

Policy Code: 2120 Code of Ethics for School Board Members

The board recognizes that collectively and individually, all members of the board must adhere to an accepted code of ethics as required by [G.S. 160A-86](#) and [G.S. 115C-47](#)(57).

A. Board Member Ethical Requirements

The following standards will guide each board member in the performance of his or her official duties:

1. the need to obey all applicable state and federal laws regarding official actions taken as a board member;
2. the need to uphold the integrity and independence of the board member's office;
3. the need to avoid impropriety in the exercise of the board's and board member's official duties;
4. the need to perform faithfully the duties of the office; and
5. the need to conduct the affairs of the board in an open and public manner, complying with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records.
6. [G.S. 115C-40](#): The board may not investigate issues, the issues must be investigated as a whole corporate.

B. Unethical/Inappropriate Acts

In addition to the ethical requirements established above, the board recognizes that it is unethical and/or inappropriate for a board member to do any of the following specific acts:

1. accept a gift of substantial value or economic benefit which would tend to improperly influence a reasonable person, which the board member knew or should have known is primarily for the purpose of a reward for official action, or which otherwise violates conflict of interests or other laws;
2. personally assume unauthorized authority;
3. criticize school employees publicly;
4. disclose confidential information;
5. place the interest of one group or community above the interest of the entire school system;
6. withhold facts from the superintendent that are relevant to the efficient and effective operation of the school system;
7. consider complaints against an employee that are not first submitted to the superintendent and brought before the full board for consideration;
8. announce future action before the proposition has been discussed by the board; and

9. conduct oneself in a manner that is inconsistent with the goals and policies of the board.
10. investigate a matter that by policy or law may not be unilaterally investigated by a board member without authorization by the board.

C. Specific Board Member Commitments

Board of education members' first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools. The accountability to the whole school system supersedes any conflicting loyalty a member may have to other advocacy or interest groups, boards or personal interests. In recognition of this priority and in accordance with the board's ethical standards, each member of the board commits to do the following:

1. attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings;
2. work with other board members to establish effective board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent;
3. endeavor to make policy decisions while always keeping in mind the objective of providing students the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings;
4. communicate to other board members and the superintendent expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs;
5. respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law and make no unauthorized disclosure of matters discussed in closed session;
6. render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups;
7. model civility and integrity to students, employees and all elements of the community by encouraging the free expression of opinion by all board members; engaging in respectful dialogue with fellow board members on matters being considered by the board; and complying with all board policies that set expectations for conduct, regardless of whether the policies expressly require compliance by board members;
8. learn about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by the state and national school boards associations and school programs;
9. comply with [North Carolina General Statute 115C-50](#) by earning the required 12 hours of training every two years;
10. comply with [G.S. 160A-87](#) by earning two hours of ethics education within 12 months of election or appointment to the board;
11. support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school employees, avoid allowing personal relationships and biases to influence decision making, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all employees;
12. respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law and make no unauthorized disclosure of matters discussed in closed session;

13. avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest, and refrain from using the board member's position on the board for personal or partisan gain;

14. as stated in board policy 2121, Board Member Conflict of Interest, refrain from participating in, deliberating on, voting on, or attempting to influence any person with respect to any matter pertaining to the employment with the board of the board member's spouse, including but not limited to hiring, transfer, promotion, demotion, suspension, discipline, performance evaluation, or review or investigation of a complaint of any kind;

15. take no private action that will compromise the board or administration; and

16. remember always that a board member's first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools.

All newly elected board members are expected to submit to a background check and sign a code of ethics statement that includes these provisions at the organizational meeting of the board.

Legal References: [G.S. 115C-36](#), [-47\(1\)](#), [-47\(57\)](#), [-50](#); [160A-86](#), [-87](#); *Leandro v. State*, 346 N.C. 336 (1997)

Cross References: Board Bylaws (policy 2020), Board Member Conflicts of Interest (policy 2121), Board Member Opportunities for Development (policy 2123)

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Rockingham County Schools