

A Note from Don Smith

By now everyone has gotten past their new school year jitters and settled into a routine. This new year will bring new opportunities to do your part in creating a workplace that is free of conduct that is unethical.

This marks the third academic year OPR has worked to investigate employee misconduct, fraud, waste, and abuse. Last year, 744 incidents were reported to OPR. We accepted and conducted investigations on 319 of those incidents. Thank you for your awareness and for wanting to ensure that the district is an ethical place to work. Continue to contact us when you need to report misconduct, fraud, waste or abuse.

Embodying Ethics

Sitting on the teacher's side of the desk had been quite the adventure for Chloe. A 21-year-old, recent college graduate, she'd been assigned to teach 12th grade English. She was just a few years older than the students she had been assigned to teach and sometimes her age was a blessing and at other times it seemed to be a curse.

Because of her age, she had great rapport with her students. She still looked their age. Her dress was a conservative but recognizable version of theirs. Her style of communicating was similar to theirs without being contrived. And on top of everything else, she stood 5'2" in heels, and many of her students towered over her. The boys in her classes tried to flirt with her, while the girls wanted to be her best friend. However, Chloe had good boundaries and was able to skillfully balance rapport and professionalism so that the students understood she was their teacher and not their peer.

Everything was going well. Chloe had a job she loved. She loved her school. And most importantly, she loved her students.

As the year progressed, Chloe spent a great deal of time outside of the classroom with several of her students because of the extracurricular activities she sponsored. She was the main Senior Class sponsor, the yearbook staff sponsor and sponsor of the newspaper staff. She threw herself completely into each one of these assignments and made sure all the work products or plans were excellent. Chloe ended each work week tired, but exhilarated.

As a chill started to pierce the morning air, one of her students, Julian, started spending more time in Chloe's room. He came to school early every day and went straight to her room. Then at the end of the school day, he'd come right back for an afternoon visit.

Chloe enjoyed being around him. He'd become like a little brother who'd share his joys and pains with her. He had great hopes for life after graduation. He couldn't wait to leave home. His home life was not that great. One of his family members or the other was always creating chaos. However, the situation was not so bad that Chloe needed to file a report for child abuse or neglect.

Whenever they were together, Julian would ask Chloe to tell him stories

about her life as a college student. And since she wanted to firm up his hopes for a better future, she would happily oblige him by telling him stories of her adventures at State U. She thought he might see himself having similar adventures when he went off to school.

They spent a great deal of time together before and after school. He had become a fixture in her everyday work life. He helped her clean her room at the end of each day. He was there to help her prepare supplies for newspaper staff or yearbook staff activities. When either of the staffs had to stay late to meet a publishing deadline, he'd go and pick up the food so that Chloe could stay with her students. He was helpful, and Chloe was glad for his assistance.

Chloe ended the day Friday preparing for the big game by taking the cameras and other supplies out of the storage closet and putting them on a table near the door. Julian, who was always there, hadn't shown up. And she realized that she was irritated to be working alone. When she got everything arranged, she went to the office to check her mailbox.

From a distance, she could tell her mailbox didn't contain any of the normal school mail. But there was something in it. As she got closer, she could make out a flower. She thought it might be a rose. She got to the box and pulled out the rose and the envelope to which it was attached. The envelope was addressed to her, Ms. Mundy. As she opened the envelope, she tried to guess who sent it. The outside greeting card was nice, but she was more interested in the inside and the signature line it possessed.

Oh, my. The card was from Julian. He'd written a personal message above his name that made Chloe's stomach churn. "Ms. Mundy, I love you, and I want to marry you when I graduate in June. I'm not asking you to get involved with me now. I can wait because I don't want you to get in any trouble. I just want you to know where I stand."

Chloe stood in the office with the card in her hand as questions and their answers played through her mind, "What have I done to give him the wrong impression? I always behaved circumspectly to remind the students that I was their teacher and not their peer. How can I rebuff him without damaging his fragile teen ego? His ego? What about mine. If this gets out, there are some people who will paint me as guilty because I wasn't bright enough to see it coming. What am I going to do? What am I going to say? I'll have to think this through."

What should Chloe do?

- The next time Julian comes to her room, she should talk to him and let him know in no uncertain terms that his hope for the future will never happen.
- Talk to Julian in the presence of witnesses like an administrator or a counselor. Gently redirect him. Also, let him know that he will need to find somewhere else to go before and after school.
- Find Julian and ask him what in the world was wrong with him.

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

Dallas ISD Policy You Need to Know

There is a group within the district that is charged with ensuring that all employees have a pleasant and secure atmosphere in which to teach and work. According to DGB (Regulation), staff from the district's ombudsman program work to:

1. Improve communications between employees and the administration and thereby promote teacher retention and the retention of other employees.
2. Ensure physical and emotional security in the employee's workplace.
3. Resolve unusual problems that have not been resolved through regular channels and serve as an expediter in processing concerns by employees, either as individuals or in groups.
4. Channel employee requests or complaints to the proper office or administrator.
5. Offer ways to bring about constructive change.

To learn more about the ombudsman program do a policy search for DGB(REGULATION).

Integrity in the Headlines

Detroit, MI

Five Detroit Public Schools employees have been charged with embezzlement as a result of an investigation. Included in the group was a clerical worker who wrote 15 checks to herself and made 17 withdrawals from district accounts. The illegal activities netted her \$25,000.

From The Associated Press

Miami, FL

The superintendent of the Monroe County Schools was placed on leave without pay after being indicted for official misconduct, a 3rd degree felony. He is alleged to have covered up his wife's inappropriate use of \$180,000 from the Adult Basic Education program he hired her to supervise.

From The Miami Herald

Beijing, China

A woman has died after being beaten by 5 employees of a Walmart store who followed her outside of the store and accused her of shoplifting.

From AFP

New York, NY

At least 6 inspectors from the New York Department of Buildings were videotaped taking bribes of \$50 to \$100 to ignore violations that could have stopped construction at several building sites.

FromNBCNewYork.com

Ethics, Integrity and You

Your work is a reflection of your character. No matter what your assignment, do it so well that the product you create or the service you provide leaves stakeholders and onlookers marveling at the 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.

In their text, *The Power of Ethical Management*, Blanchard and Peale present 3 ethics checks that help people determine what to do.

1. Is it legal? Will I be violating either civil law or company policy?
2. Is it balanced? Is it fair to all concerned in the short term as well as the long term? Does it promote win-win relationships?
3. How will it make me feel about myself? Will it make me proud? Would I feel good if my decision was published in the newspaper? Would I feel good if my family knew about it?

Contact Us to Report Fraud, Waste or Abuse

Visit us in person at 2909 N. Buckner Blvd., Room 804

Call us at (972) 925-8850

Send a fax to (972) 794-3568

Send a letter to the OPR Post Office Box:

Office of Professional Responsibility

P.O. Box 181509

Dallas, TX 75218-8509

Visit us on the Web at www.dallasisd.org/about/integrity or

at www.dallasisd.org/spanish/about/integrity/

Call the Ethics Line with Questions About Ethical Issues at Work

Call (972) 925-8849 during regular business hours with questions about your ethical issues.

Past and Present Ethical Thinking

"Any man worth his salt will stick up for what he believes right, but it takes a slightly better man to acknowledge instantly and without reservation that he is in error."

Attributed to Andrew Jackson

Seventh President of the United States

The correct answer is B. Chloe needs to redirect Julian's misguided attention. However, she must take care to protect her professional reputation as she does. Any conversation she has with Julian about the gift and the card must be held in the presence of witnesses.



Dallas Independent School District