

MANAGING BELIEFS

This statement has been put together by the Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand, in consultation with and members of the New Zealand Association for Christian Schools (NZACS), Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools (APIS) and the Association of Integrated Schools (AIS). The purpose was to collaboratively develop guidance for all teachers on how to bring to life in a practical way the commitments expressed in the Code of Professional Responsibility to colleagues, learners, family and whanau and society.

TEACHERS' AND LAT HOLDERS' RESPONSIBILITY AND MANAGING PERSONAL BELIEFS

In short, all teachers are required to ensure their learners well-being is put first. Teaching is not about sharing an individual view but teaching our children and young people to interpret the world around them and make their own decisions. When it comes to a possible teacher disciplinary matter, either within the Centre or School, or at the Teaching Council, every situation is considered on its own merit, as the context is critical to whether the right thing was done at a point in time. There can be no black and white answer, which is why we encourage teachers to know and understand the Code of Professional Responsibility.

The Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand) requires all teachers, regardless of the kind of ECE or school setting they work in, to have a commitment to learners that includes promoting the wellbeing of learners, protecting them from harm and promoting inclusive practices. Teachers are required to work in the best interest of learners by being fair and effectively managing their assumptions and personal beliefs. It is the school's responsibility to support and guide teachers to meet these expectations and standards.

Personal beliefs and ideologies such as political, ethical, and religious perspectives are all an important part of who we are, and they shape the norms of our society over time. All teachers are entitled to hold personal beliefs/ideologies; but the Teaching Council expects that they do not express these to students in ways that exploit their vulnerability or causes them distress.

It is possible to be true to your own beliefs **and** be a teacher. Teachers do this every day when working in early learning, primary or secondary settings. However, it is essential that they do not use their position of authority to enforce, impose or promote their views onto students. In addition, it is important that teachers do not promote extreme, offensive, or uncomfortable positions in a way that may cause harm to students. Generational change continues to influence the way people view the world and themselves; and within our profession it's important for us to acknowledge different perspectives and to accommodate diversity.

The use of gender pronouns for gender identification and/or to signal a gender transition is a good example that is becoming more common in our schools, kura, and in society. Teachers have a responsibility to promote students' wellbeing in these circumstances. Every situation is unique so there are no black and white responses that will be appropriate for every situation. Because of this, we strongly encourage discussion about how to apply the principles in the Code of Professional Responsibility (the Code) within



your setting. To help with this, we have pulled out some relevant parts of the Code for considering what managing your personal beliefs might look like in practice. We recommend that all members of the profession should refer to the Examples in Practice that were created by teachers at the same time as the Code – refer to the link below.

If a teacher has concerns about managing their own personal beliefs or is unsure about how to ensure the wellbeing of their students, they are encouraged to discuss this with their principal or professional leader. Such an approach provides an opportunity to explore options that support the needs of the student and ensures the teacher is safeguarding their professional practice. The principal or professional leader will be well placed to endeavour to create a solution that upholds the mana of the teacher, student and parent.

When teachers are managing their personal beliefs, students' best interests and safety is always put first, as required by the Code of Professional Responsibility | Ngā Tikanga Matatika. When a teacher expresses their beliefs in such a way that is harmful of a learner's best interests and is unwilling to uphold their commitment to the profession, student, family, and whānau, or to society, then this may be regarded as a disciplinary matter. In the first instance it is the responsibility of the school to investigate the conduct of the teacher and provide any appropriate support and guidance. The school must be mindful of its obligations to submit a mandatory report to the Teaching Council if the teacher was dismissed, or if the teacher resigned within 12 months, or if a complaint was received after they resigned from the school, or if the school believes the teacher has engaged in serious misconduct (s. 490, s. 491 and s.492 of the Education and Training Act 2020). The Teaching Council will then decide on an appropriate action (if any) which may result in a referral to the Complaints Assessment Committee.

Ngā Tikanga Matatika | Code and Ngā Paerewa | Standards, as well as the accompanying *Examples in Practice*, outline the profession's expectations and may be helpful to refer to as guidance when managing complex dilemmas and professional and personal tensions. Some relevant extracts are included below for your reference, and further detail can be found in the links below.

MANAGING PERSONAL BELIEFS IN A STATE-INTEGRATED SCHOOL

Critical to the application of managing personal beliefs in a state-integrated school is the fundamental understanding of what a Special Character School is and the tension between Section 127 and Schedule 6 of the Education and Training Act.

At its most foundational level, a State-Integrated school with a special character is a school with clearly defined philosophical, ideological, and/or religious beliefs. The contractual agreement between a State-Integrated school's proprietor and the Crown is the proprietor's right to ensure the school's Special Character is reflected through its teaching and conduct.

Whereas in State education, the presentation of ideologies attempts to be secular and neutral in its delivery of education, a Special Character education, by definition, will have a philosophical filter/weighting that informs the delivery of the education it provides. This ideological emphasis is limited to the beliefs defined in the School's Deed of Integration.



