

Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB)
Minutes
Kentucky Department of Education
300 Sower Boulevard, 5th Floor, Frankfort, KY 40601

Code of Ethics Review Committee
June 4, 2021

The following committee members were present during the June 4, 2021, Code of Ethics Review Committee meeting: Cathy Gunn, Donna Hedgepath, Traci Hunt, Jacqueline Mayfield, Justin Mitchell, and Lisa Rudzinski.

Ms. Chelsea Young welcomed Committee members and introduced legal staff, Ms. Cassie Trueblood and Ms. BreAnna Listermann. Ms. Young briefly outlined the goals of the committee, KRS 161.120, the Professional Code of Ethics for Kentucky Certified School Personnel (Professional Code of Ethics) and the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE). Ms. Young detailed the history of the Code of Ethics Review Committee and the decisions previously made.

Ms. Listermann drafted a memo for the Committee with updates from other states. Ms. Young specifically reviewed how Hawaii, Nevada, Colorado and North Dakota had used the MCEE.

Next, Ms. Young reviewed the February 2019 survey that was sent to all Kentucky EPPs and school districts. Of the responses, a majority found the MCEE useful but there was some confusion about the Professional Code of Ethics and the MCEE. Ms. Young provided data regarding the number of complaints received and cases opened from 2015-2020. Ms. Young used this to explain the importance of the MCEE and the Code of Ethics.

Ms. Young reviewed the objectives with the Board – What recommendation would they like to make on the MCEE (endorse, adapt, adopt) and the Professional Code of Ethics (retain, replace, or revise)?

Ms. Lisa Rudzinski consulted Dr. Donna Hedgepath as a veteran committee member. Dr. Hedgepath explained that the previous committee liked that the MCEE was more defined because the Professional Code of Ethics is not very specific. Dr. Hedgepath noted the MCEE was considered a supplement to explain to the Board their parameters for cases as well as for EPPs to train educators in the process of learning to teach. The prior committee had discussed technology and its contribution to the rise in cases. Ms. Rudzinski suggested looking at the data to target inappropriate relationship cases or other technology related issues teachers face. The Board's goal is compliance.

Mr. Justin Mitchell stated the MCEE should be given to EPPs and possibly incorporated into KTIP. Dr. Hedgepath agreed. She stated there could be a nexus between getting rid of the KTIP and the increase in cases because the educators did not get the mentoring that they needed.

Mr. Mitchell suggested that school districts use in their new teacher training. He believes we need to target current teachers with training as well as a refresher course throughout their career.

Ms. Rudzinski mentioned the New Teacher Institute where she mentors. Ms. Rudzinski noted she did not cover ethics or the MCEE. Ms. Young noted that an EPSB attorney does provide ethics trainings to various groups including at the New Teacher Institute. Ms. Rudzinski stated she would have been more intentional had she had more direction, she felt that she did not receive sufficient training.

Ms. Cathy Gunn suggested a website that teachers could consult might be more useful than another training at the beginning of the school year.

Dr. Hedgepath asked if there had been any updates to the MCEE. Ms. Young noted there had not been any substantive changes.

Ms. Rudzinski asked about editing the Professional Code of Ethics and possibly incorporating more guidance rather than just stop signs. Ms. Young stated that it could be confusing to have two documents. Ms. Gunn said it would be fabulous to explain what to do rather than what not to do. She stated the focus is always on what not to do but never alternatives on what to do in a difficult situation.

Ms. Young noted the previous committee wanted the MCEE shared with educators. Ms. Young posed the question, what is the best way to share the MCEE? Ms. Traci Hunt stated that as a Principal of the largest 6-12 school in JCPS, she would appreciate if it was pushed from someone in her building to encourage buy in. Ms. Gunn stated an email would not be helpful. Mr. Mitchell mentioned direct access for everyone because depending on your district, if it is not a focus of your district, then it could get passed over and not provided to everyone. Ms. Hunt asked about mandating training on the MCEE just like blood-borne pathogens. Ms. Jacqueline Mayfield suggested presenting the MCEE to the local union and having it put in their newsletter. Ms. Mayfield also asked if it could be condensed or presented in sections for better retention. Ms. Mayfield also mentioned doing a skit video that explains how to apply the MCEE.

Ms. Gunn does not believe the MCEE is well known. She believes marketing to advertise would be efficient but not a long training. Ms. Gunn also stated that a more private option would be appropriate, such as the child abuse hotline. Ms. Rudzinski asked about the Board mandating training. Ms. Trueblood stated the legislature would have to mandate but training could be required by EPPs or certification.

Ms. Mayfield asked if the MCEE and Professional Code of Ethics could be merged into one document and then published to Facebook for wide accessibility. Ms. Young noted the MCEE does not lend itself to enforcement and the statute requires a code of ethics. As for Facebook, we do have staff that maintain social media sites for the Department.

Ms. Hunt asked if we could use the MCEE to “beef up” the Code of Ethics. Ms. Gunn agreed with Ms. Mayfield and Ms. Hunt that the MCEE could be used to better explain the Professional Code of Ethics. Ms. Gunn suggested using the MCEE as a supplement to further guide educators in

specific areas of the Professional Code of Ethics. Ms. Gunn stated she would not want it required for certification, but it could be sent out to educators with links for them to reference as a guide.

Dr. Hedgepath agreed and noted it is like a cross walk, to incorporate the MCEE in the Professional Code of Ethics. Mr. Mitchell concurred and reiterated that it should be mandatory in KTIP. Mr. Mitchell noted the MCEE has “fluff” language, but it does not help him apply it to the specific situations. Several members inquired about a FAQ for prior cases to show educators what happens in DUI’s or physical force cases. Ms. Young noted that is a slippery slope because cases are fact specific and determined on a case by case basis.

Ms. Young requested opinions for the next meeting – would the committee like a presentation on the MCEE and Professional Code of Ethics or are they ready to move forward with decisions? Ms. Mayfield stated she would want to wait until the Fall because this has been a stressful year. Ms. Mayfield asked if we could watch the NASDTEC MCEE video and re-convene to discuss next steps.

10-minute Break was taken to review NASDTEC MCEE video.

Ms. Gunn and Ms. Mayfield did not find the video particularly useful.

Ms. Young stated that staff would provide more information on the MCEE and Professional Code of Ethics in an effort to make a plan going forward. The Committee made plans to meet again in September.