

**Board Policy BH: Board Code of Ethics**

Status: ADOPTED

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**Board Code of Ethics**

The Bartow Board of Education desires to operate in the most ethical and conscientious manner possible and to that end the Board adopts this Code of Ethics and each member of the Board agrees that he or she will:

**Domain I: Governance Structure**

1. Recognize that the authority of the Board rests only with the Board as a whole and not with individual Board members and act accordingly;
2. Support the delegation of authority for the day-to-day administration of the school system to the local Superintendent and act accordingly;
3. Honor the chain of command and refer problems or complaints consistent with the chain of command;
4. Recognize that the local Superintendent should serve as secretary, ex-officio to the Board and should be present at all meetings of the Board except when his or her contract, salary or performance is under consideration;
5. Not undermine the authority of the local Superintendent or intrude into responsibilities that properly belong to the local Superintendent or school administration, including such functions as hiring, transferring or dismissing employees;
6. Use reasonable efforts to keep the local Superintendent informed of concerns or specific recommendations that any member of the Board may bring to the board.

**Domain II: Strategic Planning**

1. Reflect through actions that his or her first and foremost concern is for the educational welfare of children attending schools within the school system;
2. Participate in all planning activities to develop the vision and goals of the Board and the school system;
3. Work with the Board and the local Superintendent to ensure prudent and accountable uses of the resources of the school system;
4. Render all decisions based on available facts and his or her independent judgment and refuse to surrender his or her judgment to individuals or

special interest groups;

5. Uphold and enforce all applicable laws, all rules and regulations of the State Board of Education and the Board and all court orders pertaining to the school system.

### **Domain III: Board and Community Relations**

1. Seek regular and systemic communications among the Board and students, staff and the community;
2. Communicate to the board and the local Superintendent expressions of public reaction to Board policies and school programs.

### **Domain IV: Policy Development**

1. Work with other Board members to establish effective policies for the school system;
2. Make decisions on policy matters only after full discussion at publicly held Board meetings;
3. Periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of policies on school system programs and performance.

### **Domain V: Board Meetings**

1. Attend and participate in regularly scheduled and called Board meetings;
2. Be informed and prepared to discuss issues to be considered on the Board agenda;
3. Work with other board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during the discussion and resolution of issues at Board meetings;
4. Vote for a closed executive session of the board only when applicable law or board policy requires consideration of a matter in executive session;
5. Maintain the confidentiality of all discussions and other matters pertaining to the board and the school system during executive session of the Board;
6. Make decisions in accordance with the interests of the school system as a whole and not any particular segment thereof;
7. A local Board of Education shall not adopt or follow any code of ethics which prevents the members of such board from discussing freely the policies and actions of such board outside of a Board meeting. This shall not apply to any matter or matters discussed in executive session or which are exempt from disclosure under Code Section 50- 18-72;
8. Abide by all decisions of the Board.

## **Domain VI: Personnel**

1. Consider the employment of personnel only after receiving and considering the recommendation of the local Superintendent;
2. Support the employment of persons best qualified to serve as employees of the school system and insist on regular and impartial evaluations of school system staff;
3. Comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and all board policies regarding employment of family members.

## **Domain VII: Financial Governance**

1. Refrain from using the position of board member for personal or partisan gain or to benefit any person or entity over the interest of the school system.

## **Conduct as Board Member**

1. Devote sufficient time, thought and study to the performance of the duties and responsibilities of a member of the Board;
2. Become informed about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed education and training;
3. Communicate in a respectful professional manner with and about fellow board members;
4. Take no private action that will compromise the Board or school system administration;
5. Participate in all required training programs developed for Board members by the board or the State Board of Education;
6. File annually with the local superintendent and with the State Board of Education a written statement certifying that he or she is in compliance with this Code of Ethics.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

1. Announce potential conflicts of interest before board action is taken;
2. Comply with the conflicts of interest policy of the Board, all applicable laws and Appendix B of the Standards document.

Upon a motion supported by a two-thirds (2/3) vote {3/5<sup>th</sup> vote due to a five-member Bartow County Board of Education}, the Board may choose to conduct a hearing concerning a possible violation of this Code of Ethics by a member of the Board.

The Board member accused of violating this Code of Ethics will have thirty (30) days notice prior to a hearing on the matter. The accused Board member may bring witnesses on his or her behalf to the hearing, and the Board may elect to call witnesses to inquire into the matter.

If found by a vote of two-thirds of all the members of the Board that the accused Board member has violated this Code of Ethics, the Board shall determine an appropriate sanction.

A Board member subject to sanction may, within thirty (30) days of such sanction vote, appeal such decision to the State Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education.

A record of the decision of the board to sanction a Board member for a violation of this Code of Ethics shall be placed in the permanent minutes of the Board.

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# Bartow County School System

## Board Norms and Protocols

We believe our governance team should place our highest priority on student achievement and student-focused decision-making. By establishing operating procedures for our governance team, we create a shared trust, consistency, and commitment to collaborative excellence in everything we do. In turn, this leads us to a higher level of professionalism, enhances our approachability and responsiveness to our community stakeholders, provides clear guidelines for fairness and follow through when asked to respond to community issues, and demonstrates our unified commitment to ethical standards of behavior and practice. While we may have individual passion, knowledge about educational issues, and wisdom, no single individual holds all the answers to today's challenging and complex educational environment. Operating procedures provide a clear framework and space for individual experiences and perspectives that enhance the collective commitment to our students, staff, families, and community.

