

# Teachers' Responsibilities & Professional Ethics Professionally

## Speaking

**What guiding principles direct teachers as they assume and carry out their professional responsibilities as related to privacy and information management?**

Begin by reflecting on the four values upon which the Ontario College of Teachers' (OCT) *Ethical Standards for Teaching* is based: care, respect, trust and integrity. The standard of respect names confidentiality as an ethical standard. Principals should encourage teachers to value students' information as if it was their own. Commenting, privately in a staffroom, to a colleague(s) that a student's grades are slipping because the family is going through marital instability may gain that student extra help and support. Doing the same in public, say at the recreation centre, may not meet professional standards.

**What can happen to a teacher who discloses student information without proper permission i.e. a "breach"?**

Most breaches are inadvertent or accidental, but to wilfully do so may result in a fine up to \$5000 under MFIPPA. A probationary teacher who is responsible for a serious breach may face dismissal. Boards will consider the length of a teacher's employment, history of disciplinary actions, the likelihood of rehabilitation, and the risk of something like this happening again when deciding upon sanctions for a teacher. Parents have the recourse to file a report to the OCT and a civil remedy in the courts if they believe damages have been done. In some instances there could be a finding of professional misconduct under the OCT's misconduct regulation. Teachers should exercise suitable judgment when working with students' OSR's

**Principal's Best Practice:** Encourage teachers to double and triple-check their daybooks for casual notations about students. Teachers ought to remember that any kind of personal information they may jot about a student in a daybook is the property of that individual, who has a right to request it under the MFIPPA.