

Ethical Decision Making in Educational Therapy

A Practical Guide

By

Marion Marshall and Risa Graff

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This book first published 2024

Ethics International Press Ltd, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Hardback ISBN: 978-1-80441-584-9

ebook ISBN: 978-1-80441-585-6

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Acknowledgements

I was privileged to discover the field of educational therapy many years ago and have maintained a private practice and trained others in both university and supervisory capacities. The real-life examples come out of all those experiences. I am extremely grateful for the invitation to write this book by Sarah Palmer, Publisher and help of Ben Williams, Publisher, of Ethics International Press. Thank you to Polly Mayer for her reading and insightful feedback. Thank you to Chelsea for assistance in creating graphics. As always, I am deeply appreciative of Geoff Underwood's assistance as a reader and his unwavering and on-going support, careful reading, editing, and encouragement.

Marion Marshall, MS, BCET, FAET

My journey as an educational therapist has been shaped by two amazing groups of people – the professionals who have taught me, mentored me, and continue to inspire me, and the clients and families with whom I have worked over the last forty-five years. Having become an ET before I even knew that there were other ETs in the world, much of my own learning has come from the lived experiences of working with students and designing ways to maximize their abilities and help them find joy in the learning process. I want to thank Tanis Bryan, PhD., an early pioneer in the field of learning disabilities, who provided the conceptual framework that continues to shape my work and remains relevant fifty years later. I have been inspired by Dorothy Ungerleider, Ann Kaganoff, Marion Marshall and the writers and editors of the *Clinical Practice of Educational Therapy* who have all written excellent books specifically about the practice of educational therapy. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experiences. The process of writing this book has only increased my gratitude and respect for your work.

Sometime in the mid 1990's I serendipitously met Nan Freund at a meeting in the basement of the Harold Washington Library. There, I learned that there were actually other people in Chicago who were educational therapists. Nan introduced me to the Chicago AET study group and to the organization of AET. I am continually grateful for her mentoring and friendship. Had I not met Nan, gained the support of other ETs and the continuing education provided by AET, my work would not have been as fulfilling nor as long lasting.

I also want to say how grateful I am to my husband Lloyd who has supported my professional journey since I was a twenty year-old student doing my first school practicums in Chicago. Lloyd has the ability to ask probing questions that often push me to reflect more thoughtfully about work dilemmas.

I am deeply grateful to Marion Marshall who recognized the need for this book and who had a clear vision of what it should contain. Marion, thank you for inviting me to share the experience of creating this book and for mentoring me throughout our writing process! I wish that I could have had this book to guide me when I began my ET journey forty-five years ago.

Risa Graff, MA, BCET, FAET

Chapter 1

Ethical Decision Making in Educational Therapy: A Practical Guide

Study the past if you would define the future.

– Confucius

Introduction

Ethical Decision Making in Educational Therapy: A Practical Guide describes the benefits of educational therapy, professional roles, work settings, and ethical standards in the field. To date, no other publication has fully entered into an evaluation of ethical decision-making. The book details the existing Code of Ethics for the Association of Educational Therapists, AET. Its guiding and aspirational principles are clear, however there is no practice guide accompanying it, as there are in other “helping” professions. That void requires that the educational therapist (ET) problem-solve for those “gray areas” or ethical dilemmas without any guidance or illustrative scenarios. In addition, no published literature exists that describes and evaluates Ethical Decision Making Models (EDMs) that could apply to Educational Therapists’ quandaries. Careful thinking, deliberation, and self-reflection are needed to arrive at satisfactory and ethical solutions.

An informal 2023 survey of AET’s membership identified the major categories of the most common practice dilemmas faced by educational therapists. These categories are listed in Chapter 4. Examples of these quandaries and possible solutions for them are integrated throughout this book. *Ethical Decision Making in Educational Therapy: A Practical Guide* also includes a review of some of the EDMs which can be applied to aid problem solving and help educational therapists reach reasonable and just conclusions for their practice dilemmas.