*The governance team agrees to:*

Operate in a manner that reflects-

- Student-focused decision making
- Focus on student achievement
- Approachability
- Knowledge about educational issues
- Trustworthiness
- Consistency
- Responsiveness
- Commitment
- Excellence in everything we do
- Fairness
- Follow through
- Passion
- Wisdom
- Investment
- Ethical behavior
- Professionalism

### **A. Governance Roles and Responsibilities**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Always put students first when making decisions and keep student achievement as the main focus of board actions
- Educate students – ethically and with fiscal responsibility

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- Follow the Code of Ethics and disclose any conflicts of interest
- Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust
- Act as a policymaking body separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent
- Not micromanage the superintendent in the day-to-day operations of the district
- Follow the chain of command and instruct and encourage others to do so when necessary
- Support the team, be open-minded and willing to listen
- Commit to being accountable

#### **B. Chief Executive Officer**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Be transparent and respectful
- Always follow the chain of command and not micromanage the superintendent
- Designate the superintendent as chief executive officer fully delegating authority to provide educational leadership, manage daily operations and perform all duties assigned by law
- Operate as a governance team with the superintendent as a key member
- Never surprise the superintendent in a board meeting
- Respect the superintendent's professional recommendations and decisions, even when there's disagreement, and never undermine the superintendent's authority
- Take recommendations from the superintendent seriously, and carefully research and review before taking action
- Open and honest communications
- Hold the superintendent accountable for operations and student performance
- Establish the superintendent's annual performance goals jointly with the superintendent in alignment with the strategic plan and provide feedback to the superintendent at least bi-annually via formative and summative evaluation procedures
- Be fair and timely with the superintendent's evaluation
- Be supportive of board decisions, even when there's disagreement

#### **C. Chain of Command**

*The governance team agrees that:*

- It will support and follow the chain of command and insist that staff do the same
- The superintendent is responsible and accountable for the day-to-day operations with equity and consistency
- Issues and concerns received by the Board or individual members will be referred to the superintendent
- The board will educate the public about the chain of command and instruct them to follow it when approached with requests about day-to-day and operational issues.

#### **D. Decision Making Process**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Be open-minded and respectful of all opinions
- Provide a safe space for communications for all stakeholders
- Seek input and listen to all sides before making decisions
- Put students first when making decisions
- Study the issues and discuss with stakeholders, superintendent and fellow board members
- Be prepared and knowledgeable about educational issues and topics
- Support decisions made by the Board and/or administrative team once a decision is made
- Support the majority decision

#### **E. Communication**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Be open-minded, respectful and professional with all stakeholders
- Ongoing, transparent communication with community stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality regarding sensitive matters, including items discussed in executive sessions, and refraining from discussing the intentions of fellow board members
- Incorporate good, timely, open and constant communication

#### **F. Communication Among Board Members/Superintendent**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Respectful and timely communications
- Be mindful of the superintendent's time and try to send non-urgent emails during business hours
- A 24-hour response time from the superintendent
- Not inundate the superintendent with daily phone calls, but definitely call if there's an emergency
- During times of crisis when the school system is making decisions about how to respond to a crisis or to prepare for a potential closing, individual board members will direct concerns or questions to the board chair. The board chair and superintendent will maintain daily contact. The concerns from board members will be relayed by the board chair to the superintendent and information will be gathered. The board chair will then share updates with the entire board.
- Expect the superintendent to communicate with all board members regularly using selected modes
- Direct all stakeholders' questions, input or discussion to the superintendent who will communicate them as needed to the board

- When a board member has information or data to share with other board members and/or staff, board member will provide the information/data to the superintendent who will distribute to pertinent parties
- When all five board members receive emails from constituents, the board chair will reply all, and include the superintendent on the thread. If the superintendent and board are all copied on a constituent's email, then the superintendent will reply all in his/her response.
- When an individual board member receives an email from a constituent, the board member will reply to their constituent, thanking them for emailing. The board member will note in the reply email that the board protocol is for the email to be shared with the entire governance team and that the Chair will reply on behalf of the Board. The board member will then forward the email to all of the additional board members and the superintendent. The board chair will then respond on behalf of the board and include the board and superintendent on the response.
- Requests for information from individual board members to the superintendent that will likely require considerable time and effort must be approved by a majority of the board

#### **G. Communication with Staff**

*The governance team agrees that:*

- The superintendent is the only employee that reports directly to the Board of Education
- They will go through the superintendent when wanting to communicate with staff
- They will be cohesive as a team and show support for staff
- If there are concerns regarding a staff member or a school issue, the board member will speak privately with the superintendent about the issue, unless the superintendent directs them to share the concern otherwise (i.e. with another staff member)
- They will always be respectful and courteous to staff
- There will be no surprises during staff presentations at board meetings
- When board members are notified of inquiries and/or concerns from stakeholders, they should refer the issue to the superintendent or his designee

#### **H. Social Media Communications**

*The governance team agrees to:*

- Use social media as a tool to promote positive and important news about the school district
- Not engage with the public on controversial topics on social media
- Not respond to negative comments on social media
- Be positive and mindful of how their actions on social media reflect on the whole Board
- Be mindful on posting about politics
- Stay away from responding during a crisis and rely on the district social media sites to relay critical information
- Send any social media information that may further an awareness of community concerns or controversy to the superintendent and board chair