

School District #62 (Sooke)

Trustee Code of Conduct	No.: A-105
	Effective: Jan. 26/21 Revised: Oct. 24/23 Reviewed: Sept. 26/23; Oct. 24/23

SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

This policy applies to all individual Trustees of School District #62 (the "District") that make up the District's Board of Education.

Trustees will exhibit the highest standards of conduct and act in an honest and ethical manner and in the best interests of the District. Their conduct must instil confidence and trust and not bring the District into disrepute. The honesty and integrity of the District demands the impartiality of Trustees in the conduct of their duties. Trustees will, at all times, exhibit the values of the District:

- Inclusion, respect, and diversity;
- Honesty and ethical behaviour;
- Trust;
- Integrity;
- Respect for privacy, confidentiality and the rule of law; and
- Fair dealing with all people in all situations.

This Code of Conduct and all other standards, policies and procedures of the District, including the Duties of Trustees as outlined in By-law 1-20, will guide the actions of Trustees.

The Code of Conduct is designed to:

- clarify the roles, responsibilities and conduct of trustees;
- ensure values that guide ethical behaviour and norms for trustee relationship are understood; and
- encourage respect for divergent views so that the Board can focus on student achievement, equity and well-being.

Each newly elected Board shall review this policy as part of an orientation process within 6 months of the start of their term.

Statutory Reference:

British Columbia *School Act*: Part 4

Policy Reference:

By-Law #1-20: Board Governance
A-355: Complaints Regarding Individual Trustees
B-118: Social Media

1. Delegated Responsibilities

The Board is the representative assembly that governs the provision of public-school education within the District on behalf of the people of British Columbia, represented by the Government of British Columbia, and the electors of the District.

The Board will carry out its duties in accordance with the provisions of the *School Act* and Oath of Office, as well as all other relevant legislation and regulations, and policies of the Board.

Trustees will work collaboratively and creatively with administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders.

Trustees will model and contribute to a positive and receptive learning and working culture both within the Board and the District.

In exercising their duties of governance, Trustees understand the importance of mutual respect, transparency, and impartiality. Committed to ethical practice and principles, Trustees shall act with integrity and be accountable for their actions and decisions.

To fulfill the responsibilities of public office effectively, Trustees are expected to attend all scheduled meetings of the Board; in the event of an unavoidable absence, Trustees shall inform the Board Chair ahead of the meeting.

Trustees will ensure that the decisions they are making are confined to the governance of the school district and reflect the educational welfare of children/students and strive for public schools that will meet the needs of all students.

2. Scope of Delegated Responsibility

Trustees will recognize that, although they are elected from a particular area of the District, their responsibility is to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the District as a whole.

Trustees shall respect the authority vested in the role of Superintendent of Schools and of the executive staff of the school district and shall give the responsibility to manage and operationalize policies and directions, which have been established and evaluated by the Board, to these executive officers.

3. Conflict of Interest

Trustees will comply with all applicable laws regarding conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest exists when:

- A trustee uses their position to advance the personal interests of the trustee, the trustee's families or the trustee's friends; or
- A trustee accepts, directly or indirectly, any compensation, gratuity, gift, reward or benefit from an organization or individual that has dealing with the Board if a reasonable person would perceive this as influencing the trustee's exercise of their duties.

When a trustee becomes aware that they have a conflict of interest with respect to the matter coming before the Board, the trustee must:

- Disclose that they have an interest in the matter,
- State the general nature of the trustee's interest,
- Not take part in any discussion of the matter,
- Abstain from voting on any question in respect of the matter,

- Not attempt in any way to influence the voting on any question in respect of the matter before, during or after the meeting,
- Leave the meeting until the matter has been dealt with if the meeting is closed to the public.

4. Confidentiality

Confidential information, in any form, that Trustees receive during their elected term must not be disclosed, released, or transmitted to anyone other than persons who are authorized to receive the information.

Trustees with care or control of personal or sensitive information, electronic media, or devices, must handle and dispose of them appropriately.

Trustees who are in doubt as to whether certain information is confidential must ask the Superintendent or Chief Information Officer before disclosing, releasing, or transmitting it.

The proper handling and protection of confidential information is applicable both within and outside of the District and continues to apply after the term of the Trustee ends.

Confidential information that Trustees receive through their elected position must not be used by a Trustee for the purpose of furthering any private interest, or as a means of making personal gains.

5. Working Relationships

Trustees shall work with fellow Board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation and be respectful of differences of opinion.

Trustees shall refrain from making discrediting comments about others, engaging in unwarranted criticism, or taking private action that could compromise the integrity or authority of the Board.

Trustees shall observe proper decorum and encourage full, open, and courteous discussions in all matters with other trustees.

Trustees will speak directly with one another to seek clarity and to ensure open, honest and transparent communication. Information that may be of potential concern should not be concealed or withheld.

Trustees will demonstrate responsible digital citizenship, including minimizing the risks associated with the use of electronic communications and social media (reference Policy B-118 "Social Media").

6. Community Relationships

As governors of the district and elected officials, Trustees welcome constructive engagement and participation from the broad school community in establishing and interpreting policy on school operations, goals, and directions.

Trustees will endeavor to share and incorporate the opinions and views of others in the deliberations and decisions of the Board. Timely reporting out of information will be provided to those who are impacted by Board decisions.

Trustees will recognize their duty to represent and advocate for the best interests of learners in the community by upholding the BC Human Rights Code, speaking out against racism, and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples including First Nations on whose traditional territories our schools operate.

7. Legal Authority of Individual Trustees

Trustees recognize that as a Corporate Board, the authority to make decisions must only be made within an official meeting of the Board. Individual trustees or committees of trustees may not exercise the rights, duties, and powers of the Board.

The Chair is the official spokesperson for the Board; other trustees shall not speak on behalf of the Board unless authorized to act in such a capacity.

In addition to being elected representatives who hold the public trust, Trustees are participants in a democratic society. Trustees are free to engage in, support, or comment on community issues, but must not use their formal district titles in their communications.

8. Support for Board Decisions

Trustees shall present their views through the process of Board debate.

Regardless of holding a minority position in debate or casting an opposing vote, Trustees shall publicly accept and uphold the majority decisions of the Board and any proposed action or implementation that will ensure decisions have the intended outcome.

Trustees also recognize and uphold the integrity and merits of their predecessors' work and achievements.

9. Public Accountability:

Misconduct and breaches of the Code of Conduct may affect the Board's ability to offer an educational program and the ability to support safe and inclusive schools and workplaces.

The Board, in dealing with misconduct or breaches of the Code of Conduct, will work to resolve issues early and with measures that are commensurate with the underlying factual context.

If proactive measures do not result in changed behaviour, disciplinary measures for breaches may be imposed and may include, but are not limited to:

- Writing a letter of apology;
- Participating in a restorative justice process;
- Participating in specific training, coaching, or counselling as directed by the Board;
- Being subject to a motion of censure passed by a majority of the voting trustees at a closed (i.e. in-camera) board meeting; or
- Being removed from one, some, or all board committees or other appointments by a majority of voting trustees at an in-camera board meeting.
 - *It is important to note that, except as expressly permitted by the School Act, a board's authority does not extend so far as to effectively remove a trustee from their elected office.*
 - *The imposition of a disciplinary measure barring a trustee from attending all, or part of, a board meeting shall be deemed to be authorization for the trustee to be absent from the meeting, and therefore not in violation of the School Act regarding absences from meetings.*