Educational therapists work in a variety of settings, and each setting

comes with its own roles, rules, and institutional structure. Variations in settings can easily change and challenge one's ethical decision making. An example of such a challenge is easily understood in the question: "What can an educational therapist do if the boundaries of a setting dictate a solution that is not always in the student's best interest?" This book will address these challenges in Chapter 2.

Definition of the Profession

An educational therapist, (ET), is a professional who works in the educational domain with neurotypical and neurodiverse children, adolescents, and adults who have been diagnosed with or exhibit learning disabilities and/or learning differences. Educational therapists are trained to address their clients' learning, attention, and executive function issues that result from a wide range of conditions. Few outside of the field know about this profession and how it can benefit a learner.

An educational therapist is skilled in: 1) administering and/or interpreting formal and informal educational assessments; 2) synthesizing information from parents, teachers, and allied professionals; 3) developing and implementing appropriate interventions to remediate school or work-related learning and/or behavior problems; 4) teaching strategies for resolving social and emotional aspects of learning issues; 5) providing interventions necessary for improving metacognition, organization, study skills, attention and executive functioning skills; 6) facilitating communication between the individual, the family, the school or workplace, and any allied professionals involved in the individual's educational development; and 7) acting as an advocate on behalf of the individual (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/governance-and-affiliations>). Additionally, some educational therapists are trained to address the learning needs of clients described as being on the autism spectrum. For those clients, the educational therapist designs interventions that incorporate inferential, symbolic, and social thinking strategies into the client's reading comprehension and written language skills.

While teaching academic content, educational therapists concurrently address the “*underlying issues* that impede learning” (Techaviratanakul & Murkowski, 2012, as cited in Moloy, 2014, p. 21.) “They create and implement a treatment plan that utilizes information from a variety of sources including the client’s social, emotional, psychological, and neuropsychological contexts” (<https://www.aetonline.org>). Learning goals are matched to the most effective strategies and materials for each individual client. “Educational therapy demystifies learning problems and stimulates clients’ awareness of their strengths so they can use those strengths to their best advantage” (<https://www.aetonline.org>).

Dorothy Ungerleider, the first President of the Association of Educational Therapists, AET, echoed this holistic approach in her book, *Educational Therapy In Action: Behind and Beyond the Office Door* (Ungerleider, 2011) and stated:

We can never forget that each client also brings to the therapeutic table his or her singular blueprint of humanity—temperament, family genetics/ emotional climate, and contextual influences and expectations from the family, school, culture, and community—all of these.

AET’s website states that educational therapists recognize that additional issues may emerge over time as demands upon the client increase or change. “There is analysis of data in order to adjust, adapt or revise the treatment plan” (<https://www.aetonline.org>). ETs refer to allied professions when issues outside of the scope of practice for ETs arise (<https://www.aetonline.org>).

Benefits of Educational Therapy

The benefits of educational therapy are numerous. Classrooms are social places and the inability to grasp oral directions, understand concepts, or the inability to *do* the work is awkward, at best. Much has been written about the feelings of inadequacy or “feeling stupid” that students with learning differences experience on a daily basis (<https://>

www.understood.org/articles/signs-of-frustrated-child-at-school).

When classroom discourse moves too quickly and/or gaps in prior learning emerge, either can negatively impact new learning. The relentless pace of new curriculum leaves many overwhelmed. In contrast, educational therapy is usually provided individually, in a quiet space with no other student listening or sitting in judgment. Without the peer group observing, the anxiety that often engulfs and impedes learning may be significantly reduced. The ET is a skillful and gentle guide who accepts the student's learning skills, as they are, and encourages the student's self-reflection on their own experience while learning. The ET carefully gauges the student's current skillset, values the student's self-reports and self-assessments of their strengths and needs. Learning is not always binary— mastered or not mastered. An ET probes for points of confusion and misconceptions in order to address them (Marshall, 2022).

The ET manages the pace of each session, how many minutes are spent on each task, so that the student does not become overwhelmed, overly discouraged, or new learning is disrupted by accumulating cognitive load. In strategically situating new learning in the backdrop of prior knowledge and cueing and reviewing effective new strategies, a successful learning set is established (Ahern & de Kirby, 2011).

