

Ethical Conduct

Guide to Professional Behaviour for Teacher Candidates¹

From Student to Teacher, a Shift in Position

Preface

The transition from student to student teacher is not always easy. This change in position, the shift from learning to teaching, can be more, or less, difficult depending on each person's individual experiences. Yet regardless of how challenging the transition is, the fact remains that as a student teacher you are a role model for the students, in the same way as the teacher who welcomes you into their classroom.

Through your actions, words, and attitudes, you reflect the values of the academic environment, of your future profession, and of the society in which you are evolving. You must therefore act in an ethical and responsible manner with regard to students, teachers, parents, members of the administration, and other school personnel, all the while respecting the fundamental principles of the teaching profession. The position of role model may seem constraining, or even irritating to some, but it is an essential element of professional behaviour.

In partnership with the coordinating committees of the Greater Montreal area (universities, school boards, syndicates, and the MELS), this guide was created to ensure teacher candidates are able to understand and maintain high standards with regards to professional conduct and moral responsibilities.

This guide can also validate the thought process and actions of the various staff members involved in education programs in the event of ethical issues.

1. Appropriate Behaviour for Student Teachers

Competency number 12 – “To demonstrate ethical and responsible behaviour in the performance of his or her duties” – is already defined in the assessment grids of the various teacher education programs. The “Guide to Professional Behaviour for Teacher Candidates” supports and

¹ Inspired, among others, by the pamphlet on role models in education, Human Resources Department, Sector for the Support of Educational Institutions, Marguerite-Bourgeoys School Board, 2010.

completes these grids by putting the behaviours appropriate for student teachers into perspective.

Thus, from the moment you learn of your field experience placement, it is important that, during and after your field experience, you act appropriately I) with regards to the organizational aspects of the field experience, II) with regards to the profession, the school staff, and the students, and III) with regards to the use of electronic devices.

I. With Regards to the Organizational Aspects of the Field Experience

- Communicate with your cooperating teacher in a respectful manner (phone and email). Verify that your voicemail message is professional and modify if necessary (e.g. too candid or informal).
- Polish up your writing in email correspondences (clear and succinct messages).
- Make an appointment to meet with your cooperating teacher and respect your commitments (e.g. meeting time).
- Ensure that certain actions are not perceived as harassment in an academic environment (e.g. frequency of phone calls, messages, and impromptu visits).
- Ensure you are familiar with the dress code for your field placement and the requirements for compliance for student teachers.
- Be sure to use appropriate language.
- Take care to organize your schedule so as to be available to plan or exchange on all questions related to the field experience or the teaching profession, according to the agreements made with your cooperating teacher.
- Refrain from arriving to your field experience under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Respect the regulations on tobacco in effect at your field placement.
- Obtain consent from teachers before using or retaining their material. Ensure you return any borrowed material on time.

II. With Regards to the Profession, the School Staff, and the Students

- Respect the rules, policies, goals, and values of your teaching environment.
- Be open, respectful, and courteous in your relationships with students, teachers, parents, members of the administration, and other school staff.

- Respect the teaching vision and expertise of your cooperating teacher and other staff members (teachers, members of the administration, non-teaching staff).
- Work in collaboration with others while respecting everyone's role (e.g. the student teacher is not the cooperating teacher's colleague). Avoid all forms of discrimination against others.
- Respect the confidentiality of all written or verbal information (e.g. reports, institutional documents), particularly those regarding students.
- Treat students with fairness and equality, while respecting their dignity.
- Avoid any intimacy with students, teachers, parents, members of the administration, and other school personnel.
- Avoid all actions and remarks that could have a romantic, sexual, or violent connotation when interacting with students or staff members, regardless of whether this connotation is explicit or not.
- Avoid any private outing with a student or staff member, even at their request.
- Refrain from defamatory remarks, slander, or hearsay, both verbal and written, about a teacher or professor.
- Avoid any behaviour that could affect your reputation (e.g. while out at a bar).

III. With Regards to the Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic devices are increasingly used as a means of communication (cellphones, emails, social networks, and others). Incidentally, the CSQ drafted a very interesting document about social networks, tools that are as useful as they are formidable, that can be found on the Bureau de la formation pratique website at www.stages.uqam.ca or at www.lacsq.org.

It is important to be conscious of the fact that personal or professional information can circulate on the internet and find its way onto the computers of teachers, students, members of the administration, and eventual employers. Whether you are within an academic building or outside its walls, from the moment you become a teacher candidate, you must act with discernment, use good judgement, and be cautious of the content (writings or photographs) that is disseminated on a large scale.

In addition:

- Refrain from using your cellphone, smartphone or other communication tool during a class or a meeting for purposes other than pedagogical.
- Refrain from photographing or recording students for purposes other than pedagogical. Should this be the case, be sure to obtain permission from their parents.
- Refrain from photographing or recording teaching situations involving your cooperating teacher or another staff member for purposes other than pedagogical.
- Be sure to never relay information regarding the private life of students, parents, or school personnel.
- Be sure to never relay information regarding the private life of the cooperating teacher or school personnel.
 - Refrain from giving students your email address for purposes other than pedagogical.
 - Refrain from communicating with students on social media for purposes other than pedagogical (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

Conclusion

The examples contained within this document reflect only a portion of the conduct related to the professional behaviour expected of teacher candidates. Your professional judgement should allow you to discern the values at play in your actions or remarks leading to ethical and responsible behaviour.