NABT Position Statement:
Professional Ethics for Biology Educators

The National Association of Biology Teachers strives to identify and communicate the basic ethical principles that represent the shared objectives of the profession.

Ethical principles should form the foundation of guidelines implemented by biology educators through a sense of mutual moral responsibility. This includes the obligation to: uphold the generally accepted codes of professional educator ethics; uphold the standards of scientific integrity as customary in the scientific community; encourage all students to become successful in science, communicate the processes of scientific skepticism and decision-making based on evidence, and uphold the use of scientific evidence within the context of their educational institution and the broader community.

Teachers are encouraged to use the highest standards of science teaching. They should embrace the accepted codes of ethics for educators as described by professional education associations such as the Association of American Educators, the National Education Association, The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, The American Association of University Professors, and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification.

Teachers should expose students to the breadth and depth of scientific evidence in the subject of a particular course. Biology educators have an ethical responsibility to teach diverse scientific concepts, including those that might conflict with their personal, religious, or political values and beliefs. Biology educators must ensure equitable access for all students and to include diverse perspectives and examples in instruction. Biology educators should teach students to respect biological specimens used in the classroom or field as modeled by educators, including the conservation of organisms in the classroom and the field. They should give students the broadest opportunity to learn the subject and processes of biology through field and laboratory experiences and provide students with a classroom environment upholding academic integrity, honesty, respect, fairness, and personal responsibility.

Ethical biology teachers prepare students with the skills and resources necessary to become thoughtful and scientifically literate citizens. In ethical biology classrooms, students learn to make decisions based on scientific evidence and data analyses. Ethical biology teachers understand the difference between a scientific and social controversy and can approach either in a comprehensive manner. Students learn to research controversial subjects using scientifically valid and reliable sources. Ethical biology educators enable students in carefully structured and civil discussion of controversial topics.

Educators should convey clear rules and consequences concerning report writing and presentations so that students know about and are required to understand plagiarism and data fabrication. Educators must emphasize the responsible use of information technology, including respect for Internet copyright in use of articles, images, and presentations developed by others through upholding high standards for their use and expectations for student work. Ethical Biology educators ensure that students accurately attribute references and respect the intellectual contributions reflected in lessons, handouts, articles, and other materials from work previously published by others.

Professional educators make a continuous and conscientious effort to exemplify high ethical standards. Biology teachers understand that ethical education in science demonstrates responsibility to all students, the broader community, and the profession as a whole.

Revised and adopted by the NABT Board of Directors, July 2020. This position supersedes and replaces all previous NABT statements regarding professional ethics.