Educational therapy proceeds so that the learning is incremental and sustainable. The student's unique learning processes are improved, and a greater self-understanding combines with better self-awareness about the reasons for applying specific strategies. In short, the student "learns how to learn" in educational therapy so that the crushing cycle of failing to learn does not crystalize into prolonged learning failure (Marshall, 2023).

"Through our actions and conduct, our fundamental goal is to elicit the student's interest in learning and to equip them to become avid lifelong learners" (Ahoot, 2016, p. 28).

The benefits of educational therapy extend beyond the act of learning

and create a more positive attitude towards learning and oneself. When the ET acts as the case manager and builds communication between all the parties involved with the student, family pressures may begin to resolve. As a result of educational therapy, clients gain insight into their learning process, develop greater self-understanding and learn to apply more efficient and effective study strategies. Enhanced self-understanding increases agency and self-advocacy. As academic skills improve, the client's self-esteem also increases.

The Association of Educational Therapists: Ethics, Training, and Roles

Key Responsibilities

The Association of Educational Therapists, AET, provides a professional identity, delineates a set of standards and defines the scope of practice of educational therapy (https://www.aetonline.org/images/ABOUT_Section/Governance_Docs/Ethics-Policies-and-Procedures.pdf). AET has an Ethics/Scope of Practice Committee comprised of Board Certified members. The committee's responsibilities include protecting the national organization against breeches of ethical practice, providing counsel to members who are pondering ethical decisions, and investigating alleged complaints against any member or against the organization. The committee also strives to continually educate members about changes in relevant laws, technology decisions that may create ethical problems, and language usage, including the diagnostic labels and criteria used by allied professionals. The committee is responsible for presenting a yearly ethics panel to the membership. Members are required to attend the panel at least once every three years. The Ethics/Scope of Practice Committee also reviews the AET Code of Ethics regularly and brings suggested changes to the Board of Directors as needed.

AET disseminates information about educational therapy to the public and "invests in the future of the profession and the practice of educational therapy through involvement in issues of professional

interest and importance” (<http://www.aetonline.org/memberships/membership-levels>). AET also lobbies for public funding of educational therapy and public policy issues regarding people with learning disabilities and other learning disorders (<https://www.aetonline.org>).

Training and Membership

In addition to their training in educational therapy, ETs bring significant backgrounds to their work. An educational therapist has extensive training in neurodiversity, learning difficulties, with additional specific training in the psychology of learning disorders, educational assessment, and intervention strategies that address the social and emotional issues that affect learning. Training also includes experience in the development and use of intervention strategies targeted for specific learning differences, as well as a period of supervised practice (<http://www.aetonline.org/memberships/membership-levels>).

ETs may come from different educational paths with varying experiences, but all must apply and fulfill the membership requirements to enable them to identify themselves as a Professional ET. There are tiers of membership ranging from student members to Board Certified members, BCET®. Use of the registered service mark of Educational Therapist/Professional (ET/P®) or Board Certified Educational Therapist (BCET®) provides educational therapists with a respected professional identity and assures the public of competency (<http://www.aetonline.org/memberships/membership-levels>).

An Associate Member is one who has applied for membership, and has been verified to have met all the required graduate-level academic educational course work and requirements. This includes a supervised practicum or hours involving clinical supervision. Having a Master’s degree in Educational Therapy or a related field (such as special education, speech language pathology, education, or psychology) is required to become an ET/P®. To further their training, Continuing Education hours are required for ET/P® and BCET® members (<http://www.aetonline.org/memberships/membership-levels>).

AET certifies practitioners at the Educational Therapist/Professional (ET/P®) or Board Certified Educational Therapists (BCET®) levels. ET/Ps and BCETs must fulfill the academic, direct service hours, and other training requirements to use these designations. BCETs have also met additional rigorous requirements necessary to achieve this status.

“Find An ET” on the AET website, allows parents and allied professionals to locate and contact an educational therapist (<https://www.aetonline.org/parents-community/find-an-et>). General membership is open to anyone interested in the field of educational therapy (<http://www.aetonline.org/memberships/membership-levels>).

