

**Civility Code**

As a member of the Bethany Board of Education (Board), I will strive to improve student achievement in public education, and to that end, I will:

- Attend all Board meetings insofar as possible, review relevant information, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.
- Recognize my responsibility as an agent of the State to seek the improvement of education throughout the State.
- Focus my attention on fulfilling the Board's responsibilities of goal setting, policymaking, and evaluation.
- Ensure that all sides have a fair opportunity to present their respective positions.
- Recognize that a Board member has no authority as an individual and that decisions can only be made by a majority vote at a Board meeting.
- Ensure that criticism of opposing viewpoints is expressed as criticism of a position, not a person when advocating for a belief or position.
- Arrive at conclusions only after discussing all aspects of the issue at hand with my fellow Board members in a meeting.
- Respect the opinions of others, and abide by each decision of the Board as a whole, regardless of my personal vote.
- Listen respectfully to those who communicate with the Board, seeking to understand their views, while recognizing my responsibility to represent the interests of the entire community.
- Strive for a positive working relationship with the Superintendent, respecting the Superintendent's authority to advise the Board, implement Board policy, and administer the District.
- Recognize the importance of an effective governance team.
- Respect the rights of the minority while working toward the will of the majority, and recognize the importance of achieving consensus as an important tool in community-building.
- Work with other Board members to establish effective Board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the school to the Superintendent.
- Support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school staff, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all staff by appropriate supervisors.
- Conduct all business openly and transparently, consistent with the intent and spirit of the open meeting law requirements.
- Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law and refrain from unauthorized disclosure of matters discussed in executive session.
- Model civility to students, employees, and all elements of the community by encouraging the free expression of opinion by all Board members and engaging in respectful dialogue with fellow Board members on matters being considered by the Board.
- Present personal criticism of District operations or of any employee directly to the Superintendent.

- Understand the chain of command and refer problems or complaints to the proper administrative office while refraining from actions that could compromise my ability to act if the issue rises to the Board level.
- Take no private action that will compromise the Board and administration.
- Refrain from using the Board position for personal or partisan gain and avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety.
- Be informed about the duties of Board members and current educational issues through professional development, such as programs sponsored by my state and national school board associations.
- Remember always that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the Bethany Community School.

**Meeting Protocol**

To ensure that the Board's meetings are conducted with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, members will:

- come to meetings adequately prepared;
- identify issues of concern before the meeting, whenever possible;
- review proposed motions and amendments, whenever possible, at least forty-eight (48) hours before meeting;
- speak only when recognized;
- not interrupt each other during debate;
- not engage in disruptive and disrespectful side conversations;
- minimize unnecessary repetition;
- not monopolize the discussion;
- address the merits of the issue being discussed without appealing to the biases, prejudices, and emotions of the audience;
- support the chair of the meeting's efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting;
- communicate openly and actively in discussion and dialog to avoid surprises;
- value equal participation of all members;
- practice respectful body language;
- listen actively when other members speak; and
- not surprise or embarrass each other or members of the staff.

Each member of the Board shall act in complete accordance with the provisions and tenor of this policy. Should any member of the Board fail to so act, such failure shall constitute cause for censure or other such action as deemed appropriate by the Board.

**Procedures for Censure**

Prior to any vote to censure a Board member for cause:

1. The Board may review the performance and/or conduct of the Board member in open or executive session (as determined by the Board and the Board member) prior to taking any formal action.
2. If the Board determines that formal action is necessary, the Board member shall be provided with reasonable notice of the Board's intent to consider censure or other such action as deemed appropriate by the Board (such notice to be given in writing after being authorized by Board vote at a prior meeting of the Board).
3. A vote to censure a Board member or other such action against a Board member as deemed appropriate by the Board shall only take place at a regular meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose.
4. Such censure may be enacted for cause by a two-thirds majority vote of the entire Board.

Legal References:        Connecticut General Statutes § 10-220

Bylaw adopted:        February 10, 2016  
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