Some of my kindergarten parents are forever texting me about their kids.*
> *I'm beginning to feel I have crossed a line … I spend hours at home replying*
> *to their questions and comments sent to me on social media."*

The text above exposes several tensions the educator in the video may be experiencing:

- Risk of communicating with parents through text messages
- Infringement on personal time
- Perceptions related to developing friendships with parents
- Concern about limiting communication with parents

Once situational tensions have been identified, MCEE standards can be used to assist in determining the most appropriate course of action. For each of the previously identified tensions, a MCEE standard reference has been provided below.

1. Locate and read the standard referenced in each of the tensions and discuss how it relates to the situation.

    a. Risk of communicating with parents through text messages (MCEE V.A.1)
    b. Infringement on personal time (MCEE I.A.4)
    c. Perceptions related to developing friendships with parents (MCEE IV.E.3)
    d. Concern about limiting communication with parents (MCEE IV.A.1)

2. Discuss other standards from the Code that may prompt additional considerations in how to navigate the situation involving the kindergarten teacher.

Reflection and Discussion: Exploring the MCEE

Excerpts from the texts of four additional situations presented in Segment 1 of the video are presented below. *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 1:23 – 3:22)*

Apply the following instructions for each of the situations:
1. Identify several possible tensions.
2. Locate **one** standard from the Code that may assist in identifying a potential course of action.

> *"I'm a paraprofessional and I have worked with the same group of low-incidence self-contained students for six years. The teachers come and go – a revolving door. But I know these kids and their needs far better than my supervising teachers. Yet, I have to support their choices even if I don't agree."*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 1:23)*

> *"Teachers often build informal relationships with students. That's important – but how far is too far? My colleague seems to always have this one student in his classroom before and after school – and sometimes during lunch. I know they have lots in common other than school – but when does it become too personal and not professional?"*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 1:41 – 1:59)*

> *"I'm new – a first-year middle school teacher. I don't think I can do this much longer – I'm exhausted and am losing myself. As the rookie teacher, I feel like I have been assigned the most difficult load, I'm coaching three sports, chaperoning dances, and sponsoring student activities. I want my colleagues and school administrators to believe I can handle it – but honestly, I don't know if I can handle it."*
> *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 2:00 – 2:28)*

> *"As a high school coach, I face the same tough decision several times during the season – there is always that one student who doesn't have a ride home late at night after a competition. I fear for the student's safety by making her walk several miles through a dangerous part of town, yet our district policy states employees are not to place students in their personal vehicles. So here is my question – how do I weigh a student's safety against district policy? I don't want to lose my job, but … placing a student in jeopardy?"*
> *(Video Reference. Segment 1. Time stamp 2:54 – 3:23)*

Reflection and Discussion: Common Themes and Topics

At first glance, there may seem to be repetition of themes and topics within the Code. Yet a deeper analysis reveals common themes have various applications depending on the MCEE Principle. For example, confidentiality of information may be applied differently with students, parents, colleagues, or community stakeholders.

1. Locate and discuss how the following concepts are reflected differently within the Code:

    - Equity, equality and antidiscrimination
    - Conflict of interest
    - Confidentiality
    - Gifting with stakeholders
    - Boundaries

MCEE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT
Segment **3**: Exploring the Model Code

Video Playing Time: 6 minutes. 12 seconds.

TIME STAMP	SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPT
		OPENING
[0:08]	Narrator	Virtually all professions have recognized the need for a code of ethics early in their evolution. It may seem shocking a profession like education with such a long, distinguished history, has not had a unified code of ethics – until now. It's called the Model Code of Ethics for Educators, referred to, more commonly, as the Model Code or MCEE.
		The Model Code goes beyond just decision-making. It is also meant to provide a common understanding and establish trust between students, educators, parents, boards of education and other community stakeholders.
		So how did the Model Code of Ethics for Educators come about?
		MCEE HISTORY
[0:47]	Narrator	Historically, professional codes of ethics have been created by the practitioners within their profession. Likewise, the Model Code of Ethics for Educators was created by paraprofessionals, teachers, principals, superintendents – those currently working within the schooling environment.
		But let's take a step back to understand how the Model Code was created. Between 2012 and 2014 there was a series of purposeful initiatives – symposiums, surveys, webinars, presentations, meetings with a variety of educator stakeholders and professional organizations – to affirm the need and assess the support for the development of a unified professional code of ethics for the field of education.
		In the spring of 2014, educational organizations selected a diverse and representative group of P-12 practitioners from across the country to serve on the Model Code Task Force. The group met for their first face-to-face meeting in June 2014 and began a year-long process of drafting a code of ethics.
		After numerous face-to-face and virtual meetings, the Model Code Task Force disseminated a draft edition of the code for public comment in February 2015. Based on feedback, the final draft of the

