

CODE OF ETHICS



State law requires that members of local governing boards, including boards of education, receive a minimum of two hours of ethics education. The training must cover laws and principles that govern conflicts of interest and ethical standards of conduct at the local government level and must be completed within 12 months of each election or appointment. N.C. Gen. Stat. 160A-87.

State law also requires the governing board to adopt a resolution or policy containing a code of ethics to guide the actions of board members while performing their official duties as a member of that governing board. The resolution or policy should address at least the following:

- 1 The need to obey all applicable 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 member's official duties;
- 4 The need to faithfully perform the duties of the office; and
- 5 The need to conduct the affairs of the governing board in an open and public manner, including complying with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records.

N.C. Gen. Stat. 160A-86.

The clerk (board assistant) to the governing board is responsible for maintaining a record verifying receipt of the ethics education by each board member.

NCSBA provides training that satisfies the ethics training requirement. In addition, through the association's policy service, school boards have access to tools and information to guide the board in developing a code of ethics policy. Nevertheless, as a board member or potential board member, you should be able to embrace the concepts included in your board's code of ethics.

SAMPLE CODE OF ETHICS COMMITMENTS:

attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings;

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;

render all decisions based on the available facts and independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups;

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;

respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law and refrain from unauthorized disclosure of matters discussed in closed session;

work with other board members to establish effective board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent;

communicate to other board members and the superintendent expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs;

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;

COMMITMENTS CONTINUED:

comply with North Carolina General Statute 115C-50 by earning the required 12 hours of training every two years;

comply with G.S. 160A-87 by earning two hours of ethics education within 12 months of election or appointment to the board;

support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school employees and avoid allowing personal relationships and biases to influence decision making;

refrain from investigating or attempting to resolve complaints received personally, but instead direct the complainant to follow the board's complaint or grievance process to resolve concerns;

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;

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;

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

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

Through the association's Master Board training module, Clarifying Board Operations, the board has the opportunity to discuss these concepts as a governance team.