



Position Statement

Principles of Professionalism for Science Educators

Introduction

Today's science educators play central roles in educating, inspiring, and guiding students to become responsible scientifically literate citizens. Therefore, it is essential that teachers of science uphold the highest ethical standards of the profession to earn the respect, trust, and confidence of students, parents, school leadership, colleagues, and other members of the community. The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) establishes the following expectations and principles to guide the professional conduct of all preK–16 teachers of science, including preservice, novice, and experienced educators.

Quality science instruction is an interdependent process that requires the active participation and shared responsibility of science educators, school leaders, district administrators, school boards, and parents. With this in mind, NSTA calls on science educators to accept the responsibility of conducting themselves as professionals to provide *all* students with the best science education possible; embrace and promote their own professional learning and growth; uphold and strengthen the public image of the profession; and become active leaders in their schools and communities advocating for quality science education.

Declarations

Principle 1: The Importance of Promoting the Growth of All Students

As part of their commitment to the growth and education of *all* students, teachers of science should

- Show respect for each individual and value his or her identity and cultural heritage.
- Help students reflect as learners and use skills of inquiry to become effective problem solvers (NSTA 2004).
- Keep scientific discussions focused on empirically based evidence collected from the natural world, while showing respect for the various world views of students.
- Recognize the abilities and strengths of students, as well as their unique learning needs. (NBPTS 1999)

Principle 2: The Importance of Taking Personal Responsibility for Professional Growth

To uphold the highest professional standards, teachers of science should

- Promote their own personal professional development and recognize that becoming an effective teacher of science is a continuous process that requires a commitment to lifelong learning (NRC 2006 p. 55; NSTA 2006).
- Stay current on literature in science and pedagogy and strive to be reflective practitioners who generate new knowledge and share that knowledge with others.
- Seek out formal and informal opportunities to learn, such as becoming active in professional associations; organizing and attending conferences; taking courses and seminars; reading professional publications; visiting other classrooms; and interacting with colleagues, mentors, and coaches to support their personal growth.

Principle 3: The Importance of Being Leaders in the Profession

To promote the profession both inside and outside the classroom, teachers of science must be active leaders promoting collaboration among colleagues, parents, and other members of the community. Teachers should

- Promote collaboration among colleagues in the school and in the larger community of science educators to share ideas, discuss problems, and support one another to improve their practice.
- Serve as mentors and coaches to support the initial and ongoing development of beginning teachers of science. (NSTA 2007)
- Promote the improvement of science teaching and learning by being active leaders in professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels.
- Foster positive partnerships with parents to support and enhance student growth and success in science. This includes helping parents understand the goals of science education at the school and district levels and promoting a deeper understanding of the global implications of science and our nation's future.
- Work in partnership with the school, district, and other stakeholders to gain a greater understanding of the cultural fabric of the community and its relationship to the successful teaching and learning of science.
- Reflect a positive professional image by being cognizant of the image portrayed to students, parents, and the community through speech, attire, and actions.

Principle 4: The Importance of Upholding Personal and Professional Ethics

As leaders of students, teachers of science must uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior and be positive role models. They should

- Conduct themselves—both inside and outside the school—in a positive manner that students might emulate (NBPTS 1999).
- Model ethical behavior both in the school environment and in public places.
- Understand the unique demands placed on teachers because students are required to be in their care. (NBPTS 1999)
- Protect, respect, and empower all students.

Principle 5: Support for Professional Teachers of Science

For science educators to be successful, they must have the full support and active participation of school leaders, district administrators, school boards, parents, and students. These stakeholders must work together to

- Secure a professional, safe work environment and appropriate support to allow science educators to teach and grow effectively. (NSTA 2000, NSTA Forthcoming)
- Provide all teachers of science with adequate time for planning, interacting, and collaborating with colleagues and with other stakeholders in the school and community.
- Ensure that all teachers, especially those who are new to the profession, receive a reasonable work load and adequate time for preparation.
- Secure time and resources for effective professional development and support for all teachers of science throughout their careers. (NSTA 2006)

*Adopted by the
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References

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). 1999. *What teachers should know and be able to do*. Arlington, VA.

National Research Council (NRC). 1996. *National science education standards (NSES)*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). 2007. *NSTA Position Statement: Induction Programs for the Support & Development of Beginning Teachers of Science*.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). 2006. *NSTA Position Statement: Professional Development in Science Instruction*.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). 2004. *NSTA Position Statement: Scientific Inquiry*.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). 2000. NSTA Position Statement: Safety and School Science Instruction.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). Forthcoming. NSTA Position Statement: Liability of Teachers for Laboratory Safety.

Additional Resources

New York State Code of Ethics for Educators. 2002. New York State Education Department. Albany, NY.