

VSBA CODE OF ETHICS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

A school board member has no legal powers or authority unless acting at a school board meeting or acting for the school board after it formally grants power to act on its behalf. A school board member should perform the duties of a school board member in a manner consistent with this Code of Ethics.

Board Governance

1. Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, insofar as possible, and review study materials about the issues to be considered on each agenda
2. Set goals for the school system and establish policies to direct its administration
3. Maintain confidentiality of discussion conducted in executive session and of other privileged information
4. Abide by board decisions regardless of how individuals voted.
5. Act only as a member of the board and do not assume authority as an individual in school matters when the board is not in session.
6. Be familiar with and observe Vermont education laws.
7. Listen to legal counsel and constructive criticism to protect the board and the school system from liability

Board-Administration Relations

8. Give school officials authority commensurate with their responsibility, work through the properly appointed school officials according to the school system's organization and policies, and support school officials in the performance of their duties.
9. Expect the superintendent to keep the board adequately informed through regular written or oral reports and hold the superintendent accountable through an annual job performance evaluation.
10. Refer complaints, requests, and concerns to the superintendent or other appropriate staff member.
11. Use the chain of command and avoid making commitments or promises that compromise the board, administration or the school system.
12. Listen to the recommendations of the superintendent and staff before making decisions and provide advice and counsel to the superintendent.
13. Recognize that a board member's responsibility is to see that schools are well run, but not to run them.

Board Member Relations

14. Retain independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.

15. Voice opinions responsibly, maintain good relations with other board members, respect other board members' rights and opinions, and make no disparaging remarks, in or out of the board meeting, about other board members or school staff. Instead, express opinions in a professional, fair manner.
16. Accept the responsibility to secure facts before arriving at conclusions.
17. Expect more time to be spent on educational programs and procedures than on business details at board meetings.

Personnel Relations

18. Support employment of the best qualified people as school staff and insist on regular, impartial evaluation of all staff.
19. Hire no superintendent, principal or teacher already under contract with another school unless assurance is first secured from the proper authority that the person can be released from contract.

Community Relations

20. Represent the entire community and vote for what seems best for the children and youth of the school system.
21. Interpret the attitudes, wishes and needs of the community to school staff and communicate the aims, methods and goals of the schools to the community.
22. Create an environment that fosters community participation and involvement.

Conflict of Interest

23. Refrain from using board membership for political, personal or business advancement.
24. Recognize conflicts of interest and avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest in hiring, letting bids, approving contracts and other financial affairs of the school system.

Board Preparation And Training

25. Be informed about educational issues by individual study and through participating in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by the Vermont and National School Boards Associations.
26. Take advantage of opportunities to improve your knowledge and to build your skills as locally elected members of school governing boards.
27. Associate with board members from other schools to discuss school problems and cooperate in the improvement of public school conditions.
28. Provide assistance to new school board members and make sure adequate orientation and training opportunities are offered them.