

# Georgia Professional Standards Commission



## The Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators

**Legal Authority  
of the PSC  
Ethics Division**

## 20-2-984.1. Adoption of a Code of Ethics.

- (a) It shall be the duty of the commission to adopt **standards of performance and a code of ethics for educators...** which are generally accepted by educators of this state.

# Code of Ethics

Code of “Common Sense”



## **20-2-984.1. Adoption of a Code of Ethics.**

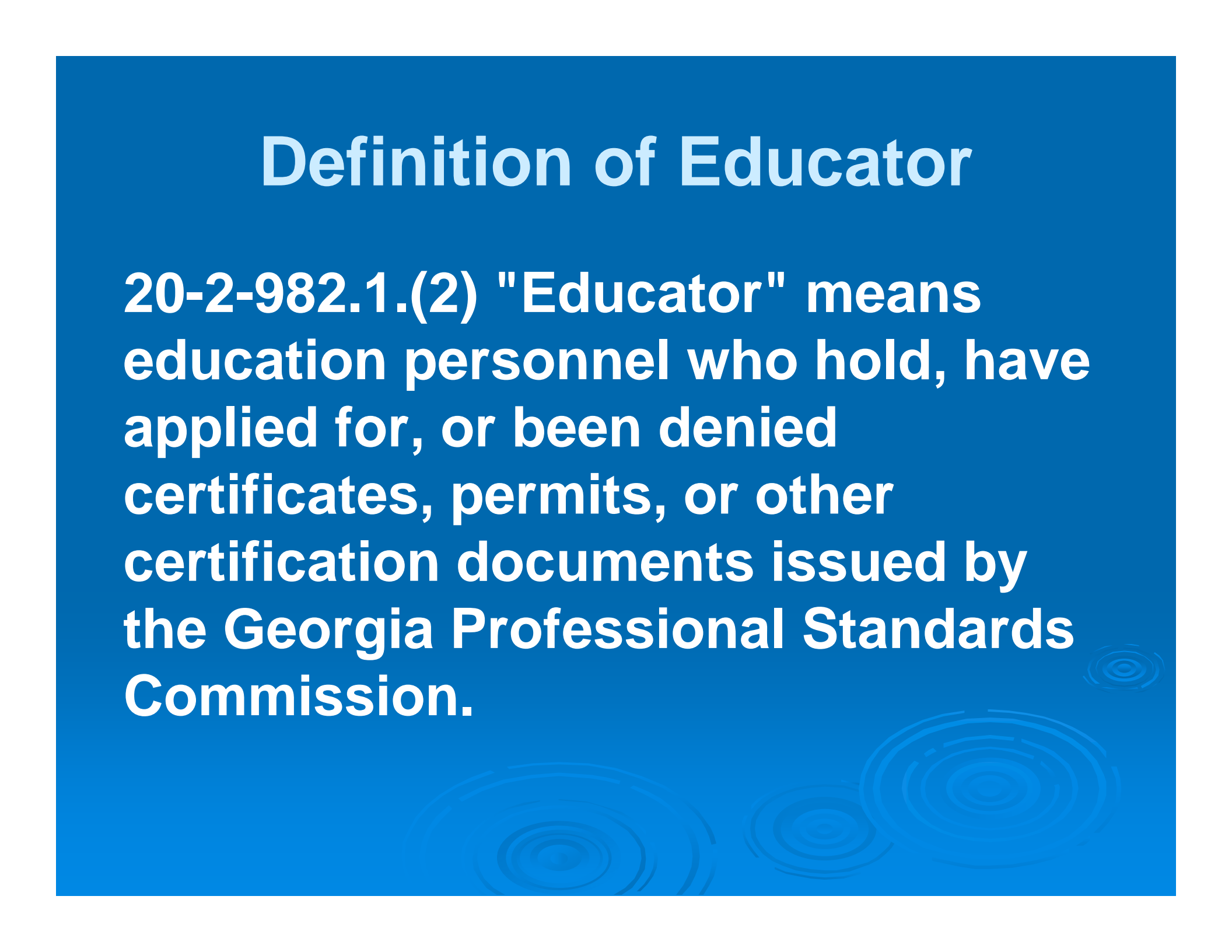
**The standards of performance and code of ethics adopted by the commission shall be limited to professional performance and professional ethics.**

