



## Certificated Staff Code of Conduct



**Mission:** Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

The Columbus City School District does not discriminate based upon sex, race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, ancestry, familial status or military status with regard to admission, access, treatment or employment. This policy is applicable in all district programs and activities.

# *Preface*

## **Code of Conduct**

The code of conduct is a set of conventional expectations and responsibilities of how certificated staff (Administrators, Teachers, Nurses, Sub Administrators and Substitute Teachers) of the Columbus City Schools should conduct themselves while in the service of the District – its students, employees, parents, and community. Its purpose is to define appropriate professional behavior in order to have standards that will serve to define proper practices, to guide actions, to prohibit improper behavior, to define acceptable conduct, and to build trust between employees and the community. The result is to cultivate the individual and collective accountability that serves as a foundation for advancing district excellence.

The code of conduct serves as a framework for ethical decision making. It provides operating principles to ensure effectiveness, to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of each employee's obligations, to advance personal/district success, and to secure the reputation/integrity of the District and its employee – all to develop and sustain a productive organizational culture.

## **Purpose Code of Conduct and General Work Rules**

Publishing general work rules is the best way to provide clear expectations to our entire team. Employees who act in an inappropriate or unreasonable manner can damage the District's brand and create unhappy coworkers, unhappy customers and/or an unhappy community. The intent is to properly communicate and document basic expectations for employee conduct and to ensure the entire team is operating on the same level of expectation.

When there is a concern that expectations have been violated, all matters will be handled professionally and in accordance with District Policy, District Procedure(s) and/or State Law as applicable. Disciplinary action may result based on circumstances.

The purpose of the code of conduct and the outlining of general work rules are to clarify the District's expectations for all certificated employees. An employer has the right to expect their employees to follow reasonable standards of conduct.

# Certificated Staff Code of Conduct

## **ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS:**

### **Commitment to the Student focuses on nurturing student learning and its eight points include:**

1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning.
2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view.
3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.
4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.
5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.
6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, gender identification/expression unfairly:
  - a. Exclude any student from participation in any program;
  - b. Deny benefits to any student;
  - c. Grant any advantage to any student.
7. Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.
8. Shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

### **Commitment to the Profession reminds educators how much the education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility that requires the highest ideals of professional service. Its eight points includes:**

#### **In fulfillment of the obligation to the profession, the educator:**

1. Shall not in an application for a professional position deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications.
2. Shall not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications.
3. Shall not assist any entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified with respect to character, education or other relevant attribute.

4. Shall not knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position.
5. Shall not assist a non-educator in the unauthorized practice of teaching.
6. Shall not disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
7. Shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague.
8. Shall not accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions.

### **EXPECTED BEHAVIORS:**

(Adopted from Licensure Code of Conduct ODE)

Educators are entrusted by the public with the responsibility of providing a high-quality education to every student. Through various roles, these professionals devote themselves to providing a safe and nurturing environment in which all students can learn. In alignment with the *Standards for Ohio Educators* and the *Ohio Academic Content Standards for Students*, our certificated staff strives for excellence through high expectations that they hold for themselves and their students. The professional conduct of every staff member affects attitudes toward the profession and molds the perception of the District. Certificated staff is entrusted with the education of our students and share with the broader community the responsibility of providing high-quality public education and leadership. Aware of the importance of maintaining the confidence and trust of students, parents, colleagues, and the public, CCS Certificated staff must maintain the highest degree of professional conduct for themselves and their peers.

***ODE Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators is the basis for the eight expectations as follows:***

1. Certificated staff behaves in a professional manner, realizing that one's actions reflect directly on the status and substance of the profession.
2. Certificated staff maintains a professional relationship with all students at all times, both in and outside the classroom.
3. Certificated staff accurately reports information required by the local board of education or governing board, state education agency, federal agency or state or federal law.
4. Certificated staff adheres to federal, state and local laws and statutes regarding criminal activity.
5. Certificated staff complies with state and federal laws related to maintaining confidential information.
6. Certificated staff serves as positive role models and do not use, possess or unlawfully distribute illegal or unauthorized drugs.

7. Certificated staff ensures that school property, public funds or fees paid by students or the community are used in the best interest of students in accordance with District policy and procedures and not for personal gain.
8. Certificated staff fulfills all of the terms and obligations in their employment contract and board policies/procedures. Certificated staff is entitled to all due process rights, with each circumstance considered on a case-by case basis to determine appropriate action.

