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MSBA/MASA Model Policy 209

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## **209 CODE OF ETHICS**

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

### **I. PURPOSE**

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

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

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

#### **A. AS A MEMBER OF THE EDUCATION DISTRICT BOARD, I WILL:**

1. Attend education district 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 education district 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 education district 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 education district.
8. Inform myself about the proper duties and functions of an education district board member.

B. IN PERFORMING THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT 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 education district board as a whole, is to see that the education district programs are properly run – not to run them myself.
5. Work through the executive director – not over or around the executive director.
6. Delegate the implementation of education district board decisions to the executive director.

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

1. Respect the rights of others to have and express opinions.
2. Recognize that authority rests with the education district board in legal session – not with the individual members of the education district board except as authorized by law.
3. Make no disparaging remarks, in or out of education district board meetings, about other members of the education district 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 education district 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 education district 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 education district and community.
2. Attempt to obtain adequate financial support for the education district district's programs.
3. Insist that business transactions of the education district be ethical and open.
4. Strive to uphold my responsibilities and accountability to the taxpayers in my education district.

E. IN WORKING WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION DISTRICTS AND STAFF, I WILL:

1. Hold the executive director responsible for the administration of the education district.
2. Give the executive director authority commensurate with his or her responsibilities.
3. Assure that the education district will be administered by the best professional personnel available.
4. Consider the recommendation of the executive director in hiring all employees.
5. Participate in education district board action after considering the recommendation of the executive director and only after the executive director has furnished adequate information supporting the recommendation.
6. Insist the executive director keep the education district board adequately informed at all times.
7. Offer the executive director counsel and advice.
8. Recognize the status of the executive director as the chief executive officer and a non-voting, ex officio member of the education district board.

9. Refer all complaints to the proper administrative officer or insist that they be presented in writing to the whole education district board for proper referral according to the chain of command.
10. Present any personal criticisms of employees to the executive director.
11. Provide support for the executive director and employees of the education district so they may perform their proper functions on a professional level.

F. IN FULFILLING MY LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AS AN EDUCATION DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER, I WILL:

1. Comply with all federal, state, and local laws relating to my work as an education district board member.
2. Comply with all education district policies as adopted by the education district 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 education districts.
4. Recognize that education district business may be legally transacted only in an open meeting of the education district board.
5. Avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from using my education district board position for personal gain.
6. Take no private action that will compromise the education district board or administration.
7. Guard the confidentiality of information that is protected under applicable law.

***Legal References:*** Minn. Stat. § 123B.02, Subd. 1 (School District Powers)  
Minn. Stat. § 123B.09 (School Board Powers)  
Minn. Stat. § 123B.143, Subd. 1 (Superintendent)

***Cross References:*** MSBA Service Manual, Chapter 1, School Board Member Code of Ethics