		Model Code was unveiled at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on June 25, 2015.
		Just like other professions, the Model Code of Ethics for Educators is regularly updated in response to changes within the profession. In essence, it is a living document.
MCEE ARCHITECTURE		
[2:18]	Narrator	The Model Code is divided into categories, sub-categories and standards. • There are 5 overarching categories defining the professional responsibilities of all educators; these are called principles. • Those 5 categories or principles are further subdivided into sections. • Within each section resides multiple standards. So what are these 5 principles? Let's take a high level look at each one. For those interested, the Guidebook provides a deeper exploration into the principles. Principle I: Responsibility to the Profession What is our responsibility to the profession? It entails holding oneself and other educators to the same ethical standards. We need to be aware of the importance of the public trust necessary in our profession. Principle II: Responsibility for Professional Competence We all know professional competence is important. As professional educators, we must be committed to the highest level of proficiency. Society's trust in our ability to provide the best educational opportunities for children is dependent on commitment to competence. Principle III: Responsibility to Students Principle III addresses how we can best treat all students with dignity and respect in a vast, multi-faceted society, while ensuring their health, safety and well-being. Principle IV: Responsibility to the School Community This principle addresses how to best promote positive relationships and effective interactions with colleagues, parents and other members of the schooling community.

		Principle V: Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology
		Principle V addresses how we maintain distinctions between our personal and professional lives in the era of digital and electronic media.
		The substance of the Model Code resides within the standards, housed within each of the principles. These standards provide guidance and promote meaningful discussion that allows for individual and collective decision-making.
UTILITY OF THE CODE		
[4:18]	Narrator	The utility of the Model Code is directly related to its architecture – how it is organized, the intentionality of how each standard is phrased, and the way each standard is constructed. For example, • Many of the standards address risks and consequences. • The standards intentionally use words and phrases that allow for application to the practitioner's own context. • Each standard starts with an action verb. In other words, these standards are what ethical educators actually do. • Finally, you'll notice the standards do not tell us what to do or what not to do. Rather they create a framework so that, as practitioners, we can reference the Model Code to assist in determining the most appropriate course of action for the complex situations we face. In short, the standards are designed to prompt and inform our thinking.
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[5:08]	Narrator	Let's take a few minutes and examine the Model Code. • Look at the architecture of the Code. Notice how the organization of the code – its principles, categories and standards support ease of use. • Look at the Code and notice the action words at the front of every standard, which means we do it. It is not an aspiration. It needs to be reflected in our daily practice. • What are some other unique characteristics you can find in the Code? • Choose a standard that has direct application to your current educational practice and share why.
CLOSING QUESTION		
[6:00]	Narrator	So what might using the code of ethics look like in professional practice? This is what we are going to discuss in Segment 4.

MCEE DISCUSSION GUIDE

VIDEO SEGMENT **4**: Exploring Applications

In Segment 4, educators demonstrated two approaches to using the MCEE.

In the first approach, the educators responded to a scenario from Segment 1 regarding the concerned colleague who spends an inordinate amount of time with a student.
 (Video Reference: Segment 4. Time stamp 1:40 – 7:08)

Choose **one** of the remaining scenarios from Segment 1, which are summarized below, and discuss the following questions: *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 0:47 – 4:08)*

- A teacher regularly covering for a colleague who is routinely late for supervisory duties
- Parents continually contacting the kindergarten teacher through text and social media
- A paraprofessional acquiescing to the teacher even when she disagrees
- An educator concerned about a colleague who spends an inordinate amount of time with a student
- An exhausted first-year middle school teacher who is unsure if she can continue
- An educator field-testing a tech product for a vendor in the classroom
- A coach making tough decisions regarding transporting student-athletes home late at night
- An administrator's concerns regarding the classroom competency of a veteran teacher
- A student teacher contemplates the appropriateness of over-involvement in the personal lives of students

1. What is the **core issue - that issue that might apply to all educators --** in the selected scenario?
2. What are unique variables within the selected scenario that might influence one's approach to decision-making? For example, what is the impact of time of day, subject area, location or even the student's age?
3. Are there any policies or procedures that should be considered in approaching the situation? If so, what are they?
4. Discuss the potential unintended consequences that need to be considered.
5. What MCEE standard(s) may prompt additional considerations in how to navigate this situation?

In the second approach, the educators discussed a topic relevant to all educators – multiple relationships. *(Video Reference: Segment 1. Time stamp 7:17 – 15:54)*

A multiple relationship exists when an educator has a personal association with a student or with a parent outside the current professional role. Common examples include a parent who is a best friend, a student who is a neighbor, or even friending a parent or student on social media.

