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## Code of Ethical Relationships

*for Board of Education Members  
and Educational Administrators*

### *Cooperating Organizations:*

Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education

Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators

Michigan Association of Professors of Educational Administration

Michigan Association of School Administrators

Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals

Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association

Michigan School Business Officials

Michigan Association of School Boards

Formulated by the  
Joint Committee of the  
Michigan Association of  
School Boards and the  
Michigan Congress of  
School Administrator Associations

Developed — 1976  
Revised — 1982  
Revised — 1994  
Revised — 1999  
Revised — 2001

## **PURPOSE**

The intent of this document is to provide guidelines for ethical relationships which are essential to the successful operation of the educational system. This Code of Ethics presumes a relationship between boards of education, administrators and community which promotes trust, open and honest communication, credibility and educational purpose. The educational purposes are stated as beliefs in the Preamble. This document was developed with the expectation that boards of education and administrators will adhere to the high standards of ethical conduct which are presented as Five Principles.

## **APPLICATION**

MASB and MCSAA urge school boards and administrators to comply with statements and principles outlined in *Code of Ethical Relationships For Board of Education Members and Educational Administrators*. It is recommended that the school board and superintendent annually review and adopt or reaffirm this Code. School boards are encouraged to incorporate specific language into local board policy stating this intent. The articles of the Code are arranged so that the reader can easily correlate board responsibilities with administrator responsibilities by following across the pages from left to right.

## **PREAMBLE**

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### **WE BELIEVE:**

That in a society in which governance resides in the people, it is the function of government to administer to their common welfare; and that equal opportunity for justice, freedom of worship, of speech, of assembly, and of press are inherent rights of the individual.

That an effective public education program on the elementary, secondary and higher education levels contributes to society.

That education is a State function; that school districts are organized for the purpose of maintaining public schools; that their creation is authorized by constitutional provisions and by the general statutes which confer upon them all their powers, prescribe all their duties, and impose all limitations to which they are subject.

That pursuant to the preceding paragraph, the policies adopted by the board and the administrative rules and regulations relating thereto, as developed by school officials, should recognize the specific rights, duties and responsibilities of each party to take appropriate action in terms of these policies and rules and then regulations. The board should delegate the administrative functions of the district to the superintendent, and to other administrative officers, instructional and non-instructional personnel.

That decisions affecting the complex problems of organizing, of administering, of developing the curriculum, and of securing financial support for the district should be made in terms of what is best for the student.

That the development of effective public education demands that the rights, duties and responsibilities of the board of education, the superintendent, and other administrators be recognized and that appropriate relationships be established and observed as presented in this code:

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS AND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS**

Board of Education Members and Professional Educational Administrators are a Leadership Team that is dedicated to the following principles of behavior in the performance of their responsibilities.

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### **PRINCIPLE I: COMMITMENT TO BE TRUSTWORTHY**

*The Leadership Team must be self-governing. They will confine their performance to those services which elicit trust from the individuals and society whom they serve using their knowledge, skills and competencies.*

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### **PRINCIPLE II: COMMITMENT TO EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

*The Leadership Team has a common mission to implement educational programs and activities essential to the welfare of society.*

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### **PRINCIPLE III: COMMITMENT TO BE RESPONSIBLE**

*The Leadership Team is committed to responsible decisionmaking. The quality of decisions, actions and performance is in proportion to the contributing competence and skill of board members and administrators.*

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### **PRINCIPLE IV: COMMITMENT TO A PROFESSION**

*The Leadership Team shall strive to meet the standards of their professions. The Leadership Team will advocate, engage in and support professional development.*

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### **PRINCIPLE V: COMMITMENT TO SERVE OTHERS ABOVE SELF**

*The Leadership Team is dedicated to improving the status and conditions of humankind by serving society.*

**PRINCIPLE I:**

**The Ethic of Responsibility—To Elicit Trust**

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**10.00**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

