

Professional Decision-Making

“Did You Know?”

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Making the Call: When to Say Yes or No to Requests

Navigating requests and directives from administration can sometimes feel tricky. It is important to know when it is appropriate to say "no" and when doing so might cross the line into insubordination. Here's a quick guide to help you make the distinction with confidence.

When It's Okay to Say No

As a professional, there are times when declining a request is reasonable:

- **Unreasonable workloads:** If the request exceeds your contractual or legal work hours (e.g., being asked to give up your planning time to complete an unrelated task without compensation).
- **Ethical concerns:** If you are asked to do something that compromises your professional integrity or violates ethical standards.
- **Lack of resources:** If a task requires tools or materials you do not have access to and cannot reasonably acquire.
- **Health and safety:** If fulfilling a directive would endanger your physical or mental health.

Example: If asked to take on an additional duty during your contractual planning time, you can politely explain that you need to prioritize your instructional planning responsibilities.

When Saying No is Insubordination

Refusing a lawful and reasonable directive from your administrator can be considered insubordination.

Some examples include:

- **Direct requests:** Refusing tasks within your job description, such as attending required meetings or completing student assessments.
- **Policy compliance:** Disregarding directives tied to district or school policies (e.g., supervising during fire drills).
- **Behavior expectations:** Ignoring requests related to professional conduct, such as arriving on time or adhering to communication protocols.
- **Safety protocols:** Declining to follow procedures that ensure student safety (e.g., supervising during fire drills).

Example: If asked to submit grades by a specific deadline per district policy, failing to comply without prior communication can be considered insubordination.

Best Practices

To navigate administrative requests professionally and confidently, consider the following:

- **Clarify expectations:** When in doubt, ask whether a request is mandatory or optional. Your building representatives are an excellent resource for clarification and support.
- **Document concerns:** Politely communicate your reasons for declining a request, ensuring your response is respectful and documented.

Know your rights and responsibilities: Review your contract and district policies to understand your obligations and boundaries.



How to Decline Participation in a Voluntary Committee

Voluntary committees are valuable, but your time and energy are finite. Here's how to decline professionally:

1. **Express appreciation:** Acknowledge the importance of the committee and the value of being considered.
2. **Be honest and respectful:** Explain that your current commitments prevent you from participating effectively.
3. **Offer alternative support (optional):** If possible, suggest a way to contribute that aligns with your availability.

Example: Thank you for considering me for the Curriculum Review Committee. I truly appreciate the opportunity and recognize the importance of this work. However, my current responsibilities limit my ability to dedicate the time and focus this committee deserves. Thank you for understanding.

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This approach promotes professionalism, positive relationships, and respect for boundaries, enabling you to navigate administrative requests confidently while protecting your rights and fostering a supportive workplace culture.