



April 17, 2023

Dear LPS Employees:

We recognize the invaluable contributions Littleton Public Schools (LPS) teachers and staff make to our students and community. As such, we acknowledge and are grateful for the enormous outpouring of support and appreciation from parents, community members, and business partners by giving gifts to district personnel. However, given the variance of income and affluence within our district, significant differences exist in terms of the quantity and value of gifts LPS employees receive across different schools. This disparity creates an unfair disadvantage for some, and can cause resentment and division among district personnel.

In addition, substantial gifts¹ from particular students or families may give rise to conflict of interest concerns and even suspicions of favoritism or preferential treatment. Colorado law has sought to address this concern by generally prohibiting government employees² or their families from receiving gifts or other things of value in excess of \$65 in relation to their public duties.

Lastly, given the financial value of many of these gifts, there is concern about whether the gifts represent taxable compensation and whether LPS or the employee could be responsible for reporting that income to the appropriate federal and state agencies.

To address these concerns and provide greater guidance for LPS employees and community members, this memo clarifies and re-emphasizes what gifts may and may not be accepted by school district employees in the course of their work:

- Accepting gifts of substantial value³ (currently \$65 or more) from the following groups or individuals is prohibited:

¹ See C.R.S. §24-18-104 et seq.

² See Colorado Constitution Art. XXXIX, § 3.

³ "Substantial value" in this context currently means more than \$65 in value, based on the Colorado Independent Ethics Commission gift acceptance threshold. This amount is periodically updated by the IEC based on inflation.

- Students or their guardians -- this includes aggregated, or "pooled" gifts from parent or student groups.
 - A direct or indirect subordinate employee.
 - Businesses or organizations doing business with the district.
- All other gifts, including gifts from parents or guardians, vendors, businesses, non-profit organizations, community members, fellow employees, or any other individuals or groups shall not exceed the applicable statutory threshold (currently \$65) within a calendar year, regardless of the type or form of gift received.

Below are examples of acceptable and unacceptable gifts for LPS employees to receive. These examples are not intended to address every possible situation. Therefore, LPS believes an employee's best criteria to assess the appropriateness of a gift remains:

- 1) Could accepting the gift reasonably create the perception of professional impropriety?; and
- 2) Could accepting the gift foster inequity between departments, school communities or colleagues?

As a general rule, if an employee believes either outcome is possible, or if the gift exceeds \$65 in value, the employee should graciously try to redirect the gift to the school, a program, the school PTO, or the LPS Foundation. The district is confident that LPS teachers and staff can be relied upon to adhere to this guidance and maintain professional integrity.

Examples of gifts that ARE acceptable within these guidelines:

- Accepting clothing that qualifies as "spirit wear" e.g. sweatshirts and other clothing supporting an LPS affiliated activity, event, or team.
- Accepting student-written letters or student-created artwork as a token of appreciation or gratitude.
- Accepting a framed picture or poster with class/club/team signatures or messages as an end-of-year or end-of-season tribute.
- Accepting non-recurring perishable items such as food or flowers of less than \$65 in value. (e.g. a bouquet of flowers presented to a drama teacher on the closing night of a school play, or dinners donated during parent-teacher conferences)
- Accepting a gift given directly to the school or program (e.g. classroom supplies, clothing for the nursing office, new music stands for a middle school jazz band, a new tree to plant to replace a tree that had to be removed, new athletic team equipment, school gardens, school cafeteria salad bars, etc.)
- Accepting a ticket or tickets with a face value of more than \$65 as long as the ticket is to an LPS affiliated event.
- Accepting tickets for travel, housing, admission, or food when an employee is acting as a chaperone of an LPS-sponsored event or attending a professional event.

- Accepting a fee waiver and/or voucher for accommodations for professional development conferences and seminars where the employee is delivering a speech, making a presentation, participating on a panel, etc.

Examples of gifts that ARE NOT acceptable within these guidelines:

- Accepting group gifts (including cash, gift cards, or gift-certificates) from team parents or classroom parents that exceed a combined value of more than \$65. This includes holiday, end-of-year, and end-of-season gifts.
- Accepting ongoing gifts (e.g. gym membership) with a one-time or cumulative value of more than \$65.
- A supervisor or administrator accepting gifts of substantial value from a direct or indirect subordinate employee, especially if such could be misunderstood or interpreted as attempting to gain preferential treatment.
- Accepting a gift or cumulative gifts with a value of more than \$65 from a vendor, business, non-profit organization, or community member.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the students of Littleton Public Schools. If you have any further questions about this policy, please contact your supervisor.

Warm regards,

Brian Ewert
Superintendent