A Brief History

Marianne Frostig is recognized as having introduced the term “educational therapy” in America. She used it as a descriptor for the combined educational and therapeutic environment she studied with Aichorn in Vienna in the late 1920s. Following her emigration to the U.S.A. from Europe in 1939, Frostig later wrote “My overwhelming desire in America was to be able to introduce educational therapy (translated from Aichorn’s *Heilpädagogie*)” (Ungerleider, 1995, p. 1).

From the late 1950s into the 1970s, the beginnings of the private practice of educational therapy in the United States emerged. While most practitioners did not yet call themselves educational therapists, they were aware that their function and interdisciplinary skills went beyond the typical duties usually performed by academic tutors. Many of these professionals completed related graduate courses and degrees. Most worked with mentors who assisted them in developing an educational therapy intervention plan (Ficksman & Adelizzi, Eds, 2018).

AET was recognized as a continuing education provider by an allied professional organization, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, (ASHA), in 2000.

To further expand the presence of educational therapy and collaborate on a larger national level, AET was accepted as a member of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, (NJCLD), in 2002. The NJCLD is a national committee representing eleven organizations concerned about individuals with learning disabilities and has been in existence since 1975. (<https://njcld.org/>) In 2008, the Professional Membership level and Board Certified levels were registered with identifying marks, ET/P® and BCET® (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/history>).

More recently, AET members have considered the interface between educational therapy and social justice issues. A commitment statement was adopted – *“AET is committed to racial and social equity and justice. As such, we are looking inward and outward at the systemic inequities that exist in our profession and in the lives of our students”* (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/public-policies>).

Educational Therapy Versus Tutoring

Primarily, ETs provide individualized intensive intervention for clients who present with a wide range of neurodiverse issues including: learning disabilities and learning differences, dyslexia and other literacy-related challenges; writing; dyscalculia and other math difficulties; ADHD; and executive functioning issues. Many clients present with overlapping conditions. Generally, a tutor focuses on homework completion and/or teaching or re-teaching specific subject matter. Often the goal is to improve grades or pass a final exam (<https://www.aetonline.org/parents-community>).

While some tutors and most teachers have some knowledge regarding how to support students with learning differences, they do not have the in-depth training to create individualized and refined approaches to guide learning. The focus of educational therapy is not on improving grades, although that is a likely byproduct when a deeper understanding of the subject matter is gained. The ET's goals are broader than that of a tutor. The ultimate goal of educational therapy is self-reliance

and the client's "ownership" of their learning. While addressing academic content, "they teach strategies for social, emotional, behavioral, attentional and organizational, and metacognitive growth in addition to curriculum content" (Techaviratanakul & Murkowski, 2012, as cited in Moloy, 2014, p. 21.)

The ET also guides the client to greater self-awareness, understanding (and sometimes acceptance) of their learning profile, as their learning grows. "*As facilitators of understanding*, [ETs] strive to help clients comprehend their disorders and diagnoses (made by others) ... explain their learning obstacles and... We mentor them to develop self-help learning strategies that work across all subject matter..." (Ungerleider, 2011, p 2). One year later, Techaviratanakul & Murkowski reiterated this stating, "Goals of the educational treatment plan include: developing clients' strategic use of strengths in order to foster learning and understanding the interrelationship between learning and social/ educational functioning" (Techaviratanakul & Murkowski, 2012, as cited in Moloy, 2014, p. 21.)

Educational therapists must also know assessment terminology in our own and related fields, be able to administer and interpret (or interpret from evaluations of others) a wide range of assessments related to learning, achievement, and processing information in order to design an appropriate, individually tailored program that will enhance learning (Mosk, 2004, pp. 4-5).

