

Kennarasamband Íslands
The Icelandic Teachers' Union

Teachers' Code of Ethics

A code of ethics for teachers has been developed in order to promote professionalism and strengthen teachers' awareness of themselves as a distinct occupational group. The code serves teachers as a guide in their work.

1. Teachers work to educate students and promote their general development through teaching, nurturing and training.
2. Teachers respect students' rights, safeguard their interests, strengthen their self-image and demonstrate respect, interest, and concern for every individual student.
3. Teachers uphold the equal rights of all students in their work in the educational system. Teachers endeavour to counteract prejudice and do not discriminate against students on any grounds, such as gender, nationality or religion.
4. Teachers endeavour to create a positive working atmosphere, establish fair rules for work and personal conduct, and promote a stimulating learning environment.
5. Teachers endeavour to instil respect for the environment and cultural values in their students.
6. Teachers make every effort to maintain and strengthen their professional competence and keep abreast innovations and improvements in education.
7. Teachers cooperate with parents and legal guardians when needed and always ensure that the information given to guardians is correct and reliable.
8. Teachers respect the rights of guardians to take decisions on behalf of students who have not reached the age of majority, and teachers will not discuss a student's personal affairs with professionals outside the school unless such action is unavoidable in order to safeguard the welfare and legal rights of the child involved
9. Teachers cultivate a relationship of trust with students.
10. Teachers maintain the confidentiality of a student's private affairs and those of his guardians when teachers acquire knowledge of such matters in the course of their work.
11. Teachers uphold the honour and interests of the teaching profession.
12. Teachers work together in a professional manner, participate in policy-making and take an active role in the day-to-day operation of schools.
13. Teachers demonstrate full respect for each other as individuals in their written and spoken utterances, and in their personal conduct toward their colleagues.

This code of ethics is subject to review at regular intervals.

Development of the Code of Ethics for Teachers

The work of formulating a code of ethics for teachers was initiated in 1991 by the Educational Affairs Council of the old Icelandic Teachers' Union (KÍ). From 1993-1999, professional committees appointed by the predecessors of this union, KÍ and HÍK, cooperated to produce a draft version of a code of ethics for teachers.

In 1989, the executive board of the Association of Teachers in Preschools (FL) decided that it should have a code of ethics, and the union board appointed the first ethics committee, which has been active ever since. In 1991, the preschool teachers' union formulated a code of ethics for their members, which was revised in 1993, 1995 and 1999.

In 2001, the steering committee of the KÍ (the new Teachers' Union founded in 2000) Educational Affairs Council decided that it was time to present a draft of the code of ethics to the KÍ national congress in March 2002 for approval or rejection. When FL joined the Icelandic Teachers' Union in 2001, a new draft version of the code was produced, which was based on the FL code and a draft version of a code for KÍ (the old organisation) and HÍK formulated in 1999. The educational affairs committee, the executive boards of all KI member organisations and the FL ethics committee produced this new draft of the code of ethics. At the annual meeting of the KÍ Educational Affairs Council in November 2001, a draft version of the code of ethics for teachers was discussed and criticism and comments presented on various aspects of it. This was followed by discussion of these suggestions, and advice was also sought from the Ethics Institute of the University of Iceland.

In 2000, there was a poll of members of the primary and secondary teachers' unions, in which members were asked to state whether or not teachers should adopt a code of ethics. There was a large majority in favour of teachers adopting such a code: 86% of primary teachers, and 80% of secondary teachers. Only 6% of secondary teachers and 3% of primary teachers opposed having a code of ethics.