

#ABC Conduct

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Educators have a visible place in their communities. The choices they make, even when well-intended, can affect their jobs, families, schools and profession. The Department, OEA and OFT, supported by BASA, OASSA and OAESA, offer this series of tip sheets on how to recognize situations that can get good educators in trouble. #ABCConduct tip sheets are designed to help educators identify and mitigate risks that occur in everyday situations. These tip sheets provide guidance for best practices and are not intended to be used in disciplinary actions.

The education community faces new challenges to meet the needs of each child as it navigates remote and hybrid learning. With many educators working from home, the lines between personal and professional time, as well as equipment, may blur. This tip sheet clarifies existing professional boundaries and responsibilities in an evolving environment.

Who you gonna call (or video conference)?

Peter, Ray and Dana are licensed educators employed as teachers by the New Metropolitan City School District. The district provided each of them with tablets to instruct their students in a digital setting.

As the school year kicked off, parents from outside the district approached Ray, a science and robotics teacher, about tutoring their children in a small group. They offered Ray a substantial hourly wage to perform the services outside of the school day. Prior to tutoring the students, Ray contacted his superintendent, as prescribed by local board policy, and informed her that he would be tutoring students within the district. A few months later, Ray held an in-person midterm for his robotics class. While the students were working, he reviewed homework from his tutees.

Peter, a psychology teacher, invested in a multi-level marketing platform that specialized in providing oversized gourmet marshmallows to its clientele. Over the weekends, Peter used his school-issued tablet to post about his marshmallows on Instagram. He also hosted online parties using his school Zoom account.

Dana, an orchestra teacher, offers cello lessons as a side business. At the end of class, she posted on her virtual classroom wall, using the school platform, offering additional instruction as a private instructor to the string students at a discounted rate. She tutored one student who ultimately made first chair in the cello section.

Where did Peter, Ray and Dana cross the lines?

Ray acted appropriately by following local board policy and notifying his superintendent about his plan to tutor students outside of school. However, he did not maintain the appropriate boundaries between the two positions when he reviewed homework while hosting a midterm during school hours. Educators should not work on outside businesses during the school day.

Peter acted appropriately when he conducted his personal business outside of the school day. However, Peter inappropriately promoted his multi-level marketing business using school property. Educators should not use school equipment or technology for personal use.

Dana acted inappropriately when she directly advertised to her students and parents using the school platform. Dana also failed to notify her district of her overlapping business interest. Further, Dana potentially showed favoritism to a student based on personal interest. Educators should not cross the lines of personal business and district obligations.



DO's & DON'Ts

— with —
Crystal Clear



- DO** follow district policies to properly notify your district prior to tutoring or coaching students.
- DO** maintain appropriate boundaries between your obligations to your district and other businesses.
- DO** act professionally, even when working with students outside of the school day.

- DON'T** supplement your income on district time.
- DON'T** use your education position to solicit personal business to coworkers, students or parents for personal gain.
- DON'T** use district-issued equipment, connectivity platforms or technology for personal gain.
- DON'T** use work time for personal matters or business.

Make Professional Choices

(Professional v. Unprofessional)

Louis, a math teacher, spends his weekends tutoring underserved and underprivileged students on a volunteer basis.

Professional: Louis is not receiving a personal gain from his services. However, Louis still should follow any district policies regarding notification.

Patty accessed parental contact information for the entire second grade to send an email from her private address offering to provide additional weekend reading hours for a fee.

Unprofessional: Patty failed to notify her district prior to offering her services to the students, and she used confidential information from the district to contact the parents for personal gain.

Jillian, the assistant principal, scheduled a meeting through Teams inviting her staff to purchase her slime-making kits during free periods.

Unprofessional: Jillian was unprofessional by using her supervisory role to promote her private, for-profit slime kit business to her staff. Also, Jillian inappropriately used the school-issued platform and scheduled it during the school day.

Egon was properly engaged in tutoring students from his district with notification and consent from his superiors. While attending a tutoring session, Egon sipped an alcoholic beverage from a koozie.

Unprofessional: Educators must behave professionally and ethically, even when acting outside of the school day and with notification to the district.

Winston, a licensed educator not currently employed in an official education-related capacity, decided to begin a tutoring business through which he worked with groups of students.

Professional: While Winston is not required to report to a district, the code of conduct requires him to act professionally.

Walter, a district football coach, advertised and ran a private, for-profit football clinic for players hoping to make the varsity team. In addition, he did not notify the district.

Unprofessional: Walter did not notify the district of his clinic, and he used his position for personal gain. He also cannot show favoritism to players who support his outside business.