Educational therapists also differ from tutors by consistently considering the impact of school, family, and community on the client's learning. Additionally, ETs are trained to serve as a resource and a provider for referrals for parents, whereas a tutor generally is not. (<https://www.aetonline.org/allied-professionals/when-to-find-an-et>)

Roles/Aclivites	Educational Therapist	Tutor	Special Ed. Teacher
Works with Individuals	Yes	Yes	Sometimes
Assesses to gauge current skill levels	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Creates an intervention plan	Yes	No	Limited
Addresses why the student is struggling	Yes	No	Sometimes
Teaches study skills as well	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Homework	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Increases self-awareness	Yes	No	Limited
Builds self advocacy	Yes	No	Limited
Trains Executive Functioning skills	Yes	No	Sometimes
Facilitates communication between all parties	Yes	No	Only for IEP
Advocates for client/student	Yes	No	Sometimes
Works with, reports to parents	Yes	Limited	Limited
Interprets assessment reports for parents and clients	Yes	No	At IEP
Refers out for issues beyond their area	Yes	No	No
Works in Independent Schools	Yes	Limited	Sometimes
Holistic approoch	Yes	Limited	Limited

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TABLE 1 graphically illustrates the differences between three service providers – the educational therapist, a tutor, and the special education teacher. (Some tutors and special education teachers provide some additional functions; this is a generalized view of their typical roles.) The ET fulfills all of these roles and performs all these activities. The only activity identified as “Sometimes” is working on homework. At times, the ET will use homework assignments as a vehicle for purpose-

fully addressing some of the client's intervention goals and intervention plan. In the United States, a special education teacher works within a public (not private) school setting. Broad goals are decided at an IEP meeting. Specific ways to measure progress towards those goals written in one or two statements shorter "goal statements". Rarely do special education teachers have the opportunity to work with individual students and almost never without other students present. This is a key difference in the specificity and individualization possible in the work of an ET. Tutors *do* work with individual students but are focused on teaching or reteaching the specific content in grade-level academic subject areas.

Fact Sheet

What Do Educational Therapists Do?

They:

- Provide individualized intensive intervention for clients who present with a wide range of neurodiversity, including learning disabilities and learning differences.
- Practice a holistic view of the student/client which integrates the social, emotional, neurobiological and cultural aspects of learning, combined with academic needs.
- Support students in developing greater self-awareness, more effective learning strategies, increased confidence, and self-advocacy.
- Foster a relationship based on trust, honesty, and mutual respect.
- Conduct assessment with the formal and informal assessment tools used by educators and only those for which that they have been trained to use.
- Use the details and results of their assessment to establish an understanding of the student's strengths and challenges, determine the starting point for remediation, and gauge progress over time.
- Infuse their work with the current research on "best practices" in remediation and support.

- Synthesize information from others.
- Refer to allied professionals for services needed (either assessment or treatment).
- Strive to build an alliance by collaborating and communicating with those involved with the client.
- Serve as the case manager by coordinating with the student's team of teachers, parents, and allied professionals (<https://www.aetonline.org/index.php/allied-professionals/when-to-find-an-et>).
- Understand and communicate the assessment results from allied professionals, consulting as necessary.
- Discuss with client/parents/guardians appropriate school placement or workplace support.

What Don't Educational Therapists Do?

They Do Not:

- Diagnose conditions
- Administer intelligence or other psychological tests, unless qualified to do so
- Practice psychotherapy
- Prescribe medication

(Ficksman & Adelizzi, Eds (2010) p. 18

AET published a "Fact Sheet" listing the roles of the educational therapist. See it below or view it online: <https://www.aetonline.org/about/fact-sheet>

Educational Therapy Fact Sheet

An Educational Therapist is a professional who works in the academic domain with neurotypical and neurodiverse children, adolescents, and adults who have been diagnosed with or exhibit learning disabilities, exhibit signs of learning differences, or demonstrate difficulties with learning.

Educational Therapists:

- have educational and experiential backgrounds in special education or a related field, with specialized training to support individuals with learning disabilities/differences.
- are skilled in:
 1. administering formal and informal educational assessments for which they are both qualified and trained to use, and/or interpreting assessment results;
 2. synthesizing information from the client, parents, teachers, allied professionals, and other members of the client's team;
 3. developing and implementing appropriate interventions to support learning-related challenges in school or work-related environments;
 4. teaching strategies to address the social and emotional aspects of having a learning issue.
- provide individualized intensive intervention for clients who present with a wide range of learning difficulties including: literacy-related challenges including dyslexia and writing difficulties, dyscalculia and/or other math-related difficulties, ADHD and/or attentional issues; and executive functioning.
- create and implement an intervention plan that utilizes information from a variety of sources including the client's educational, social, emotional, psychological, and neuropsychological contexts.
- teach strategies for academic, social, emotional, behavioral, attentional, and metacognitive growth, including all aspects of executive functioning, to enhance learning within and outside of academic settings.
- address the underlying issues that impede learning, and therefore should **not** be considered tutors.
- facilitate communication between the client and other members of the client's team across academic, workplace, and other related settings.
- act as an advocate on behalf of the individual, often in collaboration with the family.
- should belong to the Association of Educational Therapists

