

Frequently Asked Questions about the Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators

Q: How will this effort benefit the teaching profession?

A: Teaching is an Important Professional and unfortunately is not always perceived that way.

- A very small percent of Arkansas educators are unethical, but unfortunately those individuals make the front page in our local papers.
- The Prof Licensure Standards Board wants the entire state to know our aspirations of self governance.
- We believe this will encourage the retention of educators and encourage more people to enter into this profession.
- Only the extreme /illegal actions of Arkansas educators appear before the Arkansas State Board of Education for licensure revocation. These Rules will place licensure issues before the educators' peers, *which is the piece that has been missing to make teaching a profession.*

Q: Why have a Code of Ethics?

A: The goal of this work has been to raise the stature of the teaching profession in the state of Arkansas, where we are already nationally recognized for teacher quality and competitive salaries and for strong policies and support in place for Arkansas teachers. The legal authority to create the code is found in Act 846 of 2007.

Q: Who created the Code of Ethics?

A: For the past seven (7) months, the 15 member Professional Licensure Standards Board has diligently worked to craft a Code of Ethics for Arkansas educators. The Arkansas State Board of Education on March 10, 2008, approved the rules for public comment in the following seven (7) cities: Little Rock, Jonesboro, Warren, Fayetteville, Hope, Russellville and Mountain Home.

Q: **What's in the Code of Ethics?**

A: The eight (8) Standards of Professional Conduct contained in the Code of Ethics for Arkansas educators states the following: An educator...

1. ...maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom.

2. ...maintains competency regarding skills, knowledge and dispositions concomitant to his/her organizational position, subject matter and /or pedagogical practice.
3. ...honestly fulfills reporting and contractual obligations associated with professional practices.
4. ...entrusted with public funds and property honors that trust with honest, responsible stewardship.
5. ...maintains integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons and businesses regarding gifts, gratuities, favors and additional compensation.
6. ...keeps in confidence student records, personnel records, standardized test material and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.
7. ...factually and appropriately presents the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and unauthorized / illegal drug use during the course of professional practice and in accordance with current state law.
8. ...abides by local, state and federal laws.

Q: Are there examples of these standards?

A: Yes. Under each Standard the Board has listed examples of both Ethical and Unethical Conduct. These lists of commentary are to reflect the intent of the standard and should not be perceived as all inclusive.

As in Standard 1:

An example of Ethical conducts is described as "Advocating for equitable educational opportunities for each student."

An example of Unethical conducts is: "Committing an act of child abuse, including physical, sexual and/or verbal abuse

Q: Are there any repercussions to unethical conduct?

A: Pursuant to the statute, the rules outline the process by which a complaint will be investigated by the Professional Licensure Standards Board and how a subcommittee of the Board composed of the teacher/administrator peers will conduct an evidentiary hearing. This subcommittee will serve as advisory only and will make recommendations to the Arkansas State Board of Education for final approval.

The proposed fine structure is recommended with final enforcement only by authority of the Arkansas State Board of Education and is outlined in Appendix B of the rules.

Q: Arkansas teachers have never paid for their licenses. Why start now?

A: The concept of licensure fees would:

- Further elevate the teaching profession in AR
- Create credibility because the profession would become self-governing as all professions are -- this includes accountability as well as support programs
- Provide professional development and training to all teachers and potential teachers on the Code of Ethics
- Fund the operations of the Professional Licensure Standards Board and
- Fund the establishment an investigative staff and fund the office, operations and salaries of the staff members.

Q: Do other state's have license fees?

A: Yes. A survey of states' licensure fees may be found at http://arkansased.org/standards_board/index.html.

Q: How do fees for teachers' licenses compare with the fees for other licenses issued in the state?

A: The license fee of \$100 for a five-year license is one of the lowest license fees in the state. A survey of these fees may also be found at http://arkansased.org/standards_board/index.html.

Q: How do I take part in one of the public comment sessions?

A: The exact dates, times and locations will be published on the Arkansas Department of Education Web site as soon as they are finalized. Please visit http://arkansased.org/standards_board/index.html for the final schedule. If you are unable to attend one of these sessions, please e-mail your comment to Beverly Williams, ADE assistant commissioner for human resources and licensure, at beverly.williams@arkansas.gov.