

Prepping for Success: Educator Preparation Programs and Preventing Ethics Complaints

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Overview

- Morals v. Ethics
- Updated PLSB Data
- The role of EPP Programs



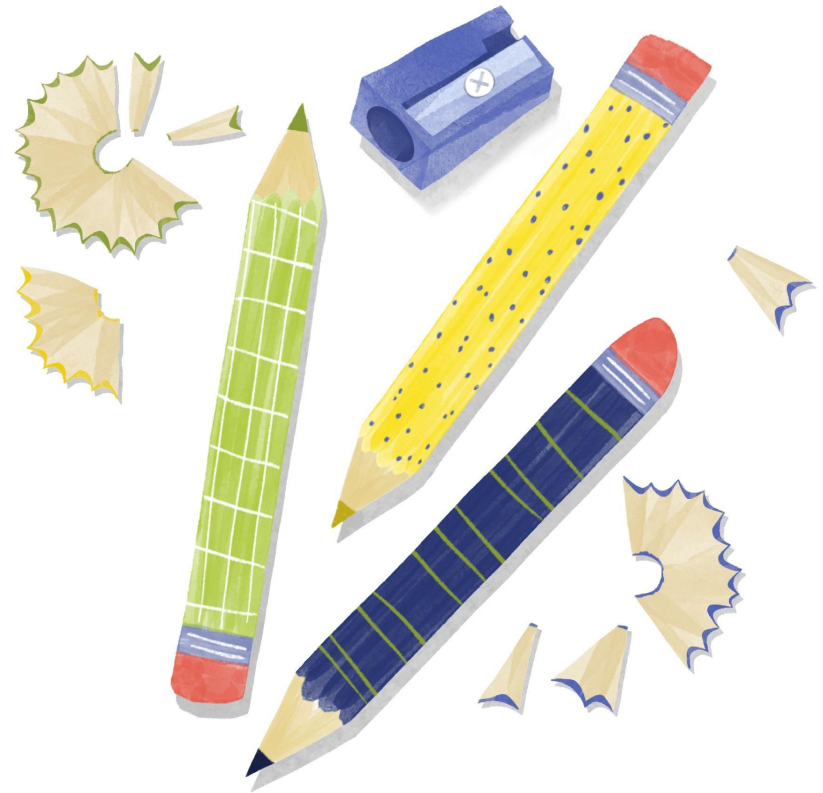
What is the difference
between morals and ethics?

Morals: One's own sense or definition of right or wrong behavior

Code of Ethics: A uniform guide to decision making for educators. A code is a set of norms created by the profession.

Should educators
rely on morals or
ethics?

What is the
importance of a set
of standards?



Data

FY25, 37 cases authorized for educators who had 1-5 years experience

FY26, so far, 24 educators investigated who had 1-5 years experience



Most Common Standards Authorized are Standards 1 & 2

- Most Cases Involved:
 - Inappropriate Communication
 - Inappropriate Interaction
 - Physical Contact
 - Sexual Contact/Communication

In some instances, preservice teachers/interns, those who have very recently had Code of Ethics training, receive the equivalent of a revocation of license ***within one semester or one school year.***

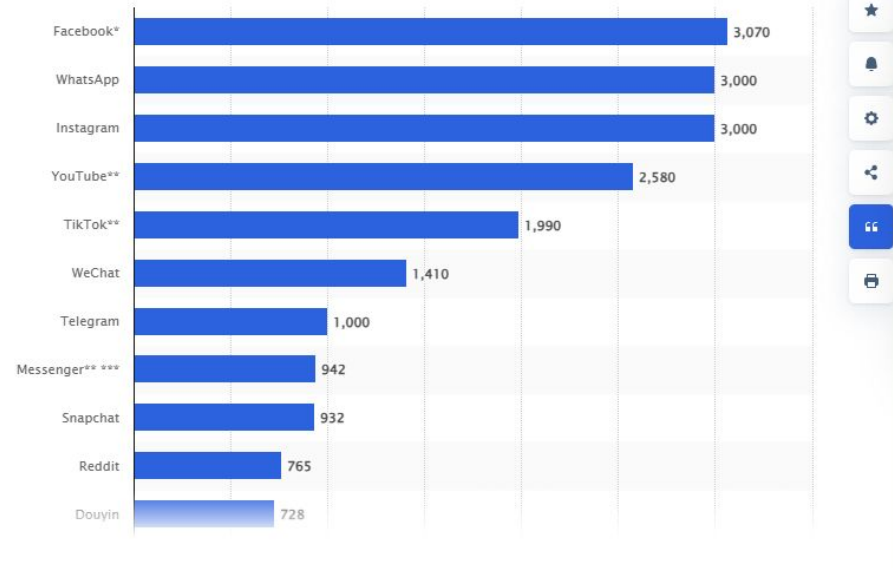
Pre-Service Teachers and Interns



Common Issues:

- Communication on Social Media
- “Friends” with students
- Students are close in age/viewed as “peers”
- Returning to same district where intern/preservice teacher went to school
- Lack of sufficient Code of Ethics training

Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2025, by number of monthly active users



Dennis and Harrison (2021), describe “moral fog” in relation to how individuals struggle to determine which ethical principles to apply and anticipate the outcome of their actions in digital spaces and online environments.