(AET), an international professional certifying organization which has set the standards for the profession, defined the field's scope of practice, and established the Code of Ethics for the practice of Educational Therapy.

- are responsible for upholding the Code of Ethics and advancing AET's Vision, Mission, and Core Values.

Educational Therapists **Do Not**:

- diagnose
- administer cognitive, intelligence, or psychological tests (unless otherwise qualified to do so)
- practice psychotherapy
- prescribe medication

AET certifies practitioners at the Educational Therapist/Professional (ET/P®) or Board Certified Educational Therapist (BCET®) levels. ET/Ps and BCETs must fulfill the academic, direct service hours, and other training requirements to use these designations. BCETs have also met additional rigorous requirements necessary to achieve this status.

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Roles in Different Work Settings

Educational therapists work in a variety of settings. They might have their own office, share an office with another educational therapist, or share an office with a licensed professional such as a speech and language pathologist or a psychologist. Some educational therapists have a traveling practice in which they see clients in the client's home or school. Some work in independent schools (see below), centers, or clinics with groups or with individuals (<https://www.aetonline.org/index.php/allied-professionals/a-career-in-et>). More recently, a new work setting, that of a virtual nature (e-practice), has become available. Ethical challenges for operating in each different kind of setting are detailed in Chapter 2. Some educational therapists are employed as a consultant in public schools, on a limited contract, to provide spe-

cialized services (P. Mayer, personal communication, August 2, 2023). Kaganoff (2001) also listed the “domains of educational therapy” in the article “Educational Therapy Defined” (pp. 17–20).

One of the roles that educational therapists may play is to accompany parents to school meetings where support and accommodations are discussed. “Educational therapists serve as an advocate with a lower-case ‘a’ for families, helping them navigate the system, understand their rights, and interpret test results, as well as making recommendations to the school team for appropriate modifications or accommodations” (Ficksman & Adelizzi, Eds, 2018, p. 283).

School-based Educational Therapy

(See Chapter 2 for the discussion of the types of issues resulting from being a school-based ET).

In addition to the work in private practice, some educational therapists serve as a Learning Specialist in independent schools.

In those settings they may:

- Serve as part of the school’s admissions team.
- Answer teacher questions and problem-solve about individual students.
- Teach in the classroom to model additional strategies.
- Assess individual students.
- Help parents find outside diagnostic evaluators (private or public school based).
- Teach small groups of children.
- Directly support individual students.
- Write progress reports.
- Summarize reports from allied professionals to “translate” key points for the school’s understanding.
- Have regular parent contacts.
- Provide staff development and training.

In 2015, Marshall conducted a research study to address the work of the school-based educational therapist. The purpose of the study was to clarify the roles of the educational therapists who work in San Francisco Bay Area independent schools and their degree of presence in those school settings. She found that most independent schools in the greater San Francisco Bay Area employ one or more ETs to serve the needs of students with learning difficulties. The survey was sent to a pool of 72 potential respondents. This resulted in 58 ETs participating in the study. The majority, 75%, reported that they had trained and identified themselves as ETs. 100% of participants (n=58) in the study, reported meeting with the school administration (Marshall, 2016, *The Educational Therapist*, pp. 9-16).

The Principles Guiding Practice

The principles guiding the practice of educational therapy are available on (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/vision-mission-and-core-values>) and listed below:

Vision

AET envisions a socially just world where all learners reach their potential, appreciate their unique abilities, and thrive.