- 10.10 Board members are elected at large to represent the interests of all constituents. In determining policy, board members shall represent the general welfare and individual rights of all citizens.
- 10.20 Board members recognize and respect fully the uniqueness, worth and dignity of each individual in all procedures and leadership actions.
- 10.30 The board, as the legal policy making body, delegates executive responsibilities to the superintendent to administer the district in accordance with statutory law, requirements prescribed by the State Constitution, the State Board of Education and adopted bylaws and policies of the Board of Education.
- 10.40 The board recognizes that the authority to act rests with the entire board of education and that business shall be transacted only in official meetings.
- 10.50 The board is impartial in the development of bylaws and policies and in exercising judicial functions.
- 10.60 The board consults with the superintendent to acquire essential data and information before developing policy or making decisions.

*The members of the board and all administrators must be self-governing if they are to be responsible. They will recognize the limits of their knowledge, skills and competencies and will confine their performance to those services that elicit trust from the individuals and the society whom they serve.*

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**11.00 ADMINISTRATORS**

- 11.10 The superintendent is employed by the board to serve as the executive officer of the board and the chief administrator of the district. The superintendent has the responsibility to represent the educational interests of the community in providing professional expertise to assist the board in establishing policy. Other administrators having assigned areas of specialized expertise are employed to assist the superintendent in advising the board in policy development.
- 11.20 Administrators recognize and respect fully the uniqueness, worth and dignity of each individual in all procedures and leadership actions.
- 11.30 Administrators respect the legislative and judicial functions of the board and accept delegated responsibility as assigned.
- 11.40 Administrators, as agents of the board, refrain from making commitments not covered by board policy or board action, which may obligate the district.
- 11.50 In the development of bylaws and policies and in exercising judicial functions, the superintendent and other administrators, through the superintendent, have the responsibility to be impartial in advising and counseling all board members.
- 11.60 The superintendent confers with the other appropriate administrators to obtain essential data, information and ideas relevant to their areas of specialization before making recommendations to the board.

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**BOARD MEMBERS** *(continued)*

- 10.70 The board acts in a judicial review capacity to resolve conflicts and administer justice.
- 10.80 The board seeks full disclosure to all sides of issues or conflicts before passing judgment, adheres to legal due process and presumes innocence until guilt has been established beyond a reasonable doubt.
- 10.90 Board members in all situations refrain from using their position of the board of education for personal and/or family gain of any nature.



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**ADMINISTRATORS** *(continued)*

- 11.70 Administrators act in a judicial review capacity to resolve conflicts and administer justice and shall provide such expert testimony and records as may be essential to the equitable judgment of all conflicts.
  
- 11.80 Administrators keep or cause to be kept essential records, provide accurate accounts to the board and provide due process in accordance with the law.
  
- 11.90 Administrators in all situations refrain from using their position for personal and/or family gain of any nature.

**PRINCIPLE II:**

**Commitment to the Educational Mission—Purposes and Goals**

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**20.00 BOARD MEMBERS**

- 20.10 The board places the highest priority on the establishment of educational purposes and goals and reviews these on a regular basis.
- 20.20 The board, in establishing purposes and goals, will act in the best educational interests of individuals and the school community.
- 20.30 The educational purposes and goals of the community are translated by the board into policy.
- 20.40 The board adopts those fiscal policies necessary to support the approved programs and activities.
- 20.50 The board works with local citizens and office holders to see that educational purposes and goals of the community are met.

*The members of the board and all administrators have a mission in common to implement educational programs and activities essential to the general welfare of society.*

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**21.00 ADMINISTRATORS**

- 21.10 Administrators, through the superintendent, provide the data and expertise in the development of educational purposes and goals.
- 21.20 The administrators, through the superintendent, counsel and recommend to the board the scope and content of educational programs as they may apply to the development of the purposes and goals.
- 21.30 Administrators implement board policies through the development of administrative rules and regulations that shall be reviewed with the board.
- 21.40 The superintendent, after counsel with administrative staff, recommends to the board for adoption, a budget which supports programs and activities essential to meeting the established educational purposes and goals of the board and community.
- 21.50 The administrator represents the board when appropriate in working with other government officials.
- 21.60 The administrators will assist the board in the formulation of new policies and the revision of existing policies.

