

Staff Ethics

District employees are allowed financial benefits as identified in ORS 244.040(2), such as their official compensation package, reimbursed expenses, limited honoraria, and unsolicited awards for professional achievement. A district employees is prohibited from using or attempting to use his/her district position to obtain a financial gain or to avoid a financial detriment for the district employee, a relative or member of the household of the employee, or any business with which the employee or a relative or a member of the household of the employee is associated, if the opportunity for financial gain or avoidance of a financial detriment would not otherwise be available but for the employee's position with the district. Specifically, this means that:

1. Employees will not use district equipment for personal use, unless it is available to a significant segment of the general public. This includes, but is not limited to, the personal use of the district's:
 - a. Fax machines¹;
 - b. Phones to make long distance personal calls;
 - c. District vehicles;
 - d. Professional technology equipment (e.g., wood shop, automotive shop, CAD); and
 - e. Athletic facilities (e.g., pool or weight room).

Further, the district's supplies, facilities, equipment, employees, records, or any other public resources are not to be used to engage in private business interests. For example, the district's computers cannot be used to sell products on an auction website during school hours.

2. When employees are traveling on official district business, any gift given because of this travel must be either declined or passed on to the district for use for future district travel. For example, if the hotel where the employee is staying gives the employee a free night's stay on a future visit, this must be declined or given back to the district for future district travel. The frequent flyer miles earned when traveling on official district business can only be used for district travel. If the employee's spouse is traveling with the employee, the employee is responsible for all additional charges (i.e., additional room charge).
3. Employees may not use personal credit cards for district travel or other district business and receive incentives such as cash reimbursements, frequent flyer miles, and other benefits based upon the dollar amount of purchases made.

¹The district could establish a fee schedule that would allow only district employees to pay for the personal use of the district fax machines. If the district established a fee schedule for the use of fax machines the fee schedule must be equal to or exceed the prevailing rates offered at commercial businesses.

4. Employees may not use discounts offered by private companies for the employee's personal benefit if the discount is only offered because of the employee's official position. For example, an office supplies store provides all teachers a 10 percent discount. Because the teachers are receiving this discount only because of their official position, they cannot use the discount to purchase personal items. Teachers may use the discount to purchase items for district use. Employees can also accept the discount if it is also available to a substantial segment of the population who are not public officials.
5. The employee's district position is not to be used to take official action that could have a financial impact on a private business with which the employee, a relative, or a member of the employee's household is associated. For example, if your brother owns a pest-control business which is seeking a contract with the district, you must declare an actual conflict of interest in writing, describing the nature of your conflict, and provide this to your supervisor.
6. Confidential information gained as a district employee is not to be used to obtain a financial benefit for the employee, a relative, or member of the employee's household or a business with which any are associated. For example, you should not use the information that a student in your class is falling behind in math to provide the parents a referral to your sister's tutoring business.
7. District employees who mentor student teachers may not receive direct payments from sponsoring colleges or universities. The payment may be provided by the college or university to the district, which can then distribute the compensation to the teachers as an element of their official compensation package.
8. District employees must follow Oregon Government Ethics Commission guidelines for outside employment if the employee acts as a chaperone for student group trips on personal time and the district employee accepts compensation in the form of travel expenses from a private business or organization. Specifically, district employees must conduct all activities related to the trip on personal time and cannot use the classroom or school environment to plan the off-campus trip. Employees may use district facilities for this purpose only if they comply with the district's public use of facilities policy. It is not an ethics violation to accept reasonable expenses for accompanying students on an education trip.

These restrictions do not apply if the teacher is chaperoning students on a fact-finding mission that is officially sanctioned by the Board. The definition of a fact-finding mission is, in part, any activity related to a cultural or educational purpose. See OAR 199-005-0020(43)(a). The district employee must be directly and immediately associated with the event or location being visited. If a district employee only acts as a chaperone and does not provide instruction or guidance for the students in language usage or cultural events, the trip may not meet the requirements of ORS 244.020(6)(H)(i). Further, the employee can only accept the reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses from the private company, not any further compensation.

These restrictions do not apply if the district compensates the district employee for chaperoning the trip.