

Employer

Your employer has a right to expect a teacher to complete assigned duties and responsibilities. But this does not require subservience. Knowing your rights and responsibilities as a professional ensures a healthy employer-employee relationship.

In your relationship with your employer:

- be cognizant of your responsibilities under the Acts, Regulations, School Board policies and procedures
- be knowledgeable of your collective agreement
- be familiar with appropriate channels for expressing concerns and bringing about change
- be assertive rather than aggressive when addressing issues
- be aware of your employer's duties and responsibilities
- be mindful of your rights as a professional, as an employee and as a member of OECTA
- be wary of situations where your employer is advising you to avoid OECTA involvement, you can call for advice and or representation **ANYTIME**

Remember: You have the right to be accompanied by an OECTA representative during any meeting with your employer.

Relationship Issues Leading to Allegations and Investigations

If you face an allegation of improper professional conduct, the investigation may be conducted by a number of agencies including the Police, Children's Aid Society, College of Teachers or your School Board. These agencies may act individually or in tandem.

Regardless of the situation it is imperative that you respond appropriately:

1. CONTACT OECTA immediately.
2. DON'T provide any information or make any statements without first consulting with OECTA staff or legal counsel.
3. The only statement you should make: "I am willing to cooperate but I am unable to comment until I contact OECTA or my legal representative."

Contact your local OECTA Unit or OECTA Provincial office at 1-800-268-7230 or 416-925-2493. www.oecta.on.ca

Resources available through the OECTA:
"Be Wary, Be Wise" booklet and DVD
"Positive Professional Parent-Teacher Relationships" booklet

Remember: There is no such thing as an "OFF THE RECORD" discussion.

Relationships: Appropriate and Professional

Maintaining professional standards of behaviour is essential for teachers.

This brochure presents advice for members concerning their professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents and the employer.

Students

A teacher is in a **Position of Trust**, regardless of the age of the student. This means that your actions will be measured against a higher standard than that of other individuals. In order to receive the respect they deserve, teachers should treat students with respect and care.

Such activities may include, but are not limited to:

- any form of sexual relationship with a student, regardless of age
- providing personal information
- dating students, even adult students
- touching students when reprimanding or disciplining
- being alone in the classroom, or other site, with a student
- writing/exchanging cards or letters with particular student(s)
- any form of Internet exchange of a personal nature, including e-mail with student(s)
- meeting student(s) outside school or in an isolated location
- playing favourites
- giving gifts to student(s)

Remember: Teachers should take great care to avoid relationships with students that cross professional boundaries.

Other activities which may create problems:

- classroom activities which may be interpreted as inappropriate
- discussions and/or teaching supports which use inappropriate content
- driving students in your personal vehicle
- interfering with the personal life of a student, unless it is due to a statutory requirement, such as the *Child & Family Services Act*.

Parents/Guardians

The relationship between a teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s) is normally one which is positive in nature and of benefit to the student.

One must maintain a professional standard when dealing with parents:

- reporting to parents, either orally or in writing, be objective, concise and considerate
- in a social setting with parents, be aware of boundaries avoiding gossip and negative comments concerning other educators/personnel or students
- address only matters related to the educational performance of the student, you are not required to respond to issues related to your teaching practice
- if you are contacted by a parent or lawyer in a child custody matter, you are not required to provide any information. Decisions regarding the disclosure of any information that would be contained in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) is the Administration's responsibility. Under no circumstance should you respond, verbally or in writing, to any inquiry of this nature until you have spoken to OECTA.

Remember: Under no circumstance should any member endure any form of verbal and/or physical abuse from a parent/guardian.

- in difficult situations with parents
 - Terminate the meeting politely but firmly.
 - Where appropriate, have a department head or administrator attend any subsequent parent meetings.
 - Seek advice and assistance from OECTA.

Colleagues

The relationship between colleagues, during the school day, is best described as professional. This means that members must cooperate with one another to complete the necessary educational activities required for student learning.

However, as in any workplace, conflict may arise between colleagues. Resolving such discord is primarily the responsibility of the employer and school boards have policies to address such matters. These may be accessed through school board websites or designated personnel.

Dealing with such situations is often difficult. Should you require assistance contact your local OECTA unit representative(s) or OECTA provincial for advice.

Remember: Conflicts between colleagues are primarily the responsibility of the employer.

Be cognizant of the following:

- Every person has the right to a workplace free from all forms of harassment and/or bullying. Under no circumstances should any member ignore such behaviour.
- Seek to resolve conflicts with colleagues personally, privately, and directly, before seeking third-party assistance within your school or board.
- If you make an adverse report about a colleague to a school board representative, you must furnish your colleague with a written account within 72 hours.
(*Teaching Profession Act* – 18 1(b))
- Timeliness is often required if a complaint is being made to the school board.