209 CODE OF ETHICS

[NOTE: A code of ethics establishes standards of conduct that members of a school board create and agree to follow. The principles and values embodied in this code of ethics prioritize board members' obligations to students, the district, and the community. As a written set of expectations, a code of ethics guides board members' decision making and behavior. This model policy offers a starting point for school boards as they create a code that establishes parameters for board member conduct that best serve their district. Minnesota law and rules of parliamentary procedure establish sanctions that a school board may choose to pursue.]

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assist the individual school board member in understanding his or her role as part of a school board and in recognizing the contribution that each member must make to develop an effective and responsible school board.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Each school board member shall follow the code of ethics stated in this policy.

A. AS A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, I WILL:

1. Attend school board meetings.

2. Come to the meetings prepared for discussion of the agenda items.

3. Listen to the opinions and views of others (including, but not limited to, other school board members, administration, staff, students, and community members).

4. Vote my conscience after informed discussion, unless I abstain because a conflict of interest exists.

5. Support the decision of the school board, even if my position concerning the issue was different.

6. Recognize the integrity of my predecessors and associates and appreciate their work.

7. Be primarily motivated by a desire to provide the best possible education for the students of my school district.

8. Inform myself about the proper duties and functions of a school board member.

B. IN PERFORMING THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, I WILL:

1. Focus on education policy as much as possible.

2. Remember my responsibility is to set policy – not to implement policy.

3. Consider myself a trustee of public education and do my best to protect, conserve, and advance its progress.

4. Recognize that my responsibility, exercised through the actions of the school board as a whole, is to see that the schools are properly run – not to run them myself.

5. Work through the superintendent – not over or around the superintendent.

6. Delegate the implementation of school board decisions to the superintendent.

C. TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, I WILL:

1. Respect the rights of others to have and express opinions.

2. Recognize that authority rests with the school board in legal session – not with the individual members of the school board except as authorized by law.

3. Make no disparaging remarks, in or out of school board meetings, about other members of the school board or their opinions.

4. Keep an open mind about how I will vote on any proposition until the board has met and fully discussed the issue.

5. Make decisions by voting in school board meetings after all sides of debatable questions have been presented.

6. Insist that committees be appointed to serve only in an advisory capacity to the school board.

D. IN MEETING MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO MY COMMUNITY, I WILL:

1. Attempt to appraise and plan for both the present and future educational needs of the school district and community.

2. Attempt to obtain adequate financial support for the school district's programs.

3. Insist that business transactions of the school district be ethical and open.

4. Strive to uphold my responsibilities and accountability to the taxpayers in my school district.

E. IN WORKING WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND STAFF, I WILL:

1. Hold the superintendent responsible for the administration of the school district.

2. Give the superintendent authority commensurate with his or her responsibilities.

3. Assure that the school district will be administered by the best professional personnel available.

4. Consider the recommendation of the superintendent in hiring all employees.

5. Participate in school board action after considering the recommendation of the superintendent and only after the superintendent has furnished adequate information supporting the recommendation.

6. Insist the superintendent keep the school board adequately informed at all times.

7. Offer the superintendent counsel and advice.

8. Recognize the status of the superintendent as the chief executive officer and a non-voting, ex officio member of the school board.

9. Refer all complaints to the proper administrative officer or insist that they be presented in writing to the whole school board for proper referral according to the chain of command.

10. Present any personal criticisms of employees to the superintendent.

11. Provide support for the superintendent and employees of the school district so they may perform their proper functions on a professional level.

F. IN FULFILLING MY LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AS A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, I WILL:

1. Comply with all federal, state, and local laws relating to my work as a school board member.

2. Comply with all school district policies as adopted by the school board.

3. Abide by all rules and regulations as promulgated by the Minnesota Department of Education and other state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over school districts.

4. Recognize that school district business may be legally transacted only in an open meeting of the school board.

5. Avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from using my school board position for personal gain.

6. Take no private action that will compromise the school board or administration.

7. Guard the confidentiality of information that is protected under applicable law.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.02, Subd. 1 (General Powers of Independent School Districts)
Minn. Stat. § 123B.09 (Boards of Independent School Districts)
Minn. Stat. § 123B.143, Subd. 1 (Superintendent)

Cross References: None