**The PSC does not care what you do in you personal lives as long as it does not carryover into your professional lives.**



# Definition of Educator

**20-2-982.1.(2) "Educator" means education personnel who hold, have applied for, or been denied certificates, permits, or other certification documents issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.**



**Standard 1**

# **Legal Compliance**

## Standard 1

**An educator shall  
abide by federal,  
state, and local  
laws and statutes.**



# Legal Compliance

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the **commission or conviction** of:

- a felony or any crime involving moral turpitude.
- any criminal offense involving a controlled substance or marijuana.
- any sexual offense specified in Code Section 16.
- any laws applicable to the profession.

**The educator pled guilty to  
two counts of Theft by  
Taking for stealing  
gasoline from the school  
system valued at  
\$1,032.75.**

**One Year Suspension**

**The educator was  
convicted of criminal  
offenses pertaining to the  
forging and passing of  
prescriptions for drugs.**

**Revoked**

**The educator surrendered  
his certificate after being  
charged with distributing  
child pornography.**

**Revoked**

# Conduct with Students

## Standard 2

An educator shall  
always maintain a  
**professional**  
relationship with all  
students, both in and  
outside the classroom.

**A student is  
anyone under  
the age of  
18.**

**OR, a student  
enrolled in  
grades Pre-K to  
12 in a public or  
private school.**



**For the purposes of the  
Code of Ethics, the  
enrollment period for a  
graduating student  
ends on August 31 of  
the year of graduation.**

# Sexual Abuse of Students

Revocation



Young people instinctively recognize these boundary violations and often nickname the employee engaged in such violations a “pervert,” based on their perceived sense of inappropriateness.

*Mary Jo McGrath*

**The Superintendent failed to report that her daughter, a school counselor, was involved in an inappropriate relationship with a student.**

**Revoked**

**The Principal was advised that a student had a cell phone video of a female student performing a sex act on a male student . She waited 3 days to confiscate the cell phone.**

**Revoked**

**The Principal exchanged over 1,100 text messages with two female students in a 2-month time period that contained discussions of alcohol, drugs, and sex.**

**Two Year Suspension**

**The educator's failure to properly supervise students resulted in the sexual assault of a kindergarten student by a third grade student.**

**One Year Suspension**

**The Educator sent students text messages asking about their sexual orientation or other student's sexual orientation. He pled guilty to two counts of Electronically Furnishing Obscene Material to Minors.**

**Revoked**



**The educator engaged in a sexual relationship with a thirteen year old male student that her daughter was dating.**

**Revoked**

**The educator provided alcoholic beverages that were consumed by students at a party at her residence.**

**One Year Suspension**

# Student Relationship Guidelines

## Social Networking

Don't accept students as friends and decline any student initiated social network friend requests.

Don't post anything on a website that you would not post on the front door of the school.

# Student Relationship Guidelines

~~Email~~

~~Phone Calls~~

**Be Friendly,  
Not a Friend.**

~~Gossip~~

~~Parties~~

~~Photographs~~

~~Inappropriate Jokes~~

# Student Relationship Guidelines

~~Home~~

**Choose**

~~Auto~~

**Appropriate**

**Settings**

~~Dark Room~~

~~Closest~~

Physical Education teacher and gymnastics coach, age 27, in Illinois convicted of having sex with a teen age boy.

"When boys sexually interact with older women they're viewed as lucky," she said. "When girls sexually interact with an older male it's seen as them being victimized."

But that kind of thinking is shortsighted, Ortiz said. Minors of any age are not cognitively developed enough to make important decisions about sexual interactions or able to "fully understand the consequences of such actions later in their lives."

**Defendant: Ashley M. Blumenshine** (Law enforcement photo /  
January 7, 2011) **Charge: Criminal sexual abuse**



**Standard 3**

**Alcohol  
or  
Drugs**



## Standard 3

**An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.**

# Drugs

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

- 1. being on school premises or at a school-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs;**

Illegal and  
Unauthorized  
Drugs are **Always**  
Illegal and  
Unauthorized.

**The educator was involved in the manufacture, use and distribution of methamphetamine at her residence. The educator took methamphetamine onto school system property and provided methamphetamine to student aged individuals.**

**Revoked**

The educator was arrested for trafficking marijuana. Fifty pounds of marijuana was found in the educator's home. The home "reeked" of the smell of smoked and fresh marijuana. Three children were in the home at the time of the arrest.

