

## MAINE EDUCATORS' CODE OF ETHICS

This code seeks to apply the general principles of ethics to the specific obligations, rights, and privileges of the teaching profession, and its intent is:

- a. To fortify those teachers and other school officials who have already adopted ethical practices.
- b. To furnish a guide to those who are not yet sure of their standards of conduct.
- c. To inform the public as to what educators themselves consider to be suitable rules of conduct for those who are engaged in educational work.

The term "teacher" as used in this code shall include all who are serving education, whether in classroom or in office.

### ARTICLE I

#### Relations to Pupils and the Home

**Section 1.** Teachers should assume responsibility for the welfare of their pupils through wise understanding of their individual problems, and they should seek to develop friendly cooperation between the home and the school, leading to a better understanding of the pupil's nature, interests, and environment.

**Section 2.** The teacher should be just, courteous, and professional in all his relations with pupils, and he should exercise scrupulous care with regard to confidential and official information concerning his pupils.

**Section 3.** Teachers should not discuss the physical, mental, moral, or financial limitations of pupils in such a way as to embarrass either pupils or parents unnecessarily. On the other hand, they should be candid and tactful in discussing with parents matters of real importance.

**Section 4.** A teacher should not accept pay for tutoring pupils of his classes in their current school work, nor should he refer such pupils to any member of his immediate family for tutoring when payment is involved.

**Section 5.** The teacher should seek to instill in the hearts of his pupils moral and intellectual principles that make for the best type of life, and to this he himself must be a person above reproach in personal habits and moral character.

This idea was well expressed by Herbert Hoover speaking at the annual convention of the Department of Superintendence in 1926: Page 1

“...The public school teacher cannot live apart; he cannot separate his teaching from his daily walk and conversation. He lives among his pupils during school hours, and among them and their parents all the time...His office, like that of the minister of religion, demands of him an exceptional standard of conduct.”

## ARTICLE II

### Relations to Civil Affairs

**Section 1.** As a member of the community the teacher should take an interest in undertakings that make for community betterment and, as far as practicable without interference with his professional duties, he should avail himself of opportunities to participate actively in the social and religious life of the community.

**Section 2.** It is the duty of every teacher to instill in his pupils a deep appreciation of the democratic way of life. He should direct full and free discussion of appropriate controversial issues with the expectation that comparisons, contrasts, and discussions will lead to an understanding, appreciation, acceptance, and practice of the principles of democracy. The teacher should refrain from using his classroom privileges and prestige to promote partisan politics, sectarian views, or selfish propaganda of any kind.

**Section 3.** The teacher should fulfill all his duties as a citizen, and keep his personal desires subservient to the public good. He should be loyal to the policies of the school system, the state, and the nation, at the same time exercising his right to make constructive criticisms and suggestions as favorable opportunity offers.

**Section 4.** The teacher's life should show that education makes people better citizens and better neighbors, and in his personal conduct he should avoid giving offense by needlessly departing from the accepted patterns of behavior in the community that he serves.

**Section 5.** It is the duty of the teacher to acquaint the public with the facts relative to teacher supply, conditions of work, and adequate compensation.

**Section 6.** It is no less the duty of the teacher to be informed about the financial condition and the ability of the town and state to meet educational demands and needs.

## ARTICLE III

### Relations to the Profession

**Section 1.** The teacher should manifest genuine pride in his profession and should maintain his efficiency through study, through travel, and through active participation in local, state, and national educational organizations.

**Section 2.** Teachers should encourage able and sincere young people to enter the profession and to view it as a life calling rather than merely as a stepping-stone to other occupation.

**Section 3.** Wherever possible the teacher should uphold and assist his associates both inside and outside the school system, sharing with them helpful ideas and methods. On the other hand, unless his official position warrants it, he should refrain from interfering in any way in either the instructional or the disciplinary problems of an associate.

