

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Policy 4119.21, 4219.21, 4319.21

CODE OF ETHICS

A Most Important Responsibility

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) is proud to implement a Code of Ethics. This code signifies the strong commitment on the part of the SBCSS staff to base our decisions and actions on clear ethical standards.

The SBCSS core values, which place student learning and safety at the center of what we do, are directly based on these standards. They reflect the deeper sense of purpose and direction which governs our work.

All SBCSS staff are to respect and follow the principles contained in the Code of Ethics. Our ethical behavior “speaks” loudly as an example to the young people we serve. It is one of the wisest lessons in teaching and learning we can offer.

Herbert R. Fischer, Ph.D.
County Superintendent
April, 2007

Preamble

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) accepts its responsibility for nurturing democratic principles, helping all students meet high standards, and providing an equal educational opportunity to all. SBCSS personnel are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards and behavior in their relations with students, parents, community and colleagues. The well being of students is the fundamental value in all decision-making and actions.

The ethical standards that guide the actions of all staff members are contained in a series of guiding principles. In certain cases, the principles are more appropriate to the actions of certificated staff members, and in other cases to classified staff. All staff members, however, are expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics.

Guiding Principles

A. Commitment to the Student

SBCSS personnel work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals; serve as a model of ethical standards; and strive through fair and just treatment to help each student achieve and succeed by fulfillment of the following obligations to student(s).

1. Encourage the student to seek independent action in the pursuit of learning.
2. Allow the student access to reasonable varying points of view.
3. Provide relevant subject matter which will promote student progress.
4. Make every effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

5. Protect the student from embarrassment and disparagement.
6. Maintain confidentiality of student information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is authorized by law.
7. Guard against unfair treatment of any student on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, gender, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, sexual orientation, or disability.
8. Use professional relationships with students only for student benefit and not in any way for private advantage.

B. Commitment to the Students' Parents and Families

SBCSS personnel know that in order for students to be successful, it is essential for the school and home to interact frequently and effectively. SBCSS personnel form a partnership of responsibility with parents in order to acknowledge, respect, and appreciate each other so that the task of educating and nurturing youth to become successful adults becomes a collaborative mutual goal. This is achieved by fulfillment of the following obligations to the parents and families:

1. Develop understanding and respect of community cultures in order to relate the students' school environment to their home environments.
2. Maintain regular communication with parents regarding student progress or problems, and respond in a timely manner to appropriate and legal requests from parents for information or communication.
3. Keep parents informed of all opportunities available to their children.
4. Ensure that all communication to parents is comprehensible, including translation into other languages when needed and feasible.
5. Offer alternative choices, within the perimeters of the law, to students and parents in the event that materials being taught conflict with home values.
6. Treat all students equitably and free from bias or a defensive, retaliatory manner in cases of negative parental involvement or conflict.
7. Develop open lines of communication and actively participate in discussions with parents to assure that their points of view are being heard, understood, and taken into consideration.
8. Provide opportunities for parents to become involved in a meaningful way in the education of their children, and encourage parents to share their experiences and expertise.

C. Commitment to the Profession

SBCSS personnel believe the quality of the services provided in the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens. Therefore, every effort is expected to be exerted to raise professional standards, improve service, promote a climate in which the exercise of professional judgment is encouraged, and to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of trust to careers in education by fulfillment of the following obligations to the profession:

1. Act and speak at all times in a manner that exemplifies personal and professional integrity, dignity, and mutual respect.

2. Accept academic degrees or professional certification only from duly accredited institutions.
3. Present professional qualifications accurately and completely.
4. Regard the employment agreement as a pledge to adhere to both the letter and the spirit of the contract and the law.
5. Give prompt notice to the employing agency of any change in availability of service.
6. Pursue appropriate measures to align laws, policies and regulations with sound educational goals.
7. Conduct professional business through proper channels.
8. Use time granted for the purpose for which it is intended.
9. Maintain a commitment to professional development and keep abreast of current research in the field.
10. Strive to align actions with professional values and beliefs to enhance personal and organizational effectiveness.
11. Adhere to established professional standards.
12. Work and share collaboratively with colleagues and professional associations to improve the quality of public education.
13. Adhere to statutory requirements in relation to accepting or offering gifts or favors and avoid any action that would impair or appear to impair professional judgment or obtain special advantage.
14. Accurately represent official policies of SBCSS or educational institutions when speaking or writing about policies.
15. Clearly distinguish private views from the official position of the institution.

D. Commitment to Certificated and Classified Colleagues

SBCSS personnel exemplify work relationships with colleagues that accord just and equitable treatment to all by fulfillment of the following obligations to colleagues:

1. Accord just and equitable treatment to all SBCSS personnel in the exercise of their professional rights and responsibilities.
2. Exercise vigilance in avoiding any special treatment in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues.
3. Maintain confidentiality regarding information obtained about colleagues in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
4. Protect fellow employees from intentional embarrassment or disparagement.
5. Act in a spirit of collaboration with fellow colleagues.

6. Treat all staff equitably and free from bias and/or a defensive, retaliatory manner.
7. Develop open lines of communication and actively participate in discussions with colleagues to assure that their points of view, needs and desires are understood and taken into consideration.
8. Present perspectives and opinions on work-related issues in ways that do not undermine the integrity and decisions of supervisors and colleagues.
9. Consider no personal success legitimate or ethical **that** is secured by taking unfair advantage of another.
10. Refrain from making false or malicious statements about a colleague.
11. Maintain work relationships that are not in any way unfairly influenced by race, ethnicity, creed, gender, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social, or cultural background, sexual orientation, or disability.

E. Commitment to the Business Community

SBCSS personnel, in contacts with members of the business community, exemplify conduct which demonstrates the highest level of professional conduct and an understanding of sound business practices by fulfillment of the following obligations to the business community.

1. Demonstrates a personal commitment to the highest ethical standards and model exemplary personal integrity in all business relationships.
2. Deal with each supplier, vendor, contractor, purveyor, or other business professional in a manner which demonstrates the SBCSS "Commitment to Excellence."
3. Place the needs of the students, schools and the SBCSS facilities foremost in making recommendations and decisions about SBCSS business matters.
4. Represent the SBCSS always in a fair and positive light.
5. Operate fairly without any personal agenda in all matters involving the business relationships of the SBCSS.
6. Obey the law in its word, spirit, and intent at all times while performing duties.
7. Exercise great care and good professional judgment in order to avoid situations that may compromise the reputation of the SBCSS.
8. Seek guidance, advice, and training from other professional associates inside and outside the SBCSS, regarding current school business practices.

Closing

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools has adopted the foregoing Code of Ethics as a standard of professional behavior for all staff members. This Code of Ethics is subject to periodic review and update. As defined in the preamble, the SBCSS staff is expected to act in a manner that demonstrates their personal commitment to the highest ethical standards as defined in this code.

Legal Reference
Code of Regulations, Title 5, 80331-80338
Rules of Conduct for Professional Educators

Approved: April 17, 2007