

#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.

Interactions between educators, building administrators, district administrators and other educational leaders are necessary for day-to-day operations of Ohio schools. All educational leaders should support and encourage educators to do their best for their students every day. Unprofessional interactions by educational leaders can result in professional discipline and derail even the best education environments.

A plague on a school district

Two school principals, Mercutio and Romeo, both respected professionals, began a new school year in the Verona Local School District.

At the beginning of the year, Romeo hired a new fourth grade teacher named Juliet. He immediately noticed her eyes were like the stars. He asked her on many dates, which she repeatedly declined. However, on the day Juliet's evaluation was due, Romeo called her into his office and propositioned her again. Juliet felt

uncomfortable but agreed to go on a date. Romeo gave Juliet top marks on her evaluation.

One building over, Mercutio realized he was behind in his OTES evaluations. He decided to fill in all the evaluations without completing any walk-throughs. When Superintendent Friar, who was Mercutio's best man at his wedding, discovered that Mercutio falsified his evaluations, Friar agreed to let him off with a warning since he knew Mercutio was a good guy.

Superintendent Friar later learned about Romeo's sexual harassment of Juliet from Tybalt, a fellow principal. He asked Romeo for his resignation and advised that he would report him to the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Professional Conduct. Romeo protested, and Friar said, "Romeo, Romeo, where art thou professionalism, Romeo?" and asked him to leave the school premises.

Resignation is such sweet sorrow: where did they go wrong?

1. Romeo harassed Juliet, his subordinate, by repeatedly asking to see her socially. Further, Juliet may have felt pressured to say "yes" to Romeo's advances to protect her evaluation. Educational leaders must maintain professional boundaries with their subordinates.

2. Mercutio failed to complete OTES evaluations. Even worse, he falsified them. Evaluators need to complete their evaluation duties, and they should never falsify records. The cover-up is worse than the crime.

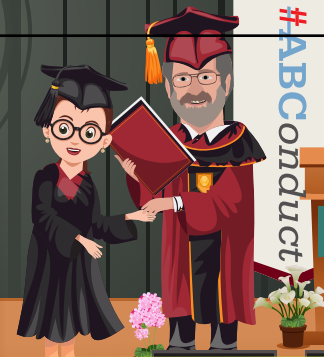
3. Friar correctly handled his duty to report Romeo's misconduct. However, Friar's failure to investigate and discipline Mercutio impartially may open him to professional discipline. Educational leaders need to be mindful of conflicts of interest that give the appearance of favoritism.

4. Friar, Mercutio and Romeo's misconduct create an environment of mistrust and unease throughout the school community. Educational leaders should be aware that their unprofessional conduct, even behind closed doors, negatively affects the development of a positive school climate.

All the world's a stage, and school leaders are major players, always in the spotlight.

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DO's & DON'Ts —with— Crystal Clear



- DO** report misconduct to the Office of Professional Conduct when required.
- DO** respond promptly when contacted by the Office of Professional Conduct to move the process along.
- DO** complete thorough and fair investigations of local educator misconduct.
- DO** maintain professional boundaries with colleagues and subordinates.

- DON'T** hire family members or business associates without consulting your district's HR and legal offices.
- DON'T** show favoritism among your subordinates.
- DON'T** submit inaccurate student or school data to the Ohio Department of Education.
- DON'T** falsify any document; the cover-up is worse than the crime.

Make Professional Choices

Coach and Athletic Director Puck received a free ticket to an expensive mid-summer concert from Hermia, a school vendor. Hermia convinced Puck to use the ticket since it was going to go to waste.

Not to be: The Licensure Code prohibits educators from accepting gifts from vendors exceeding \$25.

Superintendent Lago told all the principals that students on IEPs cannot fail, no matter what. Assistant Principal Othello reviewed the grades of students on IEPs and raised three students' grades without support.

Not to be: Othello manipulated grades and violated the accurate reporting requirements of the Licensure Code.

Teacher Hamlet asked Principal Ophelia to report a child abuse incident for him. Instead, Ophelia and Hamlet immediately went to her office to make the report.

To be: Ophelia made the right call by aiding rather than impeding Hamlet's mandatory report. All educators are mandatory reporters of child abuse.

Assistant Superintendent Caesar, the district's safety coordinator, failed to complete the school safety plan and did not certify it by the July 1 deadline.

Not to be: Caesar should have been aware of his responsibility to create and certify the school safety plan.

School Treasurer Macbeth showed what he thought was a funny but sexually explicit advertisement to his subordinates as an ice breaker for the new school year.

Not to be: As a supervisor, Macbeth must maintain professional boundaries and not share sexually charged material.