

Toronto District School Board

Policy P075

Title: **CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR TRUSTEES**

Adopted: September 21, 2005

Revised: November 26, 2008, September 23, 2009, **June 18, 2014**

Reviewed: November 2012, June 2013, May 24, 2014

1.0 OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 To outline the self-imposed standards of behaviour for the Board's trustees
- 1.2 A Trustee position is an elected position which carries with it the understanding that the electorate will decide at election time its support for the effectiveness of a Trustee. At the same time, it is important to recognize the public trust and responsibility the collective body carries and that this trust and responsibility is honoured through determining and enforcing norms of acceptable behaviour.
- 1.3 A code of conduct policy contributes to confidence in public education and respect for the integrity of Trustees in the community. It deals with acceptable and respectful behaviours.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Trustees

3.0 POLICY

3.1. Background

Trustees of the Toronto District School Board ("TDSB"):

- (a) Uphold all the tenets of the Trustee's oath of office;
- (b) Recognize that they represent the members of their communities, and are responsible to the electorate through the democratic process;
- (c) Recognize that through the electoral process, their community members have entrusted them with the student achievement and well-being of students;
- (d) Understand that their first and greatest concern is the best interest of all students of the TDSB;
- (e) Recognize that Trustees are community leaders and that the future welfare of the community, of the Province, and of Canada depends in the largest measure upon the quality of education provided in public schools;

- (f) Are in compliance with all legislation relevant to the carrying out of their official duties.

3.2. Commitments

When engaging in all forms of communication, Trustees of the TDSB are committed to:

- (a) Serving the TDSB to the best of their ability to meet student achievement and well-being, and to promote public confidence in the abilities and integrity of the Board of Trustees and TDSB;
- (b) Accepting that authority rests with the Board of Trustees and that no individual Trustee has the authority to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees unless such authority is delegated by the Board;
- (c) Accepting the public trust for the expenditure of TDSB funds and endeavouring to ensure that the funds are expended efficiently and in the best interests of students;
- (d) Acting with integrity, and doing everything possible to maintain the dignity of the Board of Trustees and office of a school board member;
- (e) Carrying out their duties objectively and considering all information and opinions presented to the Board of Trustees when making decisions;
- (f) Working with other Board members and staff of the TDSB in a spirit of respect, openness, courtesy, co-operation and respecting and abiding by the TDSB Bylaws in spite of differences of opinion that might arise during debate;
- (g) Abiding by the Board of Trustees' and TDSB's procedures, policies, By-Laws and the implementation of any Board resolution while adhering to sections 218.1 and 218.2 under the *Education Act*;
- (h) Expressing any differing opinion in a respectful and honest manner without making disparaging remarks or references about other board members, staff and community members or their opinions;
- (i) Accepting the right of every board member to formulate and express their personal opinion as long as it is done in a respectful manner and in a way that conforms to the Board's meeting rules; Trustees shall ensure that their comments are issue-based and not personal, demeaning or disparaging with regard to TDSB staff, fellow Board members or members of the community;
- (j) Communicating and conducting relationships with staff, the community, other school boards members and the media in a manner that is respectful, truthful and factual;
- (k) Conducting themselves in a professional and respectful manner and promoting public confidence and enhancing education and refraining from behaviour that could be detrimental to the TDSB or public education;

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- (l) Respecting the role of staff in managing and operationalizing the policies and directions that have been established and evaluated by the Board;
- (m) Respecting and understanding the roles and duties of the individual Trustee, Board of Trustees, the Director of Education and the Chair of the Board;
- (n) Permitting staff the opportunity to give their best professional advice on a matter before the Board makes a decision;
- (o) The Chair of the Board or presiding officer of any meeting of the Board or committee of the Board shall exercise their powers in a fair and impartial manner having due regard for every Trustee's opinion or views;
- (p) The Chair of the Board or presiding officer shall follow the special rules of order of the Board and/or the adopted Rules of Order and meeting procedures contained in the By-Laws of the Board. A breach of a rule of order should be dealt with at the meeting in question by a Trustee rising to a point of order or appealing a ruling of the Chair in accordance with any applicable rule of order. Once such a motion is dealt with by the Board of Trustees, all Trustees shall abide by that decision and no further action shall be undertaken pursuant to the *Enforcement of the Code of Conduct*, except for persistent improper use of the applicable rules of order by the Chair or Presiding Officer;
- (q) Discharging his or her duties in accordance with the Education Act, Regulations thereunder, directives or guidelines of the Ministry of Education and comply with all other relevant legislation;
- (r) Upholding the letter and spirit of this Code of Conduct and Ethics and to review it and sign each year an acknowledgement and undertaking that he or she has read, understands and agrees to abide by it;
- (s) Not advancing allegations of misconduct and/or a breach of this Code of Conduct and Ethics that are trivial, frivolous, vexatious, made in bad faith or vindictive in nature against another Trustee of the Board;
- (t) Recognizing that the Chair of the Board is the spokesperson to the public on behalf of the Board, unless otherwise determined by the Board of Trustees. No other Trustee shall speak on behalf of the Board unless expressly authorized by the Chair of the Board or Board of Trustees to do so. When individual Trustees express their opinions in public, they must make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the Board;
- (u) Not using his or her office to advance the Trustee's interests or the interests of any family member or person or organization with whom or with which the Trustee is related or associated; and
- (v) No Trustee shall use his or her office to obtain employment with the Board for the Trustee, a family member or anyone else.

3.3. Confidentiality

- (a) If a Trustee is participating in a conversation with anyone and becomes aware the other person has such information that could only have been obtained as a

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result of a breach of confidentiality, the Trustee shall immediately end the conversation regarding the confidential matter;

- (b) Trustees shall inform the Chair of the Board and the Director immediately on becoming aware that a possible breach of confidentiality has taken place;
- (c) Keeping confidential information that is obtained in their capacity as a board member private and not discussing those matters outside of the meetings of the board or standing committees, unless otherwise required by law or authorized by the Board to do so. This duty of confidentiality includes keeping confidential the substance of deliberations of meetings closed to the public even after the final decision on a matter is public; and
- (d) No Trustee shall use confidential information for either personal gain or to the detriment of the TDSB.

4.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Operational Procedure PR611, Enforcement of the Trustee Code of Conduct
TDSB Bylaws
Education Act: Section 218.1 & 218.2