## **1. Professional Behavior Educators shall behave as professionals realizing that their actions reflect directly on the status and substance of the education profession.**

*An educator serves as a positive role model to both students and adults and is responsible for preserving the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession and for practicing the profession according to the highest ethical standards.*

### **Conduct unbecoming to the profession includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Failing to adhere to the *Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators, CCS Certificated Staff Code of Conduct, District policy and/or District procedures.*
- b) Committing any violation of state or federal laws, statutes, or rules, although the conduct may not have resulted in a criminal charge, indictment, prosecution or conviction. (This does not include minor traffic violations.)
- c) Disparaging a colleague, peer or other school personnel while working in a professional setting (e.g., teaching, coaching, supervising, or conferencing) on the basis of race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identification/expression, national origin, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation, physical characteristics, age, disability, or English language proficiency.
- d) Failing to complete a criminal background check as required by state or federal law.
- e) Violating local, state or federal procedures related to the security of standardized tests, test supplies or resources.
- f) Being disciplined by another state educational entity or other professional licensing board or entity for unethical conduct.
- g) Using technology to intentionally host or post improper or inappropriate material that could reasonably be accessed by the school community.

## **2. Professional Relationship with Students**

**Certificated staff shall maintain a professional relationship with all students at all times, both in and out of the classroom.**

*An educator's responsibility includes nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of all students and providing a safe environment free from harassment, intimidation and criminal activity. An educator creates, supports, and maintains an appropriate learning environment for all students and fulfills the roles of trusted confidante, mentor and advocate for students' rights. An educator must serve as a champion against child abuse and be cognizant of student behaviors that suggest abuse or neglect.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Committing any act of sexual abuse of a student or minor or engaging in inappropriate sexual conduct with a student or minor.
- b) Committing an act of cruelty to children or an act of child endangerment (e.g., physical abuse, mental injury, or emotional abuse).
- c) Soliciting, encouraging, engaging or consummating an inappropriate relationship with a student or minor.
- d) Disparaging a student on the basis of race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identification/expression, national origin, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliation, physical characteristics, academic or athletic performance, disability, or English language proficiency.
- e) Using inappropriate language, gestures or signs (such as racial slurs, biased, lewd or lascivious expressions) at any school-related activity
- f) Provoking an altercation between students, or provoking or engaging in a physical altercation with students, that is not for the purpose of ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students.
- g) Failing to provide appropriate supervision of students, within the scope of the educator's official capacity, which risks the health, safety, and welfare of students or others in the school community.
- h) Knowingly contributing to or knowingly failing to intervene in the harassment, intimidation or bullying of a student.
- i) Using technology to promote inappropriate communications with students.

### **3. Accurate Reporting**

**Educators shall accurately report information required by the local board of education (its agents) or governing board, state education agency, federal agency or state or federal law.**

*An educator communicates appropriate representation of facts concerning qualifications for professional practice, student information, school board policy, and other educational matters. An educator must report to the superintendent or designee conduct by a licensed educator that substantially impairs his or her ability to function professionally or any conduct that is detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of students.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Falsifying, intentionally misrepresenting, willfully omitting or being negligent in reporting information submitted to federal, state, and other governmental agencies such as professional qualifications, criminal history and information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation, college or professional development credit and/or degrees, academic awards, and employment history when applying for employment and/or licensure, or when recommending an individual for employment, promotion or licensure.
- b) Falsifying, intentionally misrepresenting, willfully omitting or being negligent in reporting reasons for absences or leaves.
- c) Falsifying, intentionally misrepresenting, willfully omitting or being negligent in reporting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel.
- d) Intentionally failing to report to the superintendent or designee conduct that substantially impairs an educator's ability to function professionally in his or her position or any conduct that is detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of students.
- e) Intentionally failing to make a mandated report of any violation of state or federal law.

**4. Educators shall adhere to federal, state and local laws and statutes (avoiding criminal acts).**

*An educator shall not engage in criminal activity as evidenced by a criminal conviction, guilty plea, finding of guilt, or participation in a court-ordered diversion or treatment in lieu of conviction program.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) A criminal offense that is an offense of violence, theft, drug abuse, or sexually oriented offense as defined in Ohio Administrative Rule 3301-20-01 (e.g., murder, rape, drug trafficking, kidnapping, robbery, felonious assault).
- b) A criminal offense that requires an educator to meet the rehabilitation standards as defined in Ohio Administrative Code Rule 3301-20-01 (e.g., assault, passing bad checks, fraud, domestic violence, possession of drugs).
- c) A criminal offense that is not identified as an absolute bar offense or offense requiring rehabilitation pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code Rule 3301-20-01, and the offense involves a student, a minor or an offense involving a school district or school personnel.
- d) Conveying or possessing a deadly weapon or dangerous ordnance in a school safety zone, on school premises or at a school related activity, unless authorized by state or federal law.