Dennis, M., & Harrison, T. (2021). Unique ethical challenges for the 21st century: Online technology and virtue education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 50(3), 251–266. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2020.1781071>



The Role of EPP Programs in Prevention



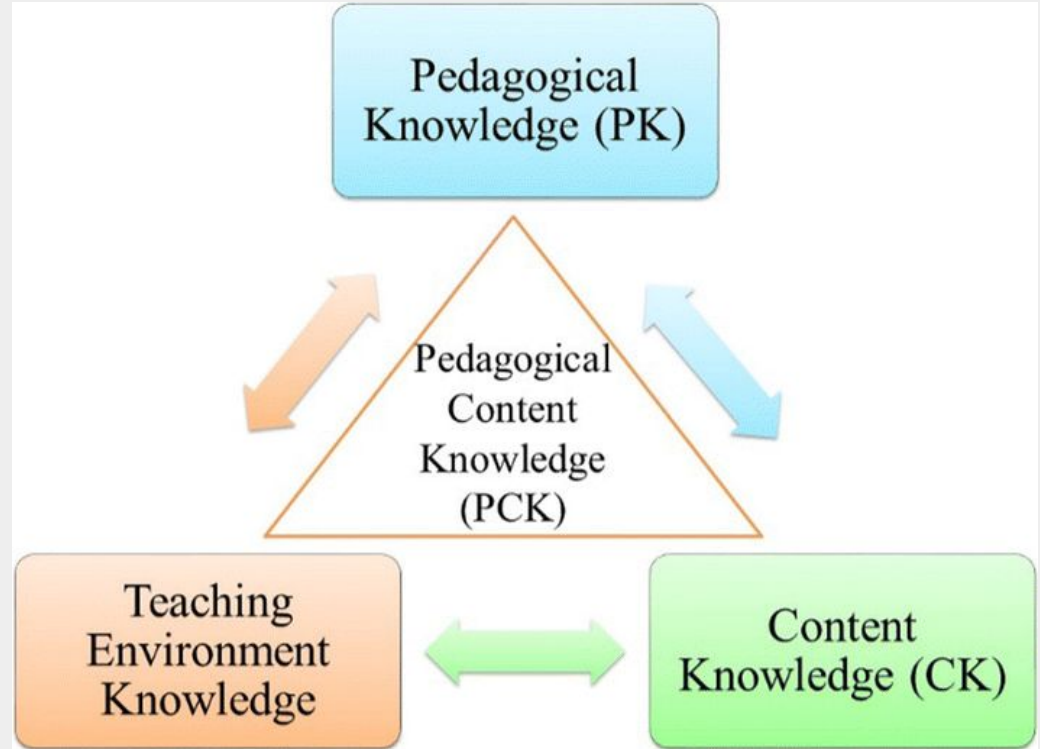
The coursework designed by the EPP provided teacher candidates with the content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and practical application opportunities to teach effectively in the classroom and to fulfill the state teaching requirement for a standard teacher licensure (Hughes & Diego-Medrano, 2019).

Therefore it is the role of the EPP to:

- Build Ethical Knowledge
- Develop ethical decision-making skills
- Foster professional identity
- Prepare teachers for digital citizenship and social media
- Create opportunities to build ethical competence

Lee Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Lee Shulman's (1987) pedagogical reasoning refers to the process by which teachers' knowledge of a particular subject matter is transformed into pedagogical principles through deliberate actions of comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, and reflection across the five cyclical stages.



Key Takeaways



- According to Warnick et al. (2016), four types of identified problems continue to recur in the news and the courts because of social media usage, including inappropriate contact with students, illegal and reckless behavior, posting content reflecting poor professional judgement, and legal but controversial behaviors.
- Ethical experiences must become incorporated in the educator preparation program curriculum to shape an educator's thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, commitments, and assumptions (Davenport et al., 2015; Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016).
- Pinkerton et al. (2025) recommended using a systems-based approach to revising and monitoring EPPs to ensure that programs meet the needs of stakeholders with continuous improvement to review, revise, and enhance.
- Robert and Thompson (2019) stated that young and early career educators are more likely to engage in inappropriate teacher-student relationships, while older, veteran teachers are more likely to engage in sexual misconduct with students.

Contact Information

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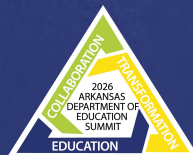
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