



BOARD MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

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The Association advocates that each board adopt and adhere to a Code of Conduct policy. This aids in the board's responsibility to carry out the important education decision-making role while maintaining effective relationships with school administrators, staff, and community members. Given the complexity of the education governance structure, nothing is more important than clarifying appropriate roles and responsibilities for the school board, superintendent, and principal(s).

A school board member has no legal powers unless participating at a meeting that complies with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law, or acting on behalf of the school board after the board formally grants authority to do so. Thus, it is essential that every school board member work as a member of the broader leadership team to perform board duties and act in a manner consistent with the Code.

Note: Board members can demonstrate personal commitment to the Code by signing this document signifying agreement to uphold the principles of the Code, both, in letter and spirit.

Many school boards post a copy of the signed Code in the front entrance of the school(s). This public display of school leadership team commitment sends a powerful message and sets the tone for how the business of education will be conducted in the schools and community.

As citizens of the United States, board members have certain Constitutional rights, including freedom of speech that cannot be taken away, whether or not you choose to sign this document. The only sections of this Code that require legal compliance are the "*conflict of interest*" and "*act only as a member of the board.*" All other sections represent best practice.

Board members' actions, verbal and nonverbal, reflect the attitude and the beliefs of the school district. Therefore, board members must conduct themselves professionally and in a manner fitting to the responsibility of duty.

Each board member shall follow the code of conduct:

As a Board Member

- I will listen.
- I will respect the opinion of others.
- I will recognize the integrity of my predecessors and the merit of their work.
- I will be motivated only by an earnest desire to serve the school district and the students in the best possible way.
- I will not use the school district or any part of the school district program for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or supporters.
- I will vote for a closed session of the board if the situation requires it, but I will consider "secret" sessions of board members unethical.

- I will recognize that to promise in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any proposition which is to be considered is to close my mind and agree not to think through other facts and points of view which may be presented in the meeting.
- I will expect, in board meetings, to spend more time on education programs and procedures than on business details.
- I will recognize that authority rests with the board in legal session and not with individual members of the board, except as authorized by law.
- I will make no disparaging remarks, in or out of the board meeting, about other members of the board or their opinions.
- I will express my honest and most thoughtful opinions in board meetings in an effort to have decisions made for the best interest of the students and the education program.
- I will abide by majority decisions of the board.
- I will carefully consider petitions, resolutions, and complaints and will act in the best interest of the school district.
- I will not discuss the confidential business of the board.
- I will endeavor to keep informed on local, state, and national educational developments of significance.

Board Governance

- Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, insofar as possible, and review advance materials provided.
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information and make no individual decisions or commitments that would compromise the board or administration.
- Work with other board members to establish effective board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent.
- Maintain a priority board focus on policymaking, goal setting, planning process, and evaluation. Most importantly increasing student learning and achievement and ensuring efficient use of education resources.
- Comply with Board policy, all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations and guidance from the superintendent, when making board decisions.
- Encourage individual board member expression of opinion and establish an open, two-way communication process between the board and students, staff, and all elements of the community.
- Remain current with changing needs and requirements pertaining to educational issues through individual study and by participating in board learning opportunities such as those sponsored by the Nebraska and National School Boards Associations, the Nebraska

Department of Education, and other education organizations.

- Recognize that a board member's responsibility, together with fellow board members, is to ensure the school district provides a quality education for all students.
- In consultation with the superintendent and district administrators, set education goals for the school(s).
- Maintain confidentiality of information and discussion conducted in closed session.
- Review essential facts, consider others' ideas, and then present personal opinions during board deliberations but, once the board vote has been taken, support board decisions regardless of how individuals voted.
- Act only as a member of the board and do not assume any individual authority when the board is not in session, unless otherwise directed by the board.
- Rely on school policies that are continually updated and aligned with Nebraska and federal education laws, and guidance from the superintendent, when making board decisions.
- Request recommendations from the superintendent and seek legal counsel, when required for full and informed board consideration of issues requiring legal expertise.
- Expect an equitable amount of board meeting time be spent both learning about educational programs and conducting the business of the board.
- Maintain a priority board focus on increasing student learning and ensuring efficient use of education resources.
- Retain independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Voice opinions respectfully and maintain good relations with other board members, administrators, school staff, and members of the public.
- Be informed about educational issues through individual study and by participating in board development opportunities such as those sponsored by the Nebraska and National School Boards Associations, the Nebraska Department of Education, and other education organizations.
- Support new school board members by sharing your experience and knowledge.
- Ensure that adequate board orientation and team building opportunities are available for board members and administrators.
- Associate with board members from other school districts to discuss school problems and collaborate on school improvement initiatives.

Board – Superintendent Relations

- Respect that the superintendent of schools and his or her staff are responsible and accountable for the delivery of the educational programs and the conduct of school operations.
- Ensure strong management of the school system by hiring, setting goals with and evaluating the Superintendent.
- Provide policy support for school administrators in the performance of their duties and delegate authority commensurate with those responsibilities.
- Expect the superintendent to keep the board adequately informed through regular written and oral communications.
- Refer complaints, requests, and concerns to the superintendent.
- Avoid making commitments that may compromise the decision-making ability of the board or administrators.
- Maintain open and candid communication with the superintendent.
- Hold the superintendent accountable by jointly creating job performance standards and at least annually performing a comprehensive evaluation process based on the job description, contract, and identified performance standards.
- Recognize that a board member's responsibility is to see that schools are well run, but not to run them.

Personnel Relations

- Seek to employ the most qualified school staff and insist on regular, impartial employee evaluations.
- Hire no superintendent, principal, or teacher already under contract with another school district unless the person has formally been released from his or her contract.
- Individual board members shall not give directives to any school administrator or employee, publicly or privately.

Community Relations

- Perform a liaison communications role by respecting the needs of both the community and the school.
- Consider the needs of the entire community and vote for what is best for students.
- Encourage collaboration between the school and community.
- Request that periodic surveys be conducted with the community to assess the quality of education services and use the data to establish and monitor goals.

Conflict of Interest

- Do not solicit or receive directly or indirectly any gift or compensation in return for making a recommendation or casting a vote.
- Do not receive anything of value by contract or otherwise, from the school district you serve unless it is received:
 - as a result of a contract accepted after a public bid.
 - in public recognition of service or achievement.
 - as expenses allowed by law for official duties performed as a member of such board.
- Follow the school board conflict of interest policy regarding the appearance of conflict of interest.

(Optional Signature)

I agree to abide by the principles outlined in the Board of Education Code of Conduct and will do everything in my power to work as a productive member of the leadership team.

Board Member

Date