**Section 4.** As a matter of ethics and good business, teachers should receive their contracts on or before April 15, and be given at least 15 days to sign them.

**Section 5.** A contract once signed should be adhered to until service there under has been performed or the contract has been terminated by mutual consent or the contract has otherwise been legally terminated.

**Section 6.** A teacher should not apply for a specific position unless he knows the position is vacant or about to become vacant. He should file his application for the position with the chief executive officer. He should not knowingly underbid either a rival or the recognized salary schedule in order to secure a position. He should not secure an offer elsewhere for the sole purpose of using it as a means of obtaining a salary increase in his present position. Upon accepting a position a teacher should notify all other school officers with whom he has filed applications.

**Section 7.** Only after notifying the official who has already employed a teacher, should a school executive offer that teacher a position elsewhere for any part of the current year, unless such offer is made at least thirty days prior to the opening of the school year for which the teacher is employed.

**Section 8.** Any member of the Maine Teachers Association will be doing a professional service by reporting to the Commission of Professional Ethics any infraction of Article III, Sections 5, 6, 7, in which he is personally involved.

**Section 9.** A teacher should not act in his own school system as an agent, or accept any commission, royalty, or other award, for books or supplies in the selection or purchase of which he can exert influence; nor should he accept any compensation for helping another teacher to obtain a position; nor should he promote any part time job during school hours.

**Section 10.** A school executive should be ready and willing at any time to answer official inquiries and to write a truthful and confidential statement regarding the professional record of any teacher on his staff. Such statements should be treated as confidential information by the school authorities receiving him.

**Section 11.** The superintendent should be recognized as the professional leader of the school system. Each member of the system should be given opportunity to collaborate in the solving of professional problems, but when a policy is finally decided upon, it should be loyally supported by all.

**Section 12.** A superintendent should, in the absence of a supervising teacher or principal, give a reasonable amount of supervision to his teachers, that he may adequately judge their abilities and weaknesses. A teacher whose work is unsatisfactory or who for any reason should be dismissed for the good of a school system or the teaching profession, should have frequent and specific oral, or, preferably written notice of his deficiencies, and ample opportunity to improve. (This may be best accomplished by a probationary period of one year's teaching, followed by a long term contract of two or three years). A teacher receiving such a notice should also receive constructive criticism and help. This applies equally to year-end dismissals, the absence of a fair dismissal law notwithstanding.

**Section 13.** While it is permissible for a town when introducing a salary scale to establish a schedule more liberal than is actually practical at that time, after a period of three years the town should pay, in every case, according to the schedule. The schedule should state specifically any exceptions such as teachers or teachers' positions which may be above or below the schedule.

**Section 14.** When a salary dispute arises in which a local organization affiliated with MTA votes not to begin a school year under the terms offered by a school committee, the MTA Executive Committee upon request by the local association should make an investigation. If the Executive Committee votes to sustain the local association, no teacher not already under contract in that community should accept a position in that school system until the dispute is resolved. Nothing in the foregoing is to be construed as denying the right of any officer or staff member of the Maine Teachers Association to make recommendations or suggestions to any individual or group of individuals.

## ARTICLE IV

### Commission on Profession Ethics

**Section 1.** There shall be a Commission on Professional Ethics operating under the Maine Teachers Association. This commission shall consist of the President of the association ex officio and four members of the profession appointed by the President. It is recommended that the President for 1943 appoint four members who will draw for one-, two-, three-, and four-year terms, respectively, dating from January first. Thereafter, one member shall be appointed each year for a four-year period. The commission shall elect its own chairman.

**Section 2.** It shall be the duty of this commission (I) to answer inquiries from members of the profession as to the meaning of various provisions in this code; (II) to study the various problems of professional ethics arising from time to time; (III) to take appropriate action on such cases of violation of this code as may be referred to it; (IV) to make recommendations to the Maine Teachers Association as to needed modifications in this code; (V) to publicize the code and promote its use in institutions for the preparation of teachers.

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