

A Note from Don Smith

A recent news report inappropriately featured a student's report card, transcript, and other educational records. All of these student records are protected from prying eyes by federal law.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is the federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. The most important tenets of the act are listed below:

1. Parents (or the student when he or she reaches 18 years of age) have the right to inspect and review the student's education records.
2. Parents and eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing.
3. *Schools must have written permission from the parent or the eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record unless the requesting entity meets certain conditions which are listed in the law.*

In the future, if you are approached and asked to compromise a student's right to privacy by giving someone unauthorized access to his or her records, remember the law. Direct the person requesting the information to the Department of Education's website or Dallas ISD's Legal Services Department. The information provided will let the person know if they have a right to the records and the steps they must take to access them.

Donald R. Smith, CFE, CPA

Embodying Ethics

Erica browsed the book club sales circular and quickly identified the titles of some of the best selling children's books on the market. She scanned the circular some more to see if the prices were reasonable enough that she could share the information with her students. She was excited to find the prices were more than reasonable. She would pass the circular out and encourage her students to buy books.

The next day, as her reading lessons came to an end, Erica called a student to her desk and had the child distribute the circulars to the class. When they were all passed out, Erica read the informational blurbs about some of the more interesting titles to the students.

The students fidgeted in their seats and murmured ah's as Erica read the information aloud. Erica smiled because she knew she had generated enough interest to make the students want to buy the books. The books provided a win-win situation for Erica. The students read more on their own because they'd picked the books they wanted. Erica was able

to meet the goals she'd set for increasing her students' reading levels without needing to give them extra traditional reading assignments.

As the week progressed, almost every student came to reading class with the circular and money for several books. Erica collected the forms and money; placed them in envelopes on which she wrote the amount of money and the child's name, and placed them in the deepest drawer of her desk. By the end of the week, Erica had collected more than \$400. As she left for the day on Friday, she secured the envelopes full of money by locking them in her desk.

Monday was a full day for Erica. Her students were completing their special projects so she was busy supervising and advising them all day. When her planning period came around, she reviewed the projects and wrote notes for improvement on each of them so she could give them back the next day.

She didn't have an opportunity to catch her breath until the end of the day. When she finally went to her desk and pulled out her chair, she noticed the desk drawer in which she had placed the book money was ajar. Her heart beat rapidly as she slowly pulled the drawer all the way open. She could only hope....

Her worst fears were realized as she looked into an empty drawer. The money was gone.

What should Erica do?

- A. Erica has no choice. She must purchase the books with her own money.
- B. Go to her supervisor and report the theft. Perhaps she can give Erica some advice for next steps.
- C. Contact the parents and let them know what has happened. Perhaps some of them will forgive the loss. Then Erica will only have to come out of her pocket to pay for books for students whose parents won't forgive her for losing the money.
- D. Try to find out who took the money and get it back from them.

See the bottom of the first column of page 2 for the answer.

Past and Present Ethical Thinking

"Glass, china, and reputation are easily cracked, and never mended well."

Attributed to Benjamin Franklin

Dallas ISD Policy You Need to Know

Teachers who provide private tutoring services need to know the policy related to providing these services. Policy DBF (Local) says, "A District teacher may contract to give private instruction or tutorial services for pay after school hours as long as no such contract is made with parents of students attending the school in which the teacher is regularly employed."

Integrity in the Headlines

Denver, CO

A bipolar 10-year-old was held in juvenile detention for three days after he was accused of second-degree assault on a police officer. The police were called to the child's classroom after the child misbehaved by running around, screaming and knocking things off desks. The student had calmed down by the time two police officers and three campus security officers arrived. However, when they entered the classroom, he spat and kicked one of the officers.

From CBS4Denver.com

Boston, MA

The Massachusetts Ethics Commission dropped conflict of interest charges against a retired police lieutenant who receives \$140,000 a year in pension payments because he worked two full-time government jobs for 3 years. The former policeman used 225 days of police department sick leave to create the time to work at a neighboring county's sheriff's department. His pension is the highest collected in Plymouth County's history.

From the Boston Globe

Greenbay, WI

A 33-year-old mother stole her daughter's identity and used it to enroll in high school and become a member of the cheerleading squad.

From the Associated Press

Ethics, Integrity and You

Groupwise is a wonderful tool for communicating with others about work. However, it is important to remember the district's e-mail system should only be used to communicate about matters related to your work.

Making Ethical Decisions



People make ethical decisions every day. However at times a situation presents itself that poses a decision-making dilemma. This section will feature common ethical decision-making models that may prove useful to readers when they are trying to address an ethical dilemma.

Eight Questions

As you reflect on the decision you may make, ask yourself these 8 questions:

1. Could the decision become habit forming?
2. Is it legal?
3. Is it safe?
4. Is it the right thing to do?
5. Will this stand the test of public scrutiny?
6. If something terrible were to happen, could I defend my actions?
7. Is it just, balanced, and fair?
8. How will it make me feel about myself?
9. Does this choice lead to the greatest good for the greatest number?
10. Would I do this in front of my mother?

Contact Us For Questions or Concerns About Employee Ethics or Integrity

Student Support Services Building
2909 Buckner Blvd.
Room 804
Phone: (972) 925-8850
Fax: (972) 794-3568
www.dallasisd.org/about/integrity

Report Fraud, Waste, or Abuse

Visit us in person or
Call: (972) 925-8850 or 800-530-1608
Web: Go Ethics•Point from the OPR site.

Write us at: P.O. Box 181509
Dallas, TX 75218-8509

The correct answer is a. Erica will need to use her own funds to purchase the books. Erica should have taken the money to the office, turned it in, and gotten a receipt. Since she didn't, she is responsible for replacing the lost money. District policy requires that money not be left unsecured overnight. Her desk drawer may have seemed to be a safe place, but the theft proved it wasn't.



Dallas Independent School District