

1st READING: 2/14/05, 9/27/2010

2nd READING: 4/11/05, 10/11/2010

Code of Ethics and Responsibilities for School Board Members

The Barre City School Board has substantial legal responsibilities and obligations to the voters. Although individual school board commissioners can be held legally responsible for neglect of duty they have 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 commissioner in a manner consistent with the following Code of Ethics and Responsibilities.

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. However, nothing herein shall be construed to abridge a commissioner's first amendment rights and prerogative to defend or explain his or her votes to their respective constituents.
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 Constitution and Education laws as they relate to public officials and school boards and the legal responsibility to constituents.
7. Listen to legal counsel and constructive criticism to protect the board and the school system from liability but in all situations act in an ethical manner.

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 to be responsive to your inquiries and hold the superintendent accountable through periodic job performance evaluation.
10. Refer complaints, requests, and concerns to the superintendent or other appropriate administrative staff member and expect a follow-up response.

11. Consider the recommendations of the superintendent and staff, when appropriate, before making decisions and provide advice and counsel to the superintendent.

12. Board members have legal responsibilities regarding overseeing the management of the school with substantial legal consequences for the neglect of this duty. However the board's job is to see that the school is run well, while being vigilant not to subrogate their legal responsibilities to the administration.

Board Member Relations

13. Retain independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals, special interest groups, other board members, or the administration. Support open, frank discussion of issues encouraging all members to voice their opinion. Listen to and consider opposing points of view. Create an environment where new ideas are encouraged rather than suppressed.

14. Voice opinions responsibly in a professional, fair manner. Maintain good relations with other board members, respect other board member's rights and opinions.

15. Accept the responsibility to secure facts before arriving at conclusions. Insist that a balanced presentation be provided on all issues before any board action is taken.

Personnel Relations

16. Support employment of the most qualified people as school staff and administration. Insist on regular, impartial evaluations of all staff.

17. Hire only teachers and principals that are free from contracts to another district.

Community Relations

18. Represent the entire community and vote for what seems best for the children and youth of the school system, while being cognizant of the board's fiscal responsibility.

19. Convey the attitudes, wishes and needs of the community to school staff and communicate the aims, methods and goals of the schools to the community.

20. Create an environment that fosters community participation and involvement. Provide timely and adequate responses to constituent inquires.

Conflict of Interest

21. Refrain from using membership for political, personal, or business advancement.

22. Recognize conflicts of interest and avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest in hiring, getting bids, approving and negotiating contracts and other financial affairs of the school system.

Board Preparation and Training

23. Be informed about educational issues and school financial management matters, by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information.

24.. Provide assistance to and/or mentor new school board members.

25. Ensure board approved orientations for new members are conducted and additional training opportunities are offered, including but not limited to financial issues and legal responsibilities.

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