Mission

The Association of Educational Therapists' mission is to benefit society by providing certification and training to members who serve individuals with learning challenges, advancing the profession of educational therapy worldwide, and establishing ethical standards for the practice of educational therapy.

Core Values

AET values: **ethics**, **integrity**, **education**, and **training** at the highest level throughout a member's professional career.

- **communication** and **collaboration** between members, clients, families, educators, and allied professionals, and fostering part-

nerships with universities, related organizations, and government agencies.

- **inclusivity** by embracing the uniqueness of all people and situations and welcoming each with care, trust, and consideration.
- **diversity** and is committed to racial and social equity and justice.

AET Code of Ethics and Boundaries

AET's Code of Ethics provides professional guidance regarding the scope of practice and the boundaries of practicing educational therapy (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/governance-and-affiliations>). The members of the Association of Educational Therapists are responsible for upholding and advancing AET's Vision, Mission, Core Values and Ethics. Ungerleider wrote "...care must be used to keep the focus on issues related to learning and academic/vocational accomplishment" (Ungerleider, 1995 p. 15). Sandra Mosk, a Past President of AET, wrote in 2004, "Educational therapy is an educational **not** a psychological service. The therapeutic component of educational therapy refers to the nonacademic interventions necessary to facilitate the remediation of learning disabilities and problems such as improving metacognition, organizational skills, attention, and self-esteem" (Mosk, 2004, p. 4). "To be perfectly clear, educational therapists do not practice psychotherapy. There is an acknowledgement within the theoretical framework that needy students often require multiple service providers and counseling may be a related service..." (Techaviratanakul & Murkowski, 2012, cited in Moloy, 2014 p. 21). Additionally, the AET Code of Ethics states, "The educational therapist will signal when it is time to refer to outside professionals and will help locate and make appropriate referrals to other practitioners" (<https://www.aetonline.org/about/governance-and-affiliations>).

Ethics is one of the core principles identified by AET. The professional organization's Code of Ethics governs standards of practice, responsibilities of members, and their relationship to allied professionals. Graduate students preparing to become members are asked to read the Code of Ethics and members are required to attend a presentation

regarding ethical issues every three years. The code of ethics and standards for professional practice was first adopted by the AET Executive Committee in February 1985 and was developed through an adaptation of the Code of Ethics and Standards for Professional Practice of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Permission was granted by CEC for such adaptation. It has been revised in 1997, 1999, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2021, and most recently in 2022. The 2022 revision now details the standards of practice for delivering educational therapy online (e-practice) and was adapted with permission based on some of the language from the American Psychological Association and American Speech and Hearing Association and the National Social Worker (NASW) codes of ethics and practice guidelines for practicing online. (Find the AET codes of ethics here: https://www.aetonline.org/images/ABOUT_Section/Governance_Docs/Code_of_Ethics_1-2024.pdf)

A professional code of ethics is designed to apply to most situations in the field. In general, its goals “are directed towards the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom the professional works and the education of members, students, and the public regarding ethical standards of the discipline” (<https://www.apa.org/ethics/code>). However, “having a code of ethics does not address all the ethical challenges for which no readily apparent solution exists” (Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 2007. 38, 1, 7–12). No matter how experienced a practitioner is, ethical dilemmas are common. Unlike other professional associations, AET has no published practice guide for actually applying these tenets to one’s own work. Nor have models of Ethical Decision Making (EDMs) been evaluated or employed in any publication. Clear violations or breaches of ethics may be readily apparent, but less clearcut ethical quandaries can be very concerning. These “grey areas” in the boundaries require careful thinking and deliberation to arrive at a satisfactory and ethical solution. New and seasoned practitioners “would benefit from a model that is theoretically grounded and accessible, considers relevant literature, is widely applicable, and addresses the complexity of decision making in practice” (Ling & Hauck, 2017 p. 2). And, while having a code of ethics is important, “one must consider many components during the

selection of a decision-making model” (Ling & Hauck p. 2). Asking practitioners to consider a code of ethics without providing any specific details or including case examples is not wholly useful, according to Ling and Hauck (2017).

