

Guide to Professional Behaviour for Student Teachers¹

From Student to Student Teacher: Changing your outlook
June 2010

Introduction

Making the switch from **student** to **student teacher** is not always easy or obvious, and each individual's experience will vary. Whatever the challenges and new situations you encounter in your field experiences, as a student teacher, you are just as much a role model for the youth in your class as their regular teacher. Your actions, words, and attitudes reflect the values of the school, your future profession, and the society in which you live. You are accountable to students, teachers, parents, school administrators and various stakeholders in the school and must act ethically and in accordance with the fundamental principles of the teaching profession.

This aspect of your role as a pre-service teacher may seem burdensome or unnecessary, but it's an essential part of learning how to act professionally. In partnership with the consultative committees on student teaching for Greater Montreal (with representatives from universities, school boards, unions and MELS), this guide has been developed to help you understand and maintain high standards of professional conduct and ethical responsibilities. It can also be used to support the decision-making process of different stakeholders in teacher education in case of ethical problems.

Appropriate Behavior for Student Teachers

Professional Competency 12 *"To demonstrate ethical and responsible professional behaviour in the performance of his or her duties"* is already an essential part of the rubrics and guidelines of all teacher education programs in Quebec. This guide supports the assessment grids and rubrics by showing examples of appropriate behavior.

From the moment you receive your field experience placement, as well as during and after your time in the school, it is important that you demonstrate appropriate behaviors with respect to A) the organization and non-teaching aspects of the field experience, B) teaching professionals, members of the school community and students, and C) the use of information technology.

A) Organization of the field experience

- Communicate with your cooperating teacher in a respectful manner (telephone, email).

¹ Inspired by the brochure on role models in education, Service des ressources humaines, Secteur du soutien aux établissements, Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys, 2010. Translated from the original French, 2013.

- Consider whether your personal voicemail message is professional or not and change as needed
- Pay attention to your written language in email exchanges (messages that are clear and brief)
- If you make an appointment to meet with your cooperating teacher, respect your commitment (e.g. meeting time)
- Make sure that your actions are not perceived as harassment by the school (e.g., frequency of calls, impromptu visits)
- Be sure to know the dress code of your school
- Make sure you use appropriate language (e.g. level of familiarity with teachers, parents, and school administrators)
- During the field experience, arrange your schedule so you are available for planning meetings or other discussions related to teaching with your cooperating teacher. Field experience is your priority.
- Refrain from reporting to the school under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Respect the regulations on tobacco use in the school
- Make sure you have the consent of your cooperating teacher before using or borrowing their materials, and be sure to return any borrowed items on time

B) Teaching professionals, members of the school community and students

- Comply with the rules, policies, goals and values of your teaching environment
- Be open, respectful and courteous in your dealings with students, teachers, parents, administrators and others in the school community
- Respect the educational vision and skills of your cooperating teacher and other professionals (teachers, principals, non-teaching staff)
- Respect your role (e.g., the student teacher is not yet the cooperating teacher's colleague)
- Avoid any form of discrimination
- Respect the confidentiality of any written or verbal information (e.g., reports, institutional documents), particularly in regard to student records
- Act with fairness and understanding toward students and respect their dignity
- Avoid inappropriate closeness or familiarity with students, teachers, parents, administrators or other members of the school community
- Avoid any actions or words that may have a romantic or sexual connotation or a connotation of violence toward a student or staff member (whether explicit or implied)
- Do not go on a private outing with a student or school staff member, even at their request
- Refrain from libel or slander in oral or written statements about teachers in any school or university professors or supervisors
- Avoid any type of behavior that might negatively affect your reputation (e.g. when going out to bars)

C) Information technology

The use of technology is becoming more prevalent as a means of communication (cell phones, email, social networks, etc.). Information of a personal or professional nature can travel widely online; reaching the general public but also the screens of teachers, students, school administrators, or your prospective employer; as a student teacher you must be aware of this. Whether in the school or off the grounds, from the moment you

become a student teacher you must act wisely, exercise your judgment, and be cautious about content (written or photographs) that you post online.

- Refrain from using your cell phone, smart phone or other communication tools in the classroom or in meetings for purposes other than teaching (and only as permitted by the school)
- Refrain from photographing or recording students for purposes other than teaching. If this is the case, make sure to obtain parental consent
- Refrain from photographing or recording your cooperating teacher or other professionals in the class for purposes other than educational
- Make sure you never transmit information pertaining to the privacy of students, school staff or parents
- Make sure you never transmit information pertaining to professional life of cooperating teachers and school staff
- Avoid giving students your email address for purposes other than educational
- Avoid contact with students on social networks on the internet other than for teaching (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) (and only as permitted by the school)

Conclusion

The examples in this document describe only a few of the appropriate and inappropriate behaviours related to ethics in student teaching. Your professional judgment should lead you to discern the values at stake in your actions and teaching, ensuring that you behave ethically and responsibly at all times.