

#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 Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers, 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 public gives educators a great deal of responsibility to manage public funds. If educators fail to properly manage these funds, even by accident, they can be held personally and professionally liable.

Señora Dinero's Dilemma

Penny Dinero is a veteran high school Spanish teacher who also coaches softball and advises the Spanish Club. Señora Dinero wants to help the softball team raise money for new uniforms. In accordance with booster policy, she asked for 20 percent of softball ticket sales to be set aside for uniforms. At softball games, Señora enlisted parents to sell tickets. She kept the money in her locked desk and planned to count the funds at the end of the season.

The Spanish Club president asked Señora if the club can hold a bake sale to raise money for a trip. Señora agreed and helped the students purchase baked goods from a Spanish bakery. Señora convinced the bakery to throw in some extra sweets, free of charge, which increased the profits. On the day of the sale, the club treasurer was ill, so the president gave the proceeds to Señora. Señora planned to give the softball ticket money and the Spanish Club bake sale proceeds to the central

office at the same time. When Señora added up the bake sale proceeds, she found the Spanish Club exceeded its expectations. When she counted the softball ticket stubs, she found the team was \$50 short. Señora did not know when the shortage occurred. Señora took \$50 out of the Spanish Club deposit to reconcile the missing softball funds. Señora promised herself that if the Spanish Club ran short, she would donate \$50.

Fraud

starts small and can snowball out of control.



Where did Señora go wrong?

- Tip 1:** Señora correctly sought permission to set ticket sales aside for uniforms. Always follow district and booster policies when handling school, student or community funds.
- Tip 2:** Señora should have reconciled and deposited ticket sales after every game in accordance with district and booster policies. Proper bookkeeping helps reduce educator risk. Señora could be responsible for the missing money.
- Tip 3:** Once Señora discovered the missing ticket funds, she should have reported it according to district and booster policies. The failure to disclose exposes educators to more personal and professional risk.
- Tip 4:** Señora had good intentions, but her actions put her license at risk. Señora's lack of bookkeeping allowed her to commingle softball and Spanish Club funds. Shortages should be reported according to policies.

DO's & DON'Ts

—with—

Crystal Clear



- DO** seek preapproval from administrators for privately paid tutoring, coaching or lessons and use of school resources.
- DO** know and follow all district and booster guidelines when handling public funds.
- DO** keep accurate records of all money going in and out of all activity accounts.
- DO** avoid the appearance of impropriety. Perception matters.
- DO** ensure timely deposits are made on all activity accounts according to policy.

- DON'T** use school activity funds for personal use, even if you pay it back right away.
- DON'T** misuse your professional position for personal gain.
- DON'T** forget to request itemized receipts.

Penny for a Thought

Coach purchases her son a bike while she is purchasing baseball equipment using team money. She reimburses the team the next day. Fair or Foul?

Foul:

Never use school or student money for personal reasons, even if you pay it back.

Director takes the Drama Club to a local dinner theater. His family joins for dinner. He asks for separate checks and pays for his family's dinner with personal funds. Action or Cut?

Action:

Director can show he did not use Drama Club funds to pay for his family's dinner.

A speech coach uses the points on the speech team's credit card to purchase a flight for his personal spring break trip. Orator or No-rator?

No-rator:

Using points from a team credit card or other "freebies" is considered nonmonetary compensation received from public funds.

A student approaches the chemistry teacher and offers to pay for private tutoring. The teacher agrees. Proton, Neutron or Electron?

Neutron:

This might be ok—educators should follow district policy before providing paid private tutoring. Educators should remember private tutoring or lessons could be perceived as influencing a grade or audition.

Coach brings in herbal supplements from his direct marketing business to sell to students. Deal or No Deal?

No Deal:

Educators cannot use their professional positions for personal gain nor should they provide or encourage use of supplements to students.