

## **426 CODE OF ETHICS FOR MINNESOTA TEACHERS**

### **I. Purpose**

Each teacher acknowledges that the schools belong to the public they serve for the purpose of providing educational opportunities to all. It's also recognized that each teacher assumes responsibility for providing professional leadership in the school and community. This responsibility requires each teacher to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct. It must be recognized that each teacher's actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates, and students.

Each teacher, upon entering the teaching profession, assumes a number of obligations, one of which is to adhere to a set of principles which defines professional conduct. These principles are reflected in the following code of ethics, which sets forth to the education profession and the public it serves standards of professional conduct and procedures for implementation.

This Code of Ethics shall apply to all persons licensed, according to rules established by the Board of Teaching.

### **II. Standards of Professional Conduct**

The standards of professional conduct are as follows:

- a. A teacher shall provide professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- b. A teacher shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to health and safety.
- c. In accordance with state and federal Jaws, a teacher shall disclose confidential information about individuals only when a compelling professional purpose is served or when required by law.
- d. A teacher shall take reasonable disciplinary action in exercising the authority to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- e. A teacher shall not use professional relationships with students, parents, and colleagues to private advantage.
- f. A teacher shall delegate authority for teaching responsibilities only to licensed personnel.
- g. A teacher shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter.
- h. A teacher shall not knowingly falsify or misrepresent records or facts relating to that teacher's own qualifications or to other teachers' qualifications.
- i. A teacher shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about students or colleagues.
- J. A teacher shall accept a contract for a teaching position that requires licensing only if properly or provisionally licensed for that position.

### **III. Statutory Enforcement of Code: Complaints, Investigation, and Hearing.**

The enforcement of the provisions of the code of ethics for Minnesota teachers shall be in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 214.10:

"Minnesota Statutes, section 214.10, complaints; investigation and hearing.

- a. Receipt of complaint. The executive secretary of a board, a board member or any other person who performs services for the board who receives a complaint or other communication, whether oral or written, which complaint or communication alleges or implies a violation of a statute or rule which the board is empowered to enforce, shall promptly forward the substance of the communication on a form prepared by the attorney general to the designee of the attorney general responsible for providing legal services to the board. Before proceeding further with the communication, the designee of the attorney general may require the complaining party to state the complaint in writing on a form prepared by the attorney general. Complaints which relate to matters within the jurisdiction of another governmental agency shall be forwarded to that agency by the executive secretary. An officer of that agency shall advise the executive secretary of the disposition of that complaint. A complaint received by another agency, which relates to a statute or rule which a licensing board is empowered to enforce shall be forwarded to the executive secretary of the board to be processed in accordance with this section.
- b. Investigation and hearing. The designee of the attorney general providing legal services to a board shall evaluate the communications forwarded by the board or its members or staff. If the communication alleges a violation of statute or rule which the board is to enforce, the designee is empowered to investigate the facts alleged in the communication. In the process of evaluation and investigation, the designee shall consult with or seek the assistance of the executive secretary or, if the board determines, a member of the board who has been designated by the board to assist the designee. The designee may also consult with or seek the assistance of any other qualified persons who are not members of the board who the designee believes will materially aid in the process of evaluation or investigation. The executive secretary or the consulted board member may attempt to correct improper activities and redress grievances through education, conference, conciliation, and persuasion, and in these attempts may be assisted by the designee of the attorney general. If the attempts at correction or redress do not produce satisfactory results in the opinion of the executive secretary or the consulted board member, or if after investigation the designee providing legal services to the board, the executive secretary or the consulted board member believes that the communication and the investigation suggest illegal or unauthorized activities warranting board action, the designee shall inform the executive secretary of the board who shall schedule a disciplinary hearing in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, chapter 14. Before the holding of a disciplinary hearing may be directed, the designee or executive secretary shall have considered the recommendations of the consulted board member. Before scheduling a disciplinary hearing, the executive secretary must have received a verified written complaint from the complaining party. A board member who was consulted during the course of an investigation may participate at the hearing but may not vote on any matter pertaining to the case. The executive secretary of the board shall promptly inform the complaining party of the final disposition of the complaint. Nothing in this section shall preclude the board from scheduling, on its own motion, a disciplinary hearing based upon the findings or report of the board's executive secretary, a board member or the designee of the attorney general assigned to the board. Nothing in this section shall preclude a member of the board or its executive secretary from initiating a complaint.
- c. Discovery; subpoenas. In all matters pending before it relating to its lawful regulation activities, a board may issue subpoenas and compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of all necessary papers, books, records, documents, and other evidentiary material. Any person failing or refusing to appear or testify regarding any matter about which the person may be lawfully questioned or produce any papers, books, records, documents, or other evidentiary materials in the matter to be heard, after having been required by order to the board or by a subpoena of the board to do so may, upon application to the district court in any district, be ordered to comply therewith. The chair of the board

acting on behalf of the board may issue subpoenas and any board member may administer oaths to witnesses, or take their affirmation. Depositions may be taken within or without the state in the manner provided by law for the taking of depositions in civil actions. A subpoena or other process or paper may be served upon any person named therein, anywhere within the state by any officer authorized to serve subpoenas or other process or paper in civil actions, with the same fees and mileage and in the same manner as prescribed by law for service of process issued out of the district court of this state. Fees and mileage and other costs shall be paid as the board directs."

- d. Complaints handled by board. When oral complaints alleging violations of the code of ethics are received, the executive secretary of the Board of Teaching shall request the complaining party to submit the complaint in writing within ten days. Upon the receipt of a complaint in writing alleging violations of the code of ethics, the teacher named in the complaint shall be notified in writing within ten days of the receipt of the complaint. The teacher shall be entitled to be represented by the teacher's own counsel or representative at each stage of the investigation and hearing.
- e. Enforcement procedures. The Board of Teaching may impose one or more of the following penalties when it has found a violation of the code of ethics. These actions shall be taken only after all previous efforts at remediation have been exhausted.
  - i. The Board of Teaching may enter into agreements with teachers accused of violating the code of ethics which would suspend or terminate proceedings against the teacher on conditions agreeable to both parties.
  - ii. A letter of censure from the Board of Teaching may be sent to the person determined to be in violation of the standards of the code of ethics. A copy of the letter shall be filed with the Board of Teaching. Such letters shall be kept on file for a period of time not to exceed one calendar year.
  - iii. A teacher who has been found to have violated the code of ethics may be placed on probationary licensure status for a period of time to be determined by the Board of Teaching. The board may impose conditions on the teacher during the probationary period. Those condition must be directed toward improving the teacher's performance in the area of the violation. During this period, the teacher's performance or conduct will be subject to review by the Board of Teaching or its designee. Such review will be directed toward monitoring the teacher's activities or performance with regard to whatever conditions may be placed on the teacher during the probationary period. Before the end of the probationary period the Board of Teaching shall decide to extend or terminate the probationary licensure status or to take further disciplinary actions as are consistent with this rule.
  - iv. The license to teach of the person determined to be in violation of the standards of the code of ethics may be suspended for a period of time determined by the Board of Teaching.
  - v. The license to teach of the person determined to be in violation of the standards of the code of ethics may be revoked by the Board of Teaching.

Legal Reference: STAT AUTH: MS s 125.185 subd. 1

Cross Reference: Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)  
Minnesota Board of Teaching (MnBOT)