

Commonwealth of Dominica

Dominica's Code of Ethics for Teachers

Preface

Francis Bacon posited: **"I hold every man a debtor to his profession."** The Dominica Code of Ethics for Teachers is recognition that we have come of age and can now take responsibility for our professional progress in the teaching service. We have now reached the point when issues regarding professional conduct and expectations are clearly documented and highlighted. Dominican teachers have, for some time now, been challenged with the question as to whether we are a full-fledged professional body. Are we now in a position to determine entry qualifications? Do we determine our own pay scales? Do we have the power to regularize conduct specific to the teaching service? While we have made some progress on the questions establishing who is hired we are yet to address matters of professional conduct and salaries. Thus this Code is the instrument with which we shall eventually manage these issues.

The Code is the result of arduous work and commitment of several players. The OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) has been a key player. The tireless support of many teachers, education officials and union representatives is also acknowledged. Without their significant efforts the Code would not have been a reality.

Biographer Fawn M. Brodie aptly sums up the challenges we face as teachers in the following observation: **"Housework is a breeze. Cooking is a pleasant diversion. Putting up a retaining wall is a lark. But teaching is like climbing a mountain."** The Code of Ethics for teachers creates a ladder to facilitate our ascent to the mountain of teaching excellence. Let us welcome that challenge.

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(December 2007)

Representatives of all OECS Ministries and Teachers' Unions/Associations participated in the development of the Draft code of Ethics. The document was discussed, modified and adapted for Dominica by a committee comprising Ministry of Education officials and teachers.

1.0 Introduction

- (1) We believe that the teaching profession expects high standards of behaviour from its members. A Code of Ethics document is a formal framework of ideals that guide and encourage all teachers to strive to achieve these high standards of behaviour.
- (2) This sub-regional Code of Ethics recognizes the commonalities of the OECS countries and promotes the concept of regional unity and co-operation. It is the result of joint efforts of educators who are cognizant of the need for teachers to obtain the necessary support so as to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards in their professional work.

- (3) The Code of Ethics is a set of prescriptive rules or regulations which seeks to set standards for all categories of teachers including principals and to enhance the public image of, and trust and confidence in teachers. The Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports and Youth Affairs expects all principals and teachers to uphold these guidelines and to maintain and promote desirable conduct, dignity and integrity of the teaching profession.
- (4) The document is generic and interactive, comprising broad principles with sub headings and examples of behaviour which are indicative and illustrative, but are exhaustive.

2.0 Preamble

- (1) Teaching is a noble profession. The quality and character of the individual members of the teaching profession influence to a great extent the social, economic, intellectual and moral levels of society. Teachers must therefore understand fully the critical role they play in the education of the nation. They should also feel a common commitment to education and nation-building while experiencing a common identity as members of the teaching profession.
- (2) The teaching profession is guided by a set of core values and principles that include inter alia:
 - (1) Commitment to duty;
 - (2) Love of children;
 - (3) Trust and confidentiality;
 - (4) Respect for law and order;
 - (5) Accountability; and
 - (6) Democracy

3.0 Commitment to Student Learning

Teachers are key to the provision of a good quality education and critical to the success of students. Their commitment to student learning is vital to the educational process. Therefore we shall endeavour to:

4.0 Recognize and respect diversity among students

- (1) Acknowledge the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each student.
- (2) Provide guidance and encouragement to enable each student to strive to reach his/her full potential.
- (3) Respect and deal justly and considerately with each student regardless of gender, ethnic origin, social or economic status, and political or religious affiliation.
- (4) Be sensitive to difference in family structure
- (5) Plan and execute activities to meet the needs of all students

5.0 Focus on choices that affect students' opportunity to learn

- (1) Place high value on and demonstrate a commitment to excellence
- (2) Be always prepared as a teacher
- (3) Plan all lessons to meet the needs and interest of students.
- (4) Maintain high standards of professional competence.
- (5) Endeavour to ensure that their students be given the full amount of contact time with maximum time-on-task
- (6) Employ a variety of teaching/learning methods that would enhance student learning
- (7) Involve students in activities that encourage them to think analytically
- (8) Deal effectively justly and constantly with student behaviour

6.0 Establish and maintain a supportive teaching and learning environment

- (1) Improve constantly teaching and learning facilities and the classroom environment.
- (2) Protect the safety and welfare of students.
- (3) Maintain order and discipline among students while they are in school or engaged in school-related activities
- (4) Promote character-building in students

7.0 Recognize the importance of inclusiveness in the classroom

- (1) Encourage all students to show respect for others and be thoughtful and helpful at all times, especially to challenged children
- (2) Encourage the acceptance of all students regardless of class, ethnic origin, status, religion or political belief

8.0 Promote student development

- (1) Develop in students an appreciation for high standards and a desire to strive for excellence in their various spheres of life.
- (2) Review with students their assessment and progress and guide them in setting and achieving meaningful goals.
- (3) Encourage students in the pursuit of learning.
- (4) Help students to acquire a wide range of essential social graces and skills.