Reflection and Discussion:

Like multiple relationships, the topics below are relevant to educators. Select **one** and discuss an experience that requires a difficult decision. *(Video Reference: Segment 4. Time stamp 15:20 – 15:54)*

- Parental situations
- Student personal information – what and when to hold in confidence or share
- Time and place for communication with students
- Teacher self-care
- Approaching colleagues regarding ethical situations

1. What is the **core issue – that issue that might apply to all educators** – in the selected scenario?
2. What are unique variables within the selected scenario that might influence one's approach to decision-making? For example, what is the impact of time of day, subject area, location or even the student's age?
3. Are there any policies or procedures that should be considered in approaching the situation? If so, what are they?
4. Discuss the unintended consequences that need to be considered.
5. What MCEE standard(s) may prompt additional considerations in how to navigate this situation?

Reflection and Discussion:

The video exhibited the value of collegial conversation. How might these conversations assist educators as they navigate the complexities of their professional roles?

MCEE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT
Segment **4**: Exploring Applications

Video Playing Time: 17 minutes. 12 seconds.

TIME STAMP	SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPT
OPENING		
[0:18 – 1:01]	Educators	Unscripted dialogue among practicing educators
[1:02]	Narrator	In segments 1 through 3, we've learned foundational knowledge about professional ethics, including benefits for us as educators, and the structure of our profession's code of ethics. In segment 4, we will be discussing how to use the Model Code. Most educators are aware the profession is fraught with risk and complexity. And that's why professional ethics is so critical to our work. So what might using the Model Code of Ethics look like in professional practice? There are many ways to utilize the Model Code. Here, we are only going to show two approaches; so, let's look at the first.
EXAMPLE OF USE #1		
[1:40]	Narrator	Educators often build meaningful relationships with students. That's important – but when does it go too far?
[1:47]	Teacher	My colleague seems to always have this one student in his class before and after school – and sometimes during lunch. I know they have lots in common other than school, and I know the student struggles with family issues, but spending hours every day together? Is that the teacher's role?
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[2:04]	Narrator	Take a few minutes and explore the different issues raised by our colleague regarding teacher and student interactions.
[2:22]	Narrator	In your discussion, did you consider other stakeholders' viewpoints? Let's hear from a teacher, as well as a principal and parent.
[2:30]	Parent	I know I'm a teacher, but I'm also a parent – so as a parent I would be concerned about this.
[2:36]	Principal	Educators are often seen as mentors and adult role models for students, but there is a fine line between healthy relationships and over-involvement.
[2:44]	Teacher	So what is the short term and long term best interest of the student?

STOP AND DISCUSS		
[2:49]	Narrator	If we don't consider those perspectives or any other possible variables, what might be some unintended consequences? Or, in other words, what could possibly go wrong? Take a minute and discuss what you think.
[3:09 – 5:27]	Educators	Unscripted dialogue among practicing educators
[5:28]	Narrator	This particular situation reflects our responsibility to our profession, responsibility to all students, and our responsibility to the school community. Remember the Model Code does not give us answers; it prompts discussion so the course of action comes from practitioners based on professional norms and local context – and it also helps to mitigate possible unforeseen consequences we have not previously considered. Let's watch our educators examine the Model Code to apply the standards to the questions and construct an appropriate course of action.
[6:04 – 6:46]	Educators	Unscripted dialogue among practicing educators
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[6:47]	Narrator	These educators found some standards that addressed the situation. Are there other principles and standards you think strengthen their course of action or change their approach?
[7:09]	Narrator	So you have seen how the Model Code can be applied to a single scenario. Let's now try a different approach to using the Code.
EXAMPLE OF USE #2		
[7:17]	Narrator	Let's watch our practitioners discuss a topic that is relevant to all educators – multiple relationships – when an educator has a personal association with a student or with a parent outside the current professional role – a parent who is a best friend; a student who is a neighbor; or social media friends with either. Let's also watch how they use the Code.
[7:42 – 15:02]	Educators	Unscripted dialogue among educators
[15:03]	Narrator	Notice one topic can generate a number of situations all educators face. Once we recognize that we all face similar situations, we are free to discuss and create agreed-upon norms for how we should approach those situations.
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[15:20]	Narrator	We are going to give you (the viewer) five topics – pick one to discuss: 1. Parental situations 2. Student personal information – hold in confidence or share? 3. Time and place for communication with students 4. Teacher self-care

		5. Approaching colleagues regarding potentially compromising situations (self or others) Allow the topic to generate situations that are authentic in your own practice or experience. Discuss how the Model Code standards may be helpful in your situation. Be sure to consider educator effectiveness and how to best mitigate the potential harm to the student.
[15:55]	Narrator	We sure hope you considered how to ensure educator effectiveness and the mitigation of potential harm to the student in your discussion. We gave you five, we chose one – but there are a limitless number of topics educators face each and every day. Imagine if, as educators, we created considerations for the topics we regularly face– like the five examples we provided. Please note in the first method of approaching the Model Code, we were responding to a situation. In the second method, our goal was to create solutions prior to a situation occurring by discussing together those core, underlying ethical tensions we all face. The Model Code doesn't tell us what to do – but through collegial conversations, collectively we can best determine the more appropriate pathways through our complex profession. These professional exchanges are not always comfortable, but the more we have them the easier they become.
CLOSING QUESTION		
[16:57]	Narrator	So how might these conversations impact the professional lives of educators?