**Revoked**

# Alcohol

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

2. being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages.

20-2-984.1. The ... code of ethics ... **shall be limited to professional performance and professional ethics.**

The educator admits consuming two glasses of wine prior to attending a middle school talent show. She exhibited glassy red eyes, slightly slurred speech, giddy behavior and the odor of an alcoholic beverage on her person. The principal asked another teacher to take her home.

**NPC**

**No Breath or Blood  
Alcohol Test Results!**



**The educator was under the influence of alcoholic beverages while on school campus. Breath test readings were .160gms and .167gms.**

**One Year Suspension**

**The educator admits to using alcohol before coming to school and leaving school, without permission, to obtain and drink more alcohol. He vomited and became disoriented in the classroom. He had been arrested and charged with Sexual Battery of a high school student and Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor the previous day.**

**Revoked**

**The educator admitted that he consumed one alcoholic beverage after hours on three nights while serving as a chaperone on an eight-day school-sponsored trip to Italy.**

**Suspended 20 Days**

The educator fell asleep in class and failed to supervise two of his students engaged in oral sex during class time. On a required drug test the educator tested positive for cocaine.

**Revoked**

Standard 4

**Honesty**

## Standard 4

**An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.**

# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

- 1. professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history;**

# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

- 2. information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies;**



# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

**3. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel;**

# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

**4. reasons for absences or leaves;**

# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

**5. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; and**

# Honesty

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

**6. information submitted in the course of professional practice.**

**The educator provided the system with a doctor's excuse for the days that she attended an out of state event with her daughter and husband.**

**5 Day Suspension**

**The educator admitted to changing the grades of 12 students in four subjects with no documentation supporting the grade changes. The educator stated it was done for the benefit of the students.**

**10 Day Suspension**

**The educator fabricated her IEP paperwork by cutting signatures from other documents, pasting them on the required paperwork, and photocopying the paperwork to conceal the cut and paste. She submitted the fabricated documents to the school system.**

**90 Day Suspension**

Standard 5

# Public Funds & Property



## Standard 5

**An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.**

# Public Funds & Property

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. **misusing public or school-related funds;**
2. **failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;**
3. **submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay;**
4. **co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; and**
5. **using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or **authorized designee.****

**The DOE Academic Coach Program Manager authorized payment of funds to employ her relatives, to fund unallowable expenditures for herself and a subordinate DOE employee, and to further her pursuit of a doctorate degree.**

**Three Year Suspension**

**The Superintendent  
wrote and approved a  
check to his wife for  
time that she did not  
actually work.**

**90 Contract Day  
Suspension**

**The Educator used school system computer equipment to exchange emails of a sexual nature with another educator. The emails were obtained by an Open Records Request and published in local newspapers.**

**90 Day Suspension**

**The educator rented the school auditorium to community members and kept the money for his personal use.**

**Revoked**

The educator forged the superintendent's signature to obtain unauthorized equipment to use for the creation and distribution of pornographic material to further his private business (*the production and distribution of pornography*).

**Revoked**

The educator used her school system computer to access dating and singles websites soliciting relationships with men during instructional time and CRCT test administration. This included arranging meetings for the purpose

**One Year Suspension**  
of having sex.



Standard 6

# Remunerative Conduct

## Standard 6

**An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.**

**A Coach opened multiple bank accounts with school funds without the school's approval. Checks totaling thousands of dollars were written to "cash" or to the Educator. This left the school over \$27,000 in debt.**

**Three Year Suspension**

## Other Remunerative Conduct Cases

- Solicited parents to pay for private music lessons
- Accepted gifts in exchange for extra credit points or starting positions on teams
- Promoted a personal business to students, teachers and parents (*Private Coaching*)
- Collected fees for participation in marching band and paid himself to conduct band camp
- Requested a ocean fishing trip from a vendor after a large purchase with no bid.

