

BOARD MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE AND PURPOSE

WHEREAS, The welfare of our community, State, and nation is directly affected by the quality of public education focused to the greatest possible degree on individual abilities and potentialities; and

WHEREAS, The ideals, attitudes, and motives of school Board members substantially influence their decisions concerning the quality of education in the schools; therefore be it

RESOLVED, In order to encourage all boards of education in Ohio to act in accordance with high professional and moral standards, the Ohio School Boards Association does hereby establish a code of basic principles and ethical standards for school Board members acting individually and collectively as boards of education in the management of the public schools in Ohio.

BASIC PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

Boards of education in Ohio accept the obligation to operate the public schools in accordance with the fundamental principles and standards of school management, which principles include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Boards of education formulate written policy for the administration of schools, to be reviewed regularly and revised as necessary.
2. Boards of education exercise legislative, policy-making, planning, and appraising functions and delegate administrative functions in the operation of schools.
3. Boards of education recognize their especially critical responsibility for selecting the Superintendent. The Board will define the Superintendent's responsibilities, help to formulate his goals, and evaluate his performance regularly, without directly engaging in administrative processes.
4. Boards of education accept and encourage a variety of opinions from and communication with all parts of the community.
5. Boards of education make public relevant institutional information in order to promote communication and understanding between the school system and the community.
6. Boards of education act on legislative and policy-making matters only after examining all pertinent facts and considering the Superintendent's recommendations.
7. Boards of education conduct their meetings with planned and published agendas.
8. Boards of education encourage and promote professional growth of school staff so that quality of instruction and support services may continually be improved.
9. Boards of education establish and maintain procedural steps for resolving complaints and criticisms of school affairs.
10. Boards of education act only through public meetings and individual Board members have no authority to bind the Board.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Optimum effectiveness as members of boards of education will be achieved only if high ethical standards of conduct are maintained in all personal, business and public activities. Fundamental is the universally accepted precept of treating others, individually or in groups, as

everyone would like to be treated. More specific standards include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Ethical Standards for All Individual Members of Boards of Education:
 - A. accept responsibility for leadership by encouraging community and staff to improve the public school system in all appropriate ways, including the greatest efficiency in the use of money, promoting increases in funding as needed, and improvement in training and performance of staff, administrators, and Board.
 - B. make sincere efforts to respect divergent points of view by seeking to understand those who advance such diverse opinions.
 - C. recognize the principles of compromise as an acceptable solution to diversity and cooperation as productive means of achieving the common good.
 - D. recognize both the positive and negative aspects of dissent. When the Board reaches a decision, Board members have an obligation to abide by the decision while retaining the right to attempt to alter the decision ethically.
 - E. avoid conflicts of interest and the use of Board membership for personal gain or even the appearance of impropriety which can result from that position.
 - F. accept the primary objective of maintaining and improving public schools, rather than personal advancement or prestige.
 - G. devote time, thought, and study to the duties and responsibilities of school Board membership.
 - H. attempt to interpret the needs and attitudes of all parts of the school District and endeavor to utilize those insights to effect improvement of the school program.
 - I. respect the limited intent and scope of executive sessions and respect privileged communications from executive sessions and other administrative sources.
2. Group Ethics for Board of Education and other Organizations:
 - A. seek assurances of the availability of administrative and teaching personnel prior to offering contracts.
 - B. initiate inquiries for prospective, specific certified and non-certified employees through channels which are available to everyone qualified.
 - C. evaluate personnel objectively in the interest of the local district of other school districts, when requested.
 - D. encourage meetings and association with other school Boards nearby, regionally, Statewide, and nationally to discuss and advance the cause of maintaining and improving public education.
 - E. recognize that, although the primary obligation is to maintain and improve the quality of education in the local District, a substantial duty in a broad sense is to be concerned for the improvement of the quality of education at all levels of society and refrain from actions locally which would substantially interfere or injure the program of education elsewhere.

[Adoption date: August 6, 1991]

SOURCE: Ohio Schools Boards Association