9.0 Establish mutual respect and trust

- (1) Speak and act in a respectful and dignified manner with students at all times
- (2) Encourage students to respect difference in opinion among their peers

10.0 Recognize the rights of the student

- (1) Respect the rights of all students as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- (2) Act with dignity, humanity and discretion in their relations with students.
- (3) Protect students from any form of verbal, mental, physical or sexual abuse.
- (4) Provide scope for the development and expansion of independent point of view

11.0 Respect and protect student's right to privacy and confidentiality

- (1) Provide opportunities for establishing mutual confidence between teachers and students
- (2) Safeguard confidential information about students and only disclose such information to authorized personnel for compelling reasons or if required by law
- (3) Respect a student's right to withhold confidential information, except to a person authorized to receive it.
- (4) Show respect for personal property. Instil in students a deep respect for an individual's personal and private property.
- (5) Encourage equal treatment of students and other persons suffering from diseases (e.g. HIV and AIDS)

12.0 Provide opportunities for the development of students' self-worth and national and regional pride

- (1) Encourage development of student self-worth
- (2) Foster a spirit of tolerance, a respect for the law and authority, freedom and social justice
- (3) Encourage a sense of patriotism, national and regional pride
- (4) Encourage respect for national, regional international symbols, emblems, songs/anthems
- (5) Encourage an appreciation for regional cooperation and unity.
- (6) Encourage the widest possible participation in national, regional and international activities.

13.0 Commitment to the teaching profession

The quality of the teaching profession directly influences the future of the community, the nation and the region; therefore, the quality of the teaching profession is also directly related to the commitment of the professionals who deliver the service. Teachers shall strive to:

1. Maintain highest standards of professional competence and integrity

- a) Represent honestly their professionalism, qualifications and identify themselves only with recognised or accredited educational institutions
- b) Place their professional service and position first and not be engaged in other employment that is in conflict with their professional status.
- c) Follow the proper and recognised channels for obtaining a position, promotion or self-advancement professionally.
- d) Speak in terms that elevate/uplift the profession and in this way encourage worthy people to enter it
- e) Be objective in all their judgments, assessments and reports
- f) Be knowledgeable of their legal, professional and administrative rights and responsibilities
- g) Make appropriate use of time granted for professional purposes
- h) Engage in activities which promote order, discipline and industry

2. Be a role model

- a) Speak and act in such a manner as to be worthy role models for their students.
- b) Exhibit at all times the highest standards of behaviour
- c) Be punctual and regular in the performance of their duties
- d) Behave in a manner this is creditable to the teaching profession
- e) Dress in a manner consistent with the dignity and honour of the teaching profession
- f) Honour responsibility to students and refrain from illicit or inappropriate relationships

3. Be up-to-date with relevant knowledge and curriculum practices

- a) Keep up-to-date through continual professional and personal development
- b) Participate in policy development and implementation
- c) Participate in a responsible manner in the development and implementation of policies affecting education

- d) Recognise school administrator's authority and seek to influence administrative policies and practices through acceptable channels.

14.0 Relationship with Parents, Guardians and Families

Recognising that parents are critical partners in the education of their children, it is essential that teachers commit themselves to working with parents in an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect, and strive to:

1. Observe the rights of parents/guardians and promote collaboration

- a) Recognize the rights of parents to consultation through agreed channels on the welfare and progress of their child as a student
- b) Respect the lawful parental authority in providing professional advice in the best interest of the child.
- c) Give information on the true status of a student, who is a minor, performance and or behaviour of students when requested by a parent.
- d) Take the opportunity to update parents on the laws and regulations affecting their child as a student and their role as parents.

2. Promote collaboration with parents

- (a) Encourage parents to be actively involved in the education of their children and to actively support the learning process by ensuring that their children avoid and/or are protected from any form of child labour and any kind of indulgence which may adversely affect the child's education.

3. Build mutual trust and respect with parents

- (a) Know the parents or guardians of their students and maintain social contact with them in the interest of their students.
- (b) Respect the private nature of the special knowledge about students and their families and use that knowledge only in the students' interests.
- (c) Respect family privacy and maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality.
- (d) Honour trust under which confidential information is exchanged.

4. Recognize and respect parent's cultural and socioeconomic diversity

- (a) Act with compassion, dignity and discretion at all times in their relationship with parents, regardless of race, religion, political belief, age, physical characteristics and ancestry or occupation.
- (b) Deal fairly and considerately with each parent.

- (c) Display no bias in dealing with student which will demonstrate a preference for parental socio-economic and cultural status.

15.0 Relationship with colleagues

Teachers in extending due respect to their colleagues' willingness to work together professionally, shall endeavour to:

1. Build an atmosphere of mutual trust among colleagues

- a) Refrain from making defamatory remarks concerning another colleague.
- b) Safeguard confidential information acquired about colleagues professionally and only disclose such information for compelling professional reasons or if required by law.
- c) Respect and encourage the confidence of students in other teachers.
- d) Resolve conflicts respectfully and peacefully

2. Provide opportunities for reflective dialogue

- a) Resolve to share professional knowledge, experience and insights with colleagues in an atmosphere of meaningful fellowship
- b) Cooperate with other educators in matters accepted as being in the best interest of students and the school

3. Build a sense of mutual support and responsibility for effective instruction

- a) Support the professional competence and only do otherwise after first discussing the matter with the said colleague
- b) Allow no gratuities or gifts to influence their judgment in the exercise of their professional duties
- c) Evaluate through appropriate professional procedures, conditions within a district or institution of learning, or take appropriate remedial action as deemed necessary

4. Assist beginning teachers

- a) Promote collegiality among colleagues by respecting their professional standing and opinions, and be prepared to offer advice and assistance particularly to those beginning their career or in training
- b) Be responsive to colleagues who seek professional assistance.

