



## Turtle River School Division

### Board Policy #8 Code of Conduct

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The Board has established a code of conduct for trustees in accordance with the provisions of *The Public Schools Act* (PSA) sections 35.1(1) and 35.1(2).

This code of conduct is an agreement between the organization and individual board members that identifies the standards of behaviour and accountability expected of trustees.

#### Trustee Responsibilities

The Board expects individual trustees to adhere to the highest ethical standards in their dealings with the collective Board, divisional staff, school communities and the public.

Trustees are responsible to familiarize themselves with the provisions of Section 35 of the PSA, its regulations and any guidelines approved by the Board, and are responsible to fulfill any requirements identified therein.

#### It is the responsibility of each trustee to:

##### Act with Integrity and Dignity of Office

- Remember that a trustee has a responsibility to the students, parents and guardians in the school system, employees and the communities that they serve.
- Discharge their duties loyally, faithfully, impartially and in a manner that inspires public confidence in the abilities and integrity of the Board.
- Commit themselves to dignified, ethical, professional and lawful conduct.
- Recognize that the expenditure of school board funds is a public trust and endeavour to see that the funds are expended effectively and efficiently, in the best interests of the students.

##### Comply with Regulatory and Division Requirements

- Abide by the provisions of all federal, provincial and local legislation including, but not limited to, that identified in the Introduction to the Board Policy Manual as well as to all Board Policies, Operating Procedures and Bylaws.

##### Authority

- Recognize that the School Board's authority rests with the corporate body, not with individual trustees.
- Accept the Chair as the spokesperson to the public on behalf of the Board, unless otherwise determined by the Board.

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- Accept that no other trustee speaks on behalf of the Board unless expressly authorized to do so by the Board Chair.

### **Uphold Decisions**

- Uphold the implementation of any Board resolution after it is passed by the Board.
- Be prepared to explain the rationale for a resolution passed by the Board even if you did not support the motion at the time.
- Recognize that a proper motion for reversal of a resolution may be introduced by a trustee.

### **Respect Confidentiality**

- Understand that trustees may be privy to confidential information about individuals including students or staff, or financial or other sensitive matters, and must keep any such information confidential unless authorized by law or by the Board.

### **Actively Participate and Make Informed Decisions**

- Prioritize and accept responsibility to attend all regular and special meetings of the Board and those committees on which they serve, and if unable to do so, advise the Secretary-Treasurer by email or phone of their pending absence at least two hours prior to the start of the meeting.
- Recognize that unexcused absences from regular and special meetings may result in removal from office, as stipulated in the PSA, or in the loss of a portion of the trustee's annual indemnity, as stipulated by the Board.

### **Full Participation Requirements**

- Adhere to expectations for conduct, attire, and engagement in virtual board meetings the same as in-person meetings. Utilize participation strategies including leaving the camera on throughout the meeting (if bandwidth permits) and actively participating in discussion. In a virtual meeting, the board member must ensure that the environment they are joining from is suitable for confidentiality and upholds the decorum of the board.
- Review meeting agendas and other relevant information prior to board and committee meetings and arrive at such meetings informed and prepared to contribute to an open and honest discussion of matters before the Board or committee.
- Safeguard the confidentiality of all documents and email activities that are recorded automatically by the Division's domain, including the opening and editing of documents.

- Listen respectfully and with an open mind to the full range of opinions on each matter before the Board, and make decisions based on the merits of these varying opinions.
- Make decisions based on the available facts and independent judgment, refusing to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Keep informed about current education issues by individual study and through participation in continuing education programs.

### **Behave Respectfully**

- Engage in conduct during meetings of the Board or committees of the Board, and at all other times in a manner that demonstrates the integrity of the Board.
- Treat Board colleagues, divisional and school staff, students and community members in a respectful and courteous manner, and refrain from using abusive or denigrating language in any dealings with them.
- Refrain from expressing opinions and/or sharing information through social media that would discredit, undermine or compromise the integrity of the Board.
- Refrain from initiating or participating in discussions of board business with other trustees (whether in person or via electronic means) when such discussions should rightly take place at an official school board meeting.
- The Board may, by resolution, engage in confidential discussions in camera.

### **Relationship Bias**

The Board supports the rights of trustees to be involved in community projects and activities as citizens of the community. This is balanced with the recognition that trustees also participate in Board decisions affecting students, employees and the public.

- Despite an affiliation with outside interests, employment or activities that may intersect with or influence both the school division and that organization or agency, while working on school board business, trustees will work in the best interest of the division and set aside opposing interests of the other organizations or agencies of which they are a part.
- A trustee involved in community organizations does not represent the Board in any official capacity unless requested by the Board to do so.
- Trustees shall not discuss confidential Board or division business outside of Board meetings. This includes with family members, dependents and close associates who work for or attend classes in the school division.
- Avoid relationship bias, whether real, potential or perceived, as outlined in Policy #7 Conflict of Interest.

- Refrain from accepting a gift from any person or entity that has dealings with the Board if it could be perceived that the gift could influence the trustee when performing their duties to the Board.
- Respectfully acknowledge that exchanges of gifts and tokens are permitted in association with cultural ceremonies and customary traditions.

### **Use of Division Property**

- Division property, including vehicles, equipment and material, are used primarily for carrying out Division business.
- The Superintendent or Secretary-Treasurer may authorize the use of supplies or equipment if they feel that such use will assist trustees in their assigned work for the Division. It may be required that some staff and trustees regularly retain district-owned supplies or equipment in their possession.
- A written record of the authorization of the use of supplies or equipment is maintained indicating the time of release, the signature of the user, and the date on which the item is returned.
- Trustees are responsible for exercising all reasonable care to prevent abuse to, excessive wear of, or loss of district-owned equipment or material entrusted to their care.

While actively campaigning for election, the following activities are prohibited and are considered a conflict of interest under the provisions of Policy #7.

- Division-owned resources may not be used other than to carry out Division related business.
- Use of Division trademarks and logos are not permitted in campaign material.
- Use of trustee divisional email accounts are not permitted in campaign correspondence or advertising.

### **Involvement with External Organizations**

Trustees must be cognizant of the potential conflict that exists when serving as members of any organization (whether school or community based) that may from time to time make a request of the Board. This includes Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), Recreation Commissions, MB Rural Learning Consortia, sports leagues, clubs, or other organizations with potential connections with the Division.

If a trustee is a member, officiant, or otherwise involved with any other organization that may have like interests to those of the Division:

- when an organization includes among its membership a trustee, the trustee may not appear as part of the organization's delegation or take part in any formal presentation the organization may make to the Board;

- when an organization which includes among its membership a trustee, makes a request of the Board, the trustee who is a member is recused from any discussion or vote on the matter involving that organization and shall immediately leave the room; and
- the trustee may not remain in the meeting as an observer.

### **Review and Acknowledgement of the Code**

The Board shall review and discuss the Code annually at the inaugural meeting and immediately thereafter, each Trustee shall acknowledge in writing that they:

- recently read this policy; and
- agree to comply with it.

### **Breaches of the Code**

Prescribed procedures for dealing with perceived or actual breaches of the Code are found in Board Operating Procedures ([link](#))