Standard 7

# Confidential Information

## Standard 7

**An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information.**

## **Confidential Information**

- Annual performance evaluation records of school personnel
- Health services provided to an insured
- Individual student performance data, information and reports
- School records of students with disabilities
- A student's education record

Standard 8

# Abandonment of Contract



**An educator shall fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract.**

# Abandonment of Contract

- The PSC expects educators to honor their contracts.
- The PSC has identified circumstances that warrant educators leaving their contracted positions without a release.
- Educators are expected to make every effort to minimize the effect on the students experiencing the loss.

Standard 9

# Required Reports

**An educator shall file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse, or any other required report.**

## O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5

**'Child abuse'** includes the following conduct by a child's parent or caretaker:

- **Physical injury or death** (*by other than accidental means*)
- **Neglect or exploitation of a child**
- **Sexual abuse** - *an act of apparent sexual stimulation or gratification ...*
- **Sexual exploitation** - allows, permits, encourages, or requires a child to engage in prostitution or sexually explicit conduct ....

# 20-2-1184

**Any employee** of a public or private elementary or secondary school ... who has **reasonable cause to believe that a student** at that school has **committed any of the following acts** upon school property or at any school function, shall immediately report the act and the name of the student to the principal or the principal's designee.

- Aggravated assault involving a firearm;
- Aggravated battery;
- Sexual offenses;
- Carrying a deadly weapons at public gatherings;
- Carrying weapons at school;
- Illegal possession of a pistol or revolver by a person under 18
- Possession or any use of marijuana and controlled substances,

**The principal ... shall make an oral report** thereof **immediately** by telephone or otherwise to the appropriate school system **superintendent** and to the **appropriate police authority and district attorney**.

Any person *who fails to make a report* shall be guilty of a **misdemeanor**.

**What is “reasonable  
cause to believe?”**

**The High School Principal failed to report rumors that a female student was involved with a male teacher until after the teacher was arrested and charged Sexual Assault.**

**One Year Suspension**



**The Educator failed to disclose the revocation of a Florida certificate in 1976 for providing alcohol to students, consuming alcohol in the presence of students, and engaging in an inappropriate physical relationship with a student.**

**Revoked**

Standard 10

# Professional Conduct

## Standard 10

**An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession.**

**The educators admit leaving 17 students unsupervised at a hotel to attend a theater performance. The students obtained and consumed alcoholic beverages and participated in sexual acts while the educators were away.**

**Suspend 2 Years**

**The Educator admitted carrying a yard stick and hitting a student on her leg, allowing students in the gym when they are not supposed to be there, and allowing a student to watch his son in his office instead of attending gym class.**

**Suspend 30 Days**

Standard 11

# Testing

## Standard 11

**An educator shall  
administer state  
mandated assessments  
fairly and ethically.**

Having difficulty getting  
your students to pass the  
standardized tests try:





CHEATING!

TEACHING!



# **ERASURES!**

**Are erasures on  
state test answer  
sheets unethical?**

**No!**

# **Erasures on Student Answer Sheets are NOT Unethical!**

**Clean up of stray marks and  
smudges is a requirement for  
accurate scoring!**

**The educator was in and out of the classroom, leaving student CRCT test booklets unsecured in the classroom. Students were present in the classroom at the time and CRCT material was compromised during the time frame in question.**

**20 Day Suspension**

**The Educator deviated from the script when she administered the CRCT Reading exam to 2nd grade students. The Educator reread each test question more times than was authorized, paraphrased the script, and at provided hints to the students.**

**30 Day Suspension**

**The educator administered the CRCT to special education students improperly by reading passages as well as questions and answers, and then falsified the students' IEP reports to convince others that he was supposed to read the passages.**

**90 Day Suspension**

**The educator provided a study guide to students was just like the CRCT. DOE confirmed that the study guide matched the test. Witnesses' statements confirmed that the educator copied testing material.**

**One Year Suspension**

**Other Grounds  
for Disciplinary  
Action against a  
Certificate**



## **Other Grounds for Disciplinary Action:**

- **Disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators.**
- **Order from a court or a request from DHR that a certificate be suspended or denied for non-payment of child support.**

## **Other Grounds for Disciplinary Action:**

- **Default on or unsatisfactory repayment status on a student loan.**
- **Suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate.**
- **Violation of laws and rules applicable to the profession.**
- **Any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.**

# **Enforcing Sanctions**

**The superintendent and the superintendent's designee for certification shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GAPSC certification.**