16.0 Relationship with the Community

The realisation of quality education depends on the commitment of teachers and supportive communities. It is necessary therefore for schools to develop the kind of

relationships that fully meet the needs of the students and the wider community. Teachers therefore shall strive to:

1. Establish and maintain supportive school-community learning environment

- a) Recognize the role of the community in the development of the children
- b) Seek available support and resources from within the community to improve the learning processes and environment
- c) Establish and sustain harmonious school – community relations

2. Encourage community participation in the decision – making process and implementation of such decisions

- a) Acknowledge the right and responsibility of the community to participate in the formulation of educational policy
- b) Inform the school community of school plans and projects and solicit community input in planning and execution of those projects.

3. Recognize and work with support agencies in the community

- a) Identify key community resources and resource persons for contribution towards school improvement
- b) Cooperate with approved agencies or bodies in matters concerning the welfare of students
- c) Collectively seek the fullest possible cooperation with authorities in promoting the well being of students
- d) Seek to establish partnerships in community groups and or agencies
- e) Treat with respect the traditions and customs of all people in the community
- f) Seek to foster the interest of parents in the progress of their children
- g) Participate in community and environmental activities that impact positively on the community
- h) Organise social and educational activities within the community
- i) Instil in the students as well as the community the idea that all occupations are dignified and honourable as long as they are suited to the ability of the individual engaged in them

17.0 Commitment to civic duties

- (1) Respect and obey the constitution and existing laws of the country.

- (2) Appreciate and respect the dominant norms and values characteristic of their culture.
- (3) Help in the evaluation of the cultural and social consciousness of the community.

18.0 Promote networking between schools and the community

- (1) Establish friendly and co-operative relations with the community
- (2) Endeavour to actively engage themselves in community projects that are designed to further the advancement of education

19.0 Relationship with the teachers' and other recognized unions and professional associations

Teachers unions are committed to the promotion of education that helps to develop the persons' capacity to live fulfilled lives. They recognize their responsibility in the teaching environment and their role in civil society. They are also aware that commitment to their members is professional, educational and industrial and accept that membership in unions carries with it rights and responsibilities. Teachers shall strive to:

1. Recognize and abide by policies and decision of the governing bodies of the union

- a) Honour their financial commitments to the union as well as those commitments of the teachers by the union without compromising the principles and integrity of the teaching profession.
- b) Be constructive in their criticism of the union
- c) Adhere to collective agreements negotiated by the union
- d) Promote change from within the organization for its development
- e) Lend support to and participate in various activities of the union.

20.0 Relationship with the Employer

Having regard for the responsibilities inherent in the teaching process and the desire to attain and maintain high ethical standards and a healthy relationship with the Ministry of Education, teachers shall strive to:

1. Work within the scope and boundaries of education laws and policies

- a) Honour agreements made between the union and the employer
- b) Be consistent in the execution of school policies and the enforcement of rules and regulations
- c) Observe all oral or written agreements arrived at with school administration and Ministry of Education

2. Observe general orders and terms of employment

- a) Use the established channels of communication in dealing with all job-related matters
- b) Report to relevant authorities through established channels all matters that impact on learning and teaching conditions in the school
- c) Be knowledgeable of their legal and administrative rights and responsibilities
- d) Respect the provisions of collective contracts and the provisions concerning students' rights
- e) Carry out reasonable instructions from management personnel and have the right to question instructions through a clearly determined procedure
- f) Promote and defend such plans and policies agreed upon by the union and the school administration and Ministry of Education

3. Provide a high standard of professional service

- a) Render to all legitimate and relevant persons in authority the necessary respect, courtesies and cooperation at all times
- b) Provide honestly, truthfully and objectively any and all such information to the relevant and legitimate authorities to assist investigation/research into any school-related issue or problem that may arise from time to time
- c) Refrain from any word, statement or action which may bring into disrepute the name or status of any teacher in authority, education officer, or other agents of the Ministry of Education
- d) Execute all responsible instructions and directions originating from the Ministry of Education as given by principals, education officers and other Education Officials
- e) Take reasonable care for the conservation of any and all resources provided or supplied to the institution/school
- f) Encourage students to take care of school buildings

21.0 Conclusion

Fundamental to any profession is a sense of common values and expectations of and for one another. The teaching profession has in addition a basis in moral authority that is derived from the central social importance of teaching and socializing children. Hence a high level of public respect and confidence is best achieved when teachers themselves establish and maintain a reputation for integrity, competence and commitment.

Adherence to the above becomes effective with immediate effect.