



New Zealand
Teachers Council

Te Pouherenga Kaiako o Aotearoa

CODE OF ETHICS

**For Registered Teachers And Those Granted
A Limited Authority to Teach**

DECEMBER 2004

The overall purposes of this Code of Ethics:

- to clarify the ethics of the profession,
- to inspire the quality of behaviour which reflects the honour and dignity of the profession,
- to encourage and emphasise those positive attributes of professional conduct that characterise strong and effective teaching,
- to enable members of the profession to appraise and reflect on their ethical decisions.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR REGISTERED TEACHERS

Teachers registered to practice in New Zealand are committed to the attainment of the highest standards of professional service in the promotion of learning by those they teach, mindful of the learner's ability, cultural background, gender, age or stage of development.

This complex professional task is undertaken in collaboration with colleagues, learners, parents/guardians and family/whānau, as well as with members of the wider community.

The professional interactions of teachers are governed by four fundamental principles:

- **Autonomy** to treat people with rights that are to be honoured and defended,
- **Justice** to share power and prevent the abuse of power,
- **Responsible care** to do good and minimise harm to others,
- **Truth** to be honest with others and self.

Application of the Code of Ethics shall take account of the requirements of the law as well as the obligation of teachers to honour the Treaty of Waitangi by paying particular attention to the rights and aspirations of Māori as tangata whenua.

1. Commitment to learners

The primary professional obligation of registered teachers is to those they teach. Teachers nurture the capacities of all learners to think and act with developing independence, and strive to encourage an informed appreciation of the fundamental values of a democratic society.

Teachers will strive to:

- a) develop and maintain professional relationships with learners based upon the best interests of those learners,
- b) base their professional practice on continuous professional learning, the best knowledge available about curriculum content and pedagogy, together with their knowledge about those they teach,
- c) present subject matter from an informed and balanced viewpoint,
- d) encourage learners to think critically about significant social issues,
- e) cater for the varied learning needs of diverse learners,
- f) promote the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing of learners,
- g) protect the confidentiality of information about learners obtained in the course of professional service, consistent with legal requirements.

2. Commitment to parents/guardians and family/whānau

Teachers recognise that they work in collaboration with the parents/guardians and family/whānau of learners, encouraging their active involvement in the education of their children. They acknowledge the rights of caregivers to consultation on the welfare and progress of their children and respect lawful parental authority, although professional decisions must always be weighted towards what is judged to be the best interests of learners.

In relation to parents/guardians, and the family/whānau of learners, teachers will strive to:

- a) involve them in decision-making about the care and education of their children,
- b) establish open, honest and respectful relationships,
- c) respect their privacy,
- d) respect their rights to information about their children, unless that is judged to be not in the best interests of the children.

3. Commitment to society

Teachers are vested by the public with trust and responsibility, together with an expectation that they will help prepare students for life in society in the broadest sense.

In fulfillment of their obligations to society, teachers will strive to:

- a) actively support policies and programmes which promote equality of opportunity for all,
- b) work collegially to develop schools and centres which model democratic ideals,
- c) teach and model those positive values which are widely accepted in society and encourage learners to apply them and critically appreciate their significance.

4. Commitment to the profession

In the belief that the quality of the services of the teaching profession influences the nation and its citizens, teachers shall exert every effort to maintain and raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgement, and to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of trust to careers in education.

In fulfillment of their obligations to the teaching profession, teachers will strive to:

- a) advance the interests of the teaching profession through responsible ethical practice,
- b) regard themselves as learners and engage in continuing professional development,
- c) be truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies,
- d) contribute to the development and promotion of sound educational policy,
- e) contribute to the development of an open and reflective professional culture,
- f) treat colleagues and associates with respect, working with them co-operatively and collegially to promote students' learning,
- g) assist newcomers to the profession,
- h) respect confidential information on colleagues unless disclosure is required by the law or serves a compelling professional purpose,
- i) speak out if the behaviour of a colleague is seriously in breach of this Code.

ABOUT THIS CODE OF ETHICS

The Education Act 1989 empowers the New Zealand Teachers Council to develop a Code of Ethics for registered teachers. This Code applies to registered teachers and to those persons who are granted a Limited Authority to Teach.

