

Professional Conduct Guidelines

Making the transition from a student to the professional teaching role is sometimes difficult. As students, you have spent long periods of time in schools, and so it is tempting to think that you know the norms of behaviour that are appropriate; however, the standards of behaviour for teachers are quite different from those demanded of students.

A good place to start in terms of what OSSTF/FEESO expects of its members, whether statutory or associate members, in terms of professional conduct is our own Constitution and Bylaws. Several of the OSSTF/FEESO Ethics Bylaws most pertinent to the Teacher Candidate / Associate Teacher relationship are quoted in the side bar at right.

Practicum Advice for Teacher-Candidates

Associate Teachers volunteer to assist Teacher Candidates develop their skills and practice in the teaching profession. Associate Teachers want you to succeed and are there to help and mentor you. That said, they will need to produce a practicum report to submit to your faculty of education and as such follow the guidelines established by your Faculty of Education.

The following additional advice was developed with the input of Associate Teachers to help you have a successful practicum and pre-service experience.

- Do the most that you are capable of, not the least. Getting by is not good enough for a professional. Excellent teachers strive to do their very best all of the time – not just when they are being evaluated. Demonstrate your commitment to professional learning by listening to, thinking about and acting on your Associate Teacher's advice.
- Demonstrate your commitment to students and their learning by putting as much time and effort as

From OSSTF/FEESO Bylaw 4: Ethics

ETH Section 1: The Motto:

- 1.1 NE SIBI QUISQUE CONSULAT,
SED INTER NOS AUXILIO SIMUS
(Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another).

From ETH Section 2: The Pledge:

- 2.2 I will strive to achieve and maintain the highest degree of professional competence and will always uphold the honour, dignity, and ethical standards of my profession.

From ETH Section 3: A Statement of Ethics

- 3.3 The member's professional conduct should be characterized by courtesy and good faith, and should imply the obligation to refrain from public criticism of the member's colleagues.
- 3.5 The member should endeavour to eliminate any behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of an individual, or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

necessary into preparing good, high quality lessons. Ideally, working on lesson preparation a couple of days in advance allows time for feedback before the lesson is taught.

- Always ensure that you arrive at school early enough to attend to any last minute preparations that may arise. Stay after school long enough to meet with your Associate Teacher and to sample some of the other aspects of school life, including staff or federation meetings. Remember that you are to be there for the entire school day, even if you are only engaged in direct teaching for parts of the day.
- Respect student confidentiality and only discuss the performance of students in your classes with other appropriate professionals.
- Dress appropriately. What you wear should conform to what is expected by the school administration. If in doubt, ask your Associate Teacher what would be appropriate or dress up until you see what the normal pattern of dress is in your school.
- Don't try to be "one of the kids" or befriend your students – you are the teacher so act like it! Remember that teachers are held to a much higher standard of conduct than is general society, and as such a violation of “professional boundaries” between a teacher and students is a serious matter and could result in discipline or even the end of your career.
- If you have a profile on a social-networking site such as Facebook, never invite students to be your “friend” nor accept students as “friends”. It would also be a very good idea to go over your profile and ensure that your privacy controls are limited and that you remove any content or photographs which you would not want your colleagues, students, their parents, or prospective employers to see. There have been cases in North America where teachers have been reprimanded or disciplined for comments or photographs that they (or their friends) have posted on such sites. In other cases, people looking for jobs have been passed over because employers have found questionable content on job applicants’ profiles. Better safe than sorry! (For excellent information on how to protect your privacy and your reputation on Facebook, see http://www.ipc.on.ca/images/Resources/up-facebook_refcheck.pdf.)
- If you are having difficulties with your Associate Teacher and cannot resolve them through professional discussions with him or her, speak directly and privately to your Faculty Advisor or to the Director of Practicum Services.

Overall, “[i]n all relationships with colleagues, students, parents and other members of the community, the member shall strive to uphold the honour, dignity and ethical standards of the profession.”

(From OSSTF/FEESO Bylaw 4: ETH Section 4.2)