MCEE DISCUSSION GUIDE

VIDEO SEGMENT **5**: Exploring Solutions

Throughout the video segments you have learned more about professional ethics, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, recognizing risks, blind spots and the blurring of roles. You also learned about the structure of the MCEE and examples of ways to use it.

Reflection and Discussion:

1. Can you imagine a world where professions are not guided by ethics? What would it look like?
2. Why are ethics especially important in a profession responsible for the well-being of students?
3. Let's picture the future of our profession — next year, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years from now — in which all educators are prepared and have ongoing professional learning in professional ethics and the MCEE. Discuss the impact on the field of education.
4. How does the following quotation relate to your understanding of how the MCEE can be used?

   > "Awareness of the ethics codes is crucial … but the formal standards are not a substitute for an active deliberative, and creative approach to fulfilling our ethical responsibilities. They prompt, guide, and inform our ethical consideration – they do not serve as a substitute for it."
   > (Pope, K. & Vasquez, M. (2011). Ethics in psychotherapy and counseling (4th edition).

5. What specific insights have you gained through this professional learning experience and subsequent discussions?
6. How will your professional practice benefit from learning about educator ethics and the MCEE?

MCEE VIDEO TRANSCRIPT
Segment **5**: Exploring Solutions

Video Playing Time: 3 minutes. 37 seconds.

TIME STAMP	SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPT
OPENING		
[0:12]	Narrator	So as educators, we know what it's like to be faced with a multitude of decisions every day. We often find ourselves making these decisions alone. Remember, the Model Code is just a starting point. It doesn't tell us what to do – but when included with collegial conversations, we can best determine the appropriate pathways to navigate the complexities of our profession. Now, let's see what our educators took away from their conversations?"
IMPACT		
[0:40]	Educator #1	I am more aware of not only my actions and decision-making, but how I can assist my colleagues as well.
[0:46]	Educator #2	I should exemplify behaviors that uphold the dignity and integrity of the profession.
[0:51]	Educator #3	I feel I can make more informed everyday decisions rather than consistently consulting a supervisor.
[0:57]	Educator #4	I am cognitive of my professional responsibilities.
[1:00]	Educator #5	I want to represent myself in a manner that honors my profession.
[1:03]	Educator #6	I feel empowered through the use of the Model Code.
[1:06]	Educator #7	I have learned to be more aware of my position as an educator in the community.
[1:10]	Educator #8	It validates my decisions.
[1:13]	Educator #9	More confident to make decisions without second guessing.
[1:16]	Educator #10	I believe someday teachers will be taught this from day one…not use personal beliefs and experiences…but rather the fair decision-making each circumstance deserves.
STOP AND DISCUSS		
[1:26]	Narrator	Now that we have heard from educators who have found the Model Code useful, how do you think it can best be utilized in your specific professional context?

CLOSING		
[1:51]	Narrator	As we close this video, I'd like to share a quotation with you that reflects much of what we have discussed, "Awareness of the ethics codes is crucial … but the formal standards are not a substitute for an active, deliberative and creative approach to fulfilling our ethical responsibilities. They prompt, guide, and inform our ethical consideration – they do not serve as a substitute for it."
		It is important that each of us understands the Model Code is a valuable and important resource, but the Model Code is not the solution. In professional ethics, the solution always resides with the practitioners – with us – through our willingness to engage our professional practice through honest personal reflections and supportive collegial conversations, including the collective voices of our colleagues found in the Model Code.
		We, as professional educators, have a responsibility and an opportunity to elevate our life's work through thoughtful, professional decision-making.
		We are not alone – we do not have to make these decisions by ourselves. We have an ethical guide in the Model Code of Ethics for Educators, and we have each other.

A Special Thank You

Members, Staff, Associates, and Friends of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)
And the National Council for the Advancement of Educator Ethics (NCAEE)
who contributed their time, experience and expertise to the MCEE Video and Guidebooks

Special Acknowledgment

Anne Marie Fenton
Project Lead and NCAEE Facilitator
Dr. Troy Hutchings
Senior Policy Advisor, NASDTEC
Dr. Phillip S. Rogers
Executive Director, NASDTEC

The video content was created by Troy Hutchings, Ed.D. and was informed by his academic research, writings, and the numerous workshops and presentations he has provided to educators.

With Appreciation

All teachers for their steadfast commitment to ethical, effective education.

01/12/2022