Central to the presentation of ideologies and beliefs defined within the Deed of Integration is the need for all teachers to uphold the requirement of the teaching council's code to ensure all students feel valued within their classroom.

In order to successfully navigate these twin obligations, it is essential that the proprietor and leadership of a State-Integrated schools clearly define how they balance the requirements of Section 127 and Schedule 6 of the Education and Training act.

The following excerpts from the Education and Training Act include, but are not limited to the following requirements:

Section 127 Objectives of boards in governing schools

- (1) A board's primary objectives in governing a school are to ensure that—
- (a) every student at the school is able to attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement; and
 - (b) the school—
 - (i) is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff; and
 - (ii) gives effect to relevant student rights set out in this Act, the [New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990](#), and the [Human Rights Act 1993](#); and
 - (iii) takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school.

Schedule 6

1 Preservation of special character of State integrated schools

- (1) A State integrated school on integration continues to have the right to reflect, through its teaching and conduct, the education with a special character provided by it.
- (2) Integration must not jeopardise the special character of a State integrated school.

28 Instruction of students

- (1) Each State integrated school must instruct its students in accordance with the curricula and syllabuses prescribed under this Act or any regulations made under this Act.

(2) However, the general school programme must reflect the education with a special character provided by the State integrated school, and religious and other examples may be used to reinforce teaching throughout the school day.

Compare: 1989 No 80 [s 444](#)

As State-Integrated Schools navigate teachers' expressions of their personal beliefs, they must do so in alignment with their stated beliefs within their school's Deed of Integration as well as in alignment with the parameters of Schedule 6 and Section 127 of the Education and Training Act.

These requirements may not be straight forward to implement in practice. The Ministry of Education encourages schools to contact their local Ministry Office to seek support.



Code and Standards

<https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Code-and-Standards/Our-Code-Our-Standards-Nga-Tikanga-Matatika-Nga-Paerewa.pdf>

Examples of Practice

<https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Code-and-Standards/Code-of-Professional-Responsibility-Examples-in-Practice.pdf>

CODE – Management of personal beliefs

Commitments	Code	Action to <u>support</u> the code
Commitment to the teaching profession	<i>I will maintain public trust and confidence in the teaching profession</i>	engaging in profession, respectful and collaborative relationships with colleagues contributing to a professional culture that supports and upholds this code
Commitment to the learner	<i>I will work in the best interest of learners.</i>	promoting the wellbeing of learners and protecting them from harm respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity, and culture of all learners being fair and effectively managing my assumptions and personal beliefs
Commitment to Families and Whanau	<i>I will respect the vital role my learners' families and whanau play in supporting their children</i>	engaging in relationships with families and whānau that are professional and respectful. respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity, and culture of families and whānau.
Commitment to Society	<i>I will respect my trusted role in society and the influence I have in shaping futures.</i>	fostering learners to be active participants in community life and engaged in issues important to the wellbeing of society.



EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE – Management of personal beliefs

Commitments	Examples of behaviour that <u>support</u> the Code of Professional Responsibility	Examples of behaviour that <u>do not</u> support the Code of Professional Responsibility
Commitment to the teaching profession	contributing to an inclusive, supportive, and respectful workplace culture that promotes teacher and learner wellbeing.	behaving in a way that damages the trust or confidence that my learners, their family and whanau, colleagues or others have in me as a teacher, or in the profession as a whole.
Commitment to the learner	<p>fostering a learning culture that celebrates diversity and inclusive and protects against discrimination.</p> <p>understanding my world views may be different from those of my learners</p> <p>critically reflecting on how my own beliefs or bias may impact on my teaching practice and the achievement of learners with different abilities and needs, backgrounds, genders, identities and cultures</p> <p>using the correct pronoun for a learner's preferred gender identity</p> <p>pronouncing learners' names correctly and encouraging others to do the same.</p> <p>helping learners to think critically about issues and understand different views, theories, perspectives, and experiences.</p> <p>maintaining professional objectivity and, when this is not possible, discussing it with my professional leader.</p>	<p>making discriminatory or derogatory comments about a learner's heritage, language, identity, beliefs, or culture</p> <p>dismissing or belittling a learner's personal, cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs</p> <p>displaying a lack of respect for a learner's cultural or customary protocols</p> <p>refusing to pronounce or to learn how to pronounce a learner's name correctly</p> <p>using my authority as a teacher to undermine the personal beliefs of my learners or to inappropriately influence them to take a course of action</p> <p>expressing or promoting discriminatory beliefs and practices</p>
Commitment to Families and Whanau	using a range of opportunities and approaches to establish and maintain a responsive and reciprocal relationship	deliberately pronouncing family or whanau names incorrectly or refusing to learn how to pronounce them correctly (including



		important names or phrases within their culture or belief).
Commitment to Society	creating learning environments where all learners can be confident in their identity, language, and culture and as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand	discriminating against or excluding people on the basis of their personal or social circumstances (that is, their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, ability, religion, or language).