

## Policy Statement 90

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### **This We Believe About Civility in Educational Environments**

**Civility**, defined as courtesy and politeness, is critical in all settings, whether educational, business, personal, or social. Concern about the effects of incivility in society is evident both in the educational and popular literature. The rise of incivility is often attributed to the ubiquitous nature and use of technology, insufficient parental supervision, students' sense of entitlement, and lack of tolerance among diverse student populations. Lack of civility disrupts the learning environment as well as negatively impacts workplace, social, and personal interactions.

Anecdotal evidence and research clearly document the presence of negative behaviors in education. Acts of incivility can manifest as discourtesy, rudeness, disruptive behavior, or threats of physical violence, resulting in an environment that is not conducive to the open exchange of ideas or the sharing of diverse experiences. Educational institutions, in face-to-face and virtual venues, respond to incivility by developing policies and procedures designed to handle inappropriate behavior to provide students and staff with a safe, secure educational setting.

#### **Need for Civility Policies in Education**

Lack of civility in the classroom negatively impacts learning. Disruptive and disrespectful students interfere with the learning environment and contribute to stress and discontent.

Inappropriate behavior disrupts the learning process in the face-to-face classroom. Such behaviors include arriving late or leaving early, using cell phones and computers for personal reasons, engaging in personal conversations, dominating discussions, aggressively challenging teachers, arguing with peers, making demeaning comments or gestures, and gathering belongings before class ends.

The risk of misunderstanding in virtual classrooms is greater than in traditional face-to-face instructional environments because of the absence of nonverbal cues. Additionally, the anonymity of the online environment fosters and exacerbates acts of incivility because some students believe they can post comments online without taking responsibility for what they write. Lack of civility in the virtual environment, as in the face-to-face class, can include behaviors such as sarcasm, impatience, manipulation, shouting, harsh criticism, harassment, and bullying.

#### **Role of Stakeholders in Improving Civility in Education**

**We believe** educators, students, administrators, and all other stakeholders must share responsibility for ensuring civil behavior in the educational environment.

**We believe** business teacher educators should

- practice civility in their interactions and lead by example.

- ensure that business teacher candidates understand the basic tenets of civil behavior.
- instruct business teacher candidates in methods of establishing appropriate classroom management strategies and properly addressing unacceptable classroom behaviors.

**We believe** business teachers should

- encourage students to practice empathy, respect diversity, and be considerate of others
- provide students with expectations for acceptable classroom and online course behavior by posting classroom rules, stating them in course syllabi, and addressing these rules at the beginning of and throughout the course.
- model civility by engaging in active listening practices, using civil language, and adhering to established classroom rules and practices.
- identify instances of incivility and explain why these behaviors are unacceptable.
- design classroom activities that provide opportunities to practice and reinforce civil behaviors.
- teach students how to properly frame questions and comments to avoid appearing confrontational or disrespectful.
- establish and implement uniform penalties for violations of classroom policies that are administered in a consistent, respectful, and civil manner.

**We believe** students should

- practice empathy, respect diversity, and be considerate of others.
- use appropriate language.
- avoid stereotyping and bullying.
- report serious acts of incivility, such as bullying, to teachers, parents, and other authority figures.

**We believe** administrators should

- practice empathy, respect diversity, and be considerate of others.
- establish and enforce policies that define civility, provide examples of policy violations, and include guidelines for consequences.
- support all stakeholders in understanding and valuing civility, as well as helping them recognize uncivil acts that disrupt the learning environment.
- protect individuals who report policy violations.

**We believe** professional associations should

- develop and promote conference sessions focused on teaching strategies for infusing civility into curricula.
- provide a platform for teachers to share best practices for integrating civility in classroom activities.
- support and encourage scholarly research related to civility in education.
- disseminate relevant articles.

**We believe** parents should

- encourage their children to practice empathy, respect diversity, and be considerate of others.
- serve as positive role models for their children.
- maintain an ongoing and open dialogue with their children regarding civil behavior.
- establish and practice family rules of civil behavior.
- monitor their children's online interactions and interpersonal communications.

**We believe** the business community should

- establish business practices that encourage empathy, value diversity, and show consideration of others.
- partner with educational institutions in establishing rules of protocol or etiquette for all stakeholders.
- reinforce rules of civility for students participating in opportunities such as cooperative education, internships, and job shadowing.

## **A Call to Action**

**We believe** everyone deserves the opportunity to learn in a civil educational environment.

**We believe** civility should be fostered through

- engaging in lifelong learning of civil behaviors;
- practicing empathy, respecting diversity, and being considerate of others;
- encouraging civility in homes, classrooms, online environments, all institutional settings, and the community;
- developing a policy addressing appropriate behaviors and responses; and
- monitoring, reporting, and correcting inappropriate conduct.

**Therefore, we believe** business education has the opportunity and responsibility to weave the tenets of civility into its curriculum.