



ETHICS CODE: Gifts

I. Gifts to the Board of Education, Schools, and Offices within the School System

- A. As the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) continue the practice of school-based management, it becomes increasingly important to establish firm guidelines on the acceptance of gifts by schools and offices on behalf of the Board of Education.

The Board of Education of Baltimore County (Board) encourages the formation of partnerships between schools and businesses and recognizes that these relationships frequently include gifts to schools and offices to enhance the educational programs of students.

The Board, schools, and offices may accept any bequest or gift of money or property for a purpose deemed suitable. All gifts shall be accepted in the name of the Board. All gifts will become the property of the Board and may be designated by the Board for use in a particular school or office.

Any gifts presented to the Board, schools, and offices must be accompanied by a document of intent from the donor for official action and recognition.

- B. To be acceptable, a gift must meet the following criteria:

- (i) have a purpose consistent with those of the Board of Education, schools, or offices
- (ii) be offered by a donor acceptable to the Board of Education, schools, or offices
- (iii) be manageable by existing staff
- (iv) not begin a program with the assumption that the Board of Education will take over if the funds are exhausted
- (v) place no restrictions on the school program
- (vi) be appropriate to the best education of students

- (vii) not imply endorsement of any business or product
  - (viii) not carry an excessive cost of maintenance or installation
  - (ix) be consistent with the provisions of the school code or public law.
- C. When installation is required, the gift will be installed under the supervision of personnel of the Board. The Board is under no obligation to replace the gift if it is destroyed or becomes worn out.

A letter of appreciation will be sent to the donor.

## II. Gifts to Individuals

- A. Subject to the exclusions enumerated in this section, a gift may be accepted unless a gift would tend to impair the impartiality and independence of judgment of the Board member, employee, or volunteer receiving it or, if of significant value, the recipient knows, or has reason to know, that it was designed to do so.
- B. A Board member, employee, or volunteer may not solicit gifts, gratuities, or discounts for personal use or gain.
- C. No Board member, employee, or volunteer may knowingly accept gifts, gratuities, or discounts for personal use or gain, directly or indirectly, from any person or business entity that he or she knows or has reason to know:
- (i) is doing business or attempting to do business with the BCPS
  - (ii) is subject to the authority of the school system
  - (iii) has financial interests that may be substantially and materially affected, in a manner distinguishable from the public generally, by the performance or non-performance of his or her official duty
  - (iv) is involved in lobbying.
  - (v) is from a political organization or candidate.

- D. A Board member or employee may accept the following, unless exceeding a \$50 market value:
- (i) meals and beverages consumed in the presence of the donor
  - (ii) ceremonial gifts or awards
  - (iii) unsolicited gifts of nominal value or trivial items of informational value
  - (iv) reasonable expenses for food, travel, lodging, and scheduled entertainment of the Board member or employee for a meeting which is given in return for participating in a panel or speaking engagement at a meeting
  - (v) tickets or free admission extended to a Board member to attend a professional or intercollegiate sporting event or charitable, cultural, or political event, if the purpose of this gift or admission is a courtesy extended to the office
  - (vi) a specific gift or class of gifts which the Ethics Review Panel exempts upon a finding, in writing, that acceptance of the gift or class of gifts would not be detrimental to the impartial conduct of the business of the school system and that the gift is purely personal and private in nature.
- E. It is not the intent of the Code to prohibit students and employees from participating in and accepting awards exceeding a \$50 market value at events which are determined by the Ethics Review Panel to have an educational benefit. It is also not the intent of the code to prohibit the receipt of non-cash recognition for professional, educational, athletic, or scholastic achievements.
- F. It is not the intent of the Code to prohibit gifts from a person related by blood or marriage, or a spouse, child, ward, financially dependent parent, or other relative who share the Board member's, the Superintendent's or an employee's legal residence, or a child, ward, parent, or other relative over whose financial affairs the person has legal or actual control.

- G. A Board member may not accept complimentary tickets to attend events that the Board member may know or have reason to know are from or on behalf of political candidates or elected officials.

Legal References: *Annotated Code of Maryland*, State Government Article, §§15-101, 15-811 to 15-815

Policy

Board of Education of Baltimore County

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