A professional Code of Ethics, such as this, is a public statement by the profession of its common ethical principles, and how those principles are to be applied to promote the highest standards of professional service.

The principles are intended to educate, motivate and inspire members of the profession. At the same time, the Code is also a statement to learners, parents, whānau and the wider public about what may be expected of all registered teachers in their professional roles. It should be recognised that high ethical standards are most fully achieved by practitioners when those standards are also observed by employers, parents, students and community.

There is a widespread public expectation in our changing and diverse society that teachers in schools and early childhood centres will treat people fairly, respect their autonomy, exercise responsible care towards those they teach, and attend to truth not only in what they say, but also in the veracity of what they teach. These are the broad principles upon which the Code is based.

The Code is not a set of rules to be observed expediently. Its application requires interpretation in the light of the circumstances of difficult situations, and practitioners need to recognise tensions between different principles which may need to be resolved. For this reason, there may be no single correct solution to some predicaments, but practitioners should still be able to account for their actions by reference to the principles.

This Code is inspirational in its intent. Like other professional codes, it may also be used as a basis to challenge the ethical behaviour of a teacher and could provide grounds for complaint if a teacher's practice falls seriously short of these standards.

Where other sector specific codes covering registered teachers are in existence, the New Zealand Teachers Council Code is the overarching document. It is important that any other codes developed should complement this document rather than be in conflict with it.

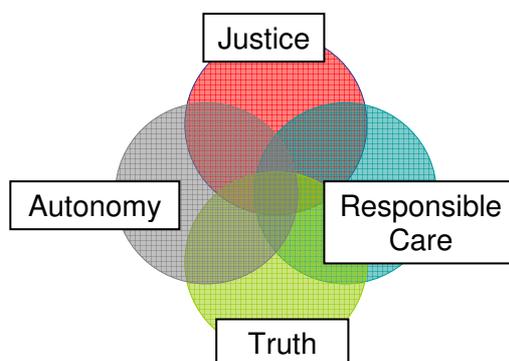
This Code should be treated as a living document with wide application in professional practice. Its use should not be limited to dealing with difficult issues. It should be treated as an educational tool: to help the profession to define and re-define its values, and assist individual practitioners to be constantly aware of ethical tensions in teaching, and help them develop principled ways to resolve those tensions. This process should begin with student teachers and continue throughout professional life.

ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Ethical decision-making is challenging because practitioners are often required to resolve tensions when their professional code is applied:

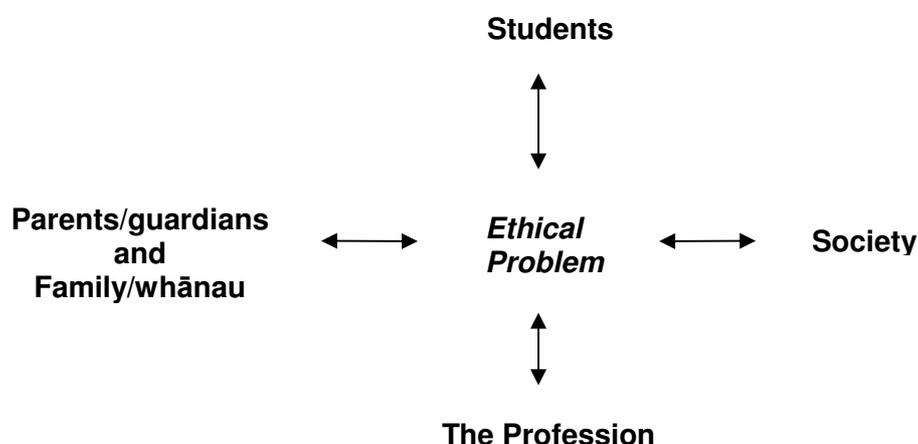
Balancing the Principles

The ethical principles underlying the Code do not stand in isolation. The four principles exist in a continuing relationship of tension as illustrated in the following diagram:



Competing Interest Groups

Tensions may also exist between the claims of the four groups to whom teachers have commitments:



Resolving Tensions

Resolving the competing claims of different ethical principles and different interest groups is usually best achieved through reflective professional discussion where the interests of learners are regarded as being of prime concern.

The process requires practice and is worthy of inclusion in both the pre-service education of teachers and their continuing professional development.