

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

POLICY

No. A-4

Adopted: September 29, 2010

Amended: November 18, 2015

Reviewed: October 9, 2019

Amended: November 29, 2023

TRUSTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

Preamble:

The Board of Education is comprised of elected members of the community and is fundamental to the effectiveness of the public education system within the community. In British Columbia, Boards of Education are co-governors, along with the Ministry of Education and Child Care for public schools (K-12) and associated child care programs operated by the school district. Broadly speaking, Boards provide district-level policy leadership that enhances student achievement, hires and manages the senior district staff, and ensures the prudent use and control of the district's resources. Locally elected Boards of Education provide the local autonomy and work to increase community confidence in public education in British Columbia. Boards carry out their work by keeping in touch with their local communities, meeting on a regular basis, reviewing recommendations and reports from staff, and making decisions in the best interest of the students and the district. The day-to-day administration of the education program and conduct of school operation is the responsibility of the superintendent of schools and district staff.

Policy:

Through the *School Act*, the Minister of Education has vested in the Board of Education the power and authority to govern the district in a fiscally responsible and cost-effective manner. In order to fulfill the Board of Education's responsibilities in an ethical and business-like manner, a trustee code of conduct is critical for:

- abiding by the *School Act* and the Oath of Office;
- guiding trustee behaviour;
- determining how trustees undertake their role and responsibilities;
- advocating for learners in the community; and
- reflecting the community's values in the public education system.

TRUSTEE CODE OF CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board, representing all members of the community, wishes to operate under the highest of ethical standards. To this end, trustees will aspire to:

1. Become familiar with the *School Act*, regulations and Ministerial Orders of the Ministry of Education and Child Care and School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) policies, regulations and contracts, and will comply with all applicable provincial and federal laws, including the Criminal Code, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Human Rights Code, *Workers' Compensation Act* and other applicable legislation.
2. Do their best to protect, conserve and advance public education, giving to the children of this district educational facilities and services that are as complete as it is possible to provide and make decisions keeping in mind student achievement, equity, and well-being of all students in the district.
3. Have a general knowledge of education mandates, goals and objectives of the system, both provincially and within the district.
4. Express honest and thoughtful opinions frankly in Board meetings in an effort to have all decisions made for the best interest of the children and the schools.
5. Recognize that the expenditures of public funds are a public trust and will see that such expenditures are done efficiently, economically and for the best interest of students in the district.
6. Treat fellow trustees and school district staff with respect, courtesy, honesty and fairness, and have proper regard for their interests, rights, safety and welfare. Trustees will conduct their work with fellow Board members in a spirit of cooperation and be respectful of differences of opinion. Trustees shall refrain from taking any action that could compromise the integrity/authority of the Board. Trustees shall conduct themselves in a fair and respectful manner in their interactions with students, parents, staff and members of the community.
7. Be accessible to the public and devote the necessary time, thought, and study to the Board's duties, responsibilities, and committee work in order to render effective and creditable service.
8. Base personal decisions upon all available facts and independent judgement in each situation and vote in an unbiased manner in every case. Trustees shall not surrender their independent judgement to individuals or special interest groups.
9. Honor obligations to attend all Board meetings and where this is not possible, notify the chairperson and senior staff in advance of inability to attend.
10. Be cognizant of legislation and policy concerning conflict of interest and abstain from discussing or voting on issues where such conflict exists. Not attempt in any way before, during or after the meeting to influence voting and will not use their position for personal advantage or for the advantage of friends and/or family. If a trustee is in a conflict of interest situation, the trustee will declare the nature and extent of such conflict at a Board of Education meeting and abstain from deliberating or voting on the issue that has given rise to the conflict.
11. Recognize the integrity of predecessors and associates and the merit of their work. Trustees shall act with the highest standards of professional integrity and in a manner that inspires public confidence in the Board.

12. Channel all communication between Board and staff on business matters through the chairperson and district management.
13. Respect the confidentiality and privacy of all information as it pertains to individuals, in-camera Board and committee meetings, and matters the Board deems important to remain confidential temporarily or permanently. Trustees shall not release privileged information in any format to the public until the Board has done so in an official capacity.
14. Recognize that it is important to represent the school district in such a way as to leave others with a positive impression of the school district. Preserve and enhance the good reputation of the school district and avoid behaviour that might damage the reputation of the Board and the school district. Trustee decisions will be made in the best interest of the school district as a whole, irrespective of the area that the trustee is elected from.
15. Represent the community by which elected but serve the interest of the school district as a whole.
16. Respect the right of each member to contribute their position or opinion to Board discussion and deliberations, even though they might disagree with them.
17. Use Board meetings to voice disagreement with Board positions and decisions and not use public forums or vehicles to exert pressure on the Board to change its views or decisions or to take actions or make decision I want them to make.
18. Recognize their duty to represent and advocate for the best interest of all students in the community, including Indigenous students and First Nations on whose traditional territories district schools operate.
19. Commit to responsible digital citizenship and to minimize the risk associated with the use of electronic communications systems and access to social media.

VIOLATION OF THE CODE

1. Trustees are encouraged to seek appropriate conciliatory measures prior to commencing in making an official complaint with regard to a violation of this code of conduct. A violation of this code of conduct may result in the Board instituting, without limiting what follows, any or all of the following sanctions which may only be implemented by a motion of those trustees present at a closed (in-camera) meeting of the Board.
 - a. having the Board Chair write a letter of concern/warning;
 - b. having the Board Chair write a letter of censure;
 - c. having a motion of censure passed and removing the trustee from some or all Board committees or other appointments of the Board.
2. The plaintiff will be given opportunity to respond to the complaint prior to any motions being made.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

1. This policy will be reviewed by trustees annually at the meeting of the Policy Committee in October.
2. Upon review at the Policy Committee trustees will sign and date a copy of the policy.

Trustee name (print)

Trustee signature

Date