



Module Summary

In this module, teachers will:

- Examine four principles that can help them develop and maintain professional relationships with colleagues.

** This module is part of a group focused on professionalism that includes “Teacher Professionalism in the Age of Social Media” and “Maintaining Professional Relationships with Students”.*



Key Takeaways

Essential knowledge:

High-quality, professional interactions among teachers have been linked to higher levels of student achievement and overall school quality (Chance & Segura, 2009; Garmston & Wellman, 2003; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Heider, 2005; Shah, 2012b).

Essential skill:

There tend to be two types of situations when professionalism breaks down. The first breakdown can occur when colleagues fail to affirm and navigate differences that exist between them, which then causes their relationship to become tense or contentious. The following principles can be used to improve that relationship:

- Operate with an asset-based perspective.
- Engage in reflexivity.
- Build a rapport.

The second type of breakdown can occur when teachers get *too* friendly with colleagues and professionalism becomes lax. The following actions can be used to maintain professional boundaries:

- Consider how others may interpret your words, tone, and actions.
- Refrain from discussing personal information that is not appropriate for a work or school setting.

Essential mindset:

Strong, positive and professional relationships with colleagues can benefit students and the overall school climate. Proactively taking the steps to improve these relationships is within the locus of control of teachers.



The Skill in Action

Teachers who are conscientious about their professionalism with colleagues will do the following:

- Remain open-minded and suspend judgement.
- Ask clarifying and probing questions to better understand someone else’s actions, beliefs, or perspective.
- Stay aware that the *content* of her/his message and *how it is communicated* may impact others in ways that were different from what was intended.
- Consider how others could interpret her/his words, tone, and actions.
- Take the time to get to know her/his colleagues better.
- Proactively resolve an issue with a colleague by speaking directly with him/her.
- Refrain from discussing personal information that is not appropriate for a work or school setting.
- Refrain from gossiping about colleagues and students.

Teachers who exhibit any of the following behaviors, may benefit from this module:

- Have hostile or combative relationships with anyone on staff.
- Communicate with other staff members about topics that aren’t appropriate for a work or school setting.
- Make statements that are insensitive and have hurt or offended others.



Questions for Discussion

The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- What were your key takeaways from the module?
- How would you evaluate your level of professionalism with colleagues?
- Which of the principles do you already do well? How so?
- Which of the principles described in this module do you think you could apply immediately?
- Did this module give you any ideas for things you should do differently?
- Have you ever encountered a situation where you were unsure of the appropriate course of action?
- How do you believe the knowledge and skills highlighted in this module will benefit your growth as a teacher?
- What questions do you have about professionalism?
- Are there any questions you have for me?



Standards

InTASC:

10(c) The teacher engages collaboratively in the schoolwide effort to build a shared vision and supportive culture, identify common goals, and monitor and evaluate progress toward those goals.

10(r) The teacher takes initiative to grow and develop with colleagues through interactions that enhance practice and support student learning.