Summary

Ethical Decision Making in Educational Therapy: A Practice Guide is focused on: 1) defining ethical dilemmas; 2) characterizing the most common issues, as described by members; 3) illustrating ethical dilemmas and suggesting pathways for solving them using Ethical Decision Making models; 4) utilizing ones’ own professional judgement and experience to problem-solve; 5) knowing when to seek consultation; and 6) clarifying the role of reflection in the ethical decision making process.

In Chapter 1, the professional work and roles of the educational therapist, the benefits of providing educational therapy, the profession’s guiding principles, its Code of Ethics and boundaries are discussed. A brief overview of the field’s theoretical foundation to its present-day practice is provided.

Chapter 1 Guiding Questions for Self-Study, use in Training Programs and in Supervision

1. How do you define the profession of educational therapy?
2. How closely does it match AET’s definition?
3. Define the benefits of educational therapy for clients.
4. Having read the history of the profession, what new information did you learn about AET’s history?
5. Describe the differences in activities between an educational therapist and a tutor.
6. Describe the differences in activities for an educational therapist and a special educator.
7. Look at the Fact Sheet. Rate your current skills. What are your strengths? Where are your learning opportunities?

8. Consider the different settings where an ET might work. Compare the benefits and challenges in each. Do you have a preference?
9. When you think about your work setting(s), what concerns have emerged?

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Chapter 2

Professional Codes of Ethics: A Comparison of Allied Professions

A problem clearly stated is a problem half solved.

– Dorothea Brande

Introduction

In Chapter 2, the Code of Ethics of the Association of Educational Therapists and of allied professionals are described. Specifically, the codes for these are detailed: the American Psychological Association, the American Occupational Therapy Association, the American Speech Hearing Association, the American Counseling Association, National Association of Social Workers, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and the Standards of Practice for Social Workers in England. It may be of interest for readers to compare and contrast the features of AET's code to those in these professions.

Chapter 2 also describes the roles, responsibilities, and commonly occurring issues for educational therapists in private practice, those employed by independent (private) schools, and in various clinical settings. Definitions of different types of issues confronting ETs are delineated with explanatory details.

The profession of educational therapy has a detailed Code of Ethics governing standards of practice, responsibilities of members, and relationships with clients and allied professionals. Professional ethics assist in guiding appropriate professional conduct by sharing the values of the profession (Bush, 2019). AET's code of ethics has a set of guiding principles similar to the American Psychological Association's (APA) preamble and standards of practice (<https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/ethics-code-2017.pdf>). However, the AET code provides little guidance to those operating in various roles or in different work settings where the roles are differentiated.

The American Psychological Association (APA)

The APA and other professional organizations provide practice guidelines and position statements that clarify appropriate professional behavior in *specific* aspects of practice (Bush, 2019). There is no accompanying practice guide to assist educational therapists in applying the standards of practice and tenets to one's own work, as there are in other "helping" professions. "Professional codes of ethics provide guidance but out of necessity they are general in nature" (Bush, 2019 p. 1151). Bush stated that the APA Code of Ethics provides aspirational general ethical principles and enforceable ethical standards. He emphasized that practice guides and position statements complement the ethical codes and "facilitates ethical decision making" (Bush, 2019 p. 1151). Practice guides clarify appropriate professional behavior in *specific* areas of practice and are "intended to provide guidance across psychological activities, contexts, and specialties" (Bush, 2019 p. 1152).

The APA has 22 approved practice guides covering specialized areas such as: Professional Practice Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men; Professional Practice Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Girls and Women; Professional Practice Guidelines for Integrating the Role of Work and Career Into Psychological Practice; Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People; Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology; Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology; and Guidelines for the Practice of Parenting Coordination. For a complete list and to view the specific practice guidelines see: <https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines>. Each APA Practice Guide begins with an "overarching purpose ... to promote evidence-based and ethically informed practice... that endeavor to keep pace with research and legal developments" (<https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines>). It is followed by a Rationale that cites relevant research, then follows specific guidelines, each with examples of Applications.

The APA has also developed how to *create* professional practice guidelines "for the development, evaluation, and review of proposed and existing professional practice guidelines... The intent behind these cri-