



INTERNAL BOARD OPERATIONS: Ethics Code

Statement of Purpose and Policy

I. Policy Statement

- A. The Board of Education of Baltimore County (Board) and the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) are committed to promoting and practicing moral principles and values in both the delivery of instruction and the delivery of support services. Consistent with this conviction, and in accordance with the school system's "Precepts, Beliefs and Values" and the Maryland Public Ethics Law, this Ethics Code establishes guidelines of ethical and professional conduct. This Ethics Code (hereinafter, "Ethics Code") formally acknowledges the school system's commitment to its institutional responsibility to students, parents and the community. It advocates positive behavior and the avoidance of impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.
- B. The Board, recognizing that our system of representative government is dependent in part upon the people maintaining the highest trust in their public officials and employees, finds and declares that the people have a right to be assured that the impartiality and independent judgment of public officials and employees will be maintained.
- C. It is evident that this confidence and trust is eroded when the conduct of public business is subject to improper influence and even the appearance of improper influence.
- D. For the purpose of guarding against improper influence, the Board adopts this Ethics Code to require members of the school board, candidates to be members of the school board and designated school officials to disclose their financial affairs and to set minimum standards for their conduct of school system business.
- E. It is the intention of the Board that this policy be liberally construed to accomplish this purpose.

II. Standards

- A. This Ethics Code establishes recommended behavior for members of the school board, candidates to be members of the school board, the superintendent and employees. Each of these individuals shall be subject to this Ethics Code, which addresses the school system's commitment that all lead and teach by example and serve as role models for students.
- B. No Ethics Code can delineate the appropriate ethical behavior for every situation with which the school system's personnel will be confronted. It is important, therefore, that whenever a difficult situation arises which is not directly addressed by this Ethics Code, the individual seek counsel from colleagues, administrators and the Ethics Review Panel as established by this Ethics Code. However, many individuals will be called upon to make decisions in which time precludes consultations. In such cases, the individual must rely on his or her good judgment, recalling that the school system's ethical commitment is rooted in fairness, equity and integrity.
- C. One of the most important elements of this Ethics Code is promoting the worth and dignity of all individuals in compliance with the Board's non-discrimination policy. A second key element of this Ethics Code is open communication. Business-related transactions in which individuals engage must be correctly documented and reported. Every individual covered by this Ethics Code must behave as if public scrutiny of his or her actions would be welcome.

III. Sanctions

- A. A school official who violates the Ethics Code, is subject to discipline, personnel action or removal from office, as provided by law and consistent with Board policies and Superintendent's rules.
- B. Persons or organizations found in violation of the lobbying provisions of the Ethics Code shall be publicly identified and subject to other penalties as provided by law.

Legal References: *Annotated Code of Maryland*, General Provisions Article Title 5, Maryland Public Ethics Law
Annotated Code of Maryland, General Provisions Article §§5-815 to 5-821, *Local Boards of Education*
COMAR 19A.05, *Board of Education Ethics Regulations*

Related Policies: Board of Education Policy 0200, *Precepts, Beliefs and Values of the Baltimore County Public Schools*
Board of Education Policy 3127, *Travel Approval*
Board of Education Policy 3209, *Purchasing Principles*
Board of Education Policy 4002, *Obligations of Employees of the Board of Education of Baltimore County*
Board of Education Policy 4100, *Employee Conduct and Responsibilities*
Board of Education Policy 8410, *Fraud Reporting, Waste, Abuse or Unlawful Acts*

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