- e) A criminal offense that is not identified as an absolute bar offense or offense requiring rehabilitation pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code Rule 3301-20-01, and the offense does not involve a student, a minor, a school district or school personnel. (This does not include traffic violations.)

**5. Confidentiality Educators shall comply with state and federal laws related to maintaining confidential information.**

*An educator is entrusted with information that could be misused to embarrass or damage a student's reputation or relationship with others. Therefore, the educator has the responsibility to keep information about students confidential unless disclosure serves professional purposes, affects the health, safety, and welfare of students and others, is required by law, or parental permission has been given. A professional maintains the security of confidential information such as academic and disciplinary records, personal confidences, photographs, health and medical information, family status and/or income.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Willfully or knowingly violating any student confidentiality required by federal or state laws, including publishing, providing access to, or altering confidential student information on district or public websites such as grades, personal information, photographs, disciplinary actions, or individual educational plans (IEPs) without parental consent or consent of students 18 years of age and older.
- b) Using confidential student, family, or school-related information in a nonprofessional way (e.g., gossip, malicious talk or disparagement).

**6. Use, Possession, or Unlawful Distribution of Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco. Educators shall not use, possess or unlawfully distribute illegal or unauthorized drugs. Educators shall not use alcohol during any school activity involving students, minors or underage persons. Educators shall not use tobacco during any school activity except in a designated area. Educators shall not furnish, provide or encourage students or underage persons to use, possess or unlawfully distribute alcohol, tobacco, illegal or unauthorized drugs.**

*Certificated staff is entrusted with protecting the health, safety, and welfare of students at any school event. The use of alcohol, illegal or unauthorized drugs causes impairment of professional judgment that may potentially harm others. A professional must serve as a positive role model and refrain from the illegal use of tobacco on any school grounds or at any school activity.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Being under the influence of, possessing, using or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- b) Being on school premises in an official capacity (e.g., teaching, coaching, supervising, or conferencing) or at any school activity involving students, minors or underage persons while under the influence, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages.
- c) Furnishing or providing tobacco, alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student, minor or underage person.



- d) Being on school premises or at any school activity involving students, minors or underage persons while using tobacco except in a designated area.
- e) Promoting the use of steroids, stimulants, or nutritional supplements to accelerate physical growth or contribute to the control of weight loss or weight gain to enhance physical performance.

**7. Accepting Compensation for Self-Promotion or Personal Gain. Educators shall ensure that school property, public funds or fees paid by students or the community are not used for personal gain. Educators shall not make decisions based upon gifts, gratuities, favors or the socioeconomic status of parents, family members, community members or businesses.**

*Certificate staff is entrusted with public funds and school property in the course of performing job duties and must maintain a high level of honesty, accuracy and accountability to ensure that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain. An educator maintains integrity with students, colleagues, parents, families, community or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities or favors. To avoid bias or prejudice, an educator needs to ensure that decisions made about students or school policy are not negatively influenced by the socioeconomic status of parents, family members, community members or businesses.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator without notifying the superintendent or designee and/or not in accordance with local board policy.
- b) Accepting gifts for personal use or gain from vendors or potential vendors exceeding \$25.00 in value.
- c) Tutoring students in one's district for profit without notifying the superintendent or designee and/or not in accordance with local board policy.
- d) Coaching and/or promoting athletic or artistic camps, off-season leagues, etc. in one's district for profit without notifying the superintendent or designee and/or not in accordance with local board policy.
- e) Failing to account for funds related to school activities collected from students, parents, family members, community members, staff or peers in accordance with local board policy.
- f) Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts.
- g) Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses.

**8. Commitment to Contract.** Certificated staff shall fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in their employment contract with the CCS Board of Education for the duration of the contract.

*Certificated staff knows and understands the rights and responsibilities as outlined in the employment contract and adheres to the terms and conditions of the agreement by fulfilling responsibilities and duties required of the position.*

**Conduct unbecoming includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:**

- a) Abandoning the contractual agreement for professional services without prior release from the contract by the CCS Board of Education or designee according to Ohio Revised Code 3319.15.
- b) Willfully refusing to perform services and duties required by the contract except as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117.
- c) Violating or interfering with due process as outlined in the contractual agreement.