

RELATIONSHIPS APPROPRIATE AND PROFESSIONAL



CATHOLIC TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic
Teachers
ASSOCIATION

Catholic teachers strive every day to build positive rapport with students. They do this through professional judgement and the application of appropriate boundaries. This document provides advice to OECTA members on maintaining professional relationships with students. It is not an exhaustive list. For more detail on professional boundaries, see [OECTA's Teaching in the 21st Century resource series](#).

Dealing with conflict is often difficult. Consult your local collective agreement and your health benefits provider regarding supports for your mental and physical health when dealing with conflict. Should you require assistance or advice, contact your local OECTA unit representative(s). Visit catholicteachers.ca for a list of local unit presidents.

REMEMBER:

You should take great care to remain within professional boundaries when interacting with students.

The Ontario College of Teachers outlines [Standards of Practice](#), [Ethical Standards](#), and a variety of [Professional Advisories](#) related to professional relationships with students, including [Addressing Hate and Discrimination](#). A teacher is in a position of trust, regardless of the age of the student. Your actions will be measured against a higher standard than those of other individuals. Your professional conduct is subject to scrutiny by the Ontario College of Teachers, which has the power to suspend or revoke your teaching license, various children's welfare agencies, the criminal justice system, your school board human resources department, and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

Below is a list of DOs and DON'Ts regarding professional boundaries and relationships with students:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand and maintain professional relationships with students. ● Continually discern appropriate boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage in any form of dating or sexual relationship with a student, even adult students or former students, regardless of age. ● Meet students outside of school sanctioned events, in an isolated location, or be alone with a student. ● Show favouritism. ● Give gifts to an individual student or students. ● Drive students in your personal vehicle. ● Interfere with the personal life of a student, unless it is due to a statutory requirement, such as the duty to report under the <i>Child, Youth and Family Services Act</i>.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only use board-provided communication methods (email, learning platforms etc.) for electronic communication. ● Focus communication on topics related to student learning or safety needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate using personal email, texting, or social media sites. ● Share information of a personal nature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use board-approved curriculum resources to improve your professional skills in all areas. ● Review any resource before using it in class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use resources that are not approved by your board, or are not connected with curriculum. ● Use teaching resources that contain inappropriate content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain physical distance, especially when disciplining a student. ● If you are unsure about this, see OECTA's video: Professional Misconduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make physical contact with students especially when reprimanding or disciplining them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep the classroom door open when speaking to a student and remain in sight line of the exit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be alone in the classroom with a student. ● Block the exit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand the existence and impact of systemic discrimination on Indigenous and equity-deserving students (Black, 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized, and students who have disabilities) and ensure that they are represented in the materials you select for your classroom. ● See OECTA's Safer Spaces Series for more ideas. ● Practice professional self-reflection to examine unconscious bias in the classroom. ● Review and analyze your classroom resources regularly to detect bias with an anti-oppressive lens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assume that the way you have always done things is the way that things should be done today. ● Assume that positive intent will outweigh negative impact on any student, especially Indigenous and equity-deserving students. ● Use resources or content that is prejudicial or discriminatory in any way, or contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code protected grounds: citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing), and record of offences (in employment).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize your own mental health and well-being needs, ensuring that you take the time to practice self-care and self-regulation so you can effectively manage the demands of the classroom. ● See OECTA's Mental Health and Wellness Series for more ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wait until you are experiencing extreme stress or burnout before you practice self-care.