**Principle III:**

**Commitment to be Responsible**

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**30.00 BOARD MEMBERS**

- 30.10 The board causes policy to be developed and adopted based upon the best knowledge, research available, and superintendent’s counsel. Each board member adheres to and supports adopted policies until altered.
- 30.20 The board acts on policy matters only after seeking and receiving pertinent information, receiving the superintendent’s recommendation, and following full board discussion.
- 30.30 The board acts on policy matters in accordance with current laws, and to advance the purposes and goals of the district.
- 30.40 The board employs the most competent persons available for administrative positions.
- 30.50 The board develops policies to assure fairness and competence in all assignments of personnel in keeping with the purposes and goals of the district.
- 30.60 Individual board members will keep the superintendent advised of community concerns, listen courteously to citizens without promising outcomes, refer persons with personal requests and criticisms to the appropriate authority.

*The members of the board and all administrators are committed to cause the best possible decisions to be made. The quality of responsible decisions, actions and performance is in proportion to the contributing competence and skill of board members and administrators.*

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**31.00 ADMINISTRATORS**

- 31.10 Administrators cause decisions relative to their area of responsibility to be made based upon the best knowledge and research available and in accordance with existing adopted board policies. Administrators adhere to and support adopted policies.
- 31.20 Administrators, through the superintendent, provide the best possible information essential to the development of policies and administrative rules and regulations. The superintendent makes recommendations on all matters requiring board action.
- 31.30 Administrators apply their expertise in maintaining board policies and administrative rules and regulations which are consistent with current laws and the purposes and goals of the district.
- 31.40 The superintendent, after counsel with appropriate administrative staff, recommends for employment only the best-qualified candidates. Candidates for administrative positions represent objectively and honestly their qualifications.
- 31.50 Administrators, through the superintendent, make objective recommendations with adequate supporting data on assignments, transfers, promotions, demotions, nonrenewal of contracts, or dismissals of all personnel in accordance with board policies, administrative rules and regulations, and existing law.
- 31.60 The superintendent keeps board members and appropriate administrators informed of community concerns. Individual administrators, through the superintendent, keep the board and other administrators apprised of community concerns as they arise.

**BOARD MEMBERS** *(continued)*

- 30.70 The board shall encourage and support the administration to be adequately informed concerning state and national educational trends and developments.
- 30.80 The board conducts its meetings based on a planned written agenda prepared by the superintendent in consultation with the board president, and in accordance with board bylaws and state law.
- 30.90 The board maintains long-range plans including school improvement plans which anticipate the future needs, trends and fiscal requirements of the district.
- 30.100 The board develops policy to maintain a program of public information.
- 30.110 The board, to promote quality performance, encourages and supports continuing education through Certified Board Award classes. The board also supports other professional development opportunities.
- 30.120 Board members respect all confidential information received and refrain from disclosing opinions expressed in confidence by other board members and administrators.
- 30.130 Board members make a commitment to devote time, thought and study to the duties and responsibilities of a board member and recognize that regular attendance at board meetings is a requisite to the effective management of the district.
- 30.140 The board strongly encourages a well-maintained human resource system and approves the district process for hiring and maintaining quality personnel.
- 30.150 The board strongly encourages an administrative team concept of management.

**ADMINISTRATORS** *(continued)*

- 31.70 Administrators keep themselves and the board adequately informed concerning the current educational trends and developments appropriate to their area of responsibility.
- 31.80 The superintendent, in consultation with the board president, prepares a written agenda. The superintendent, with supportive data from other administrators and in accordance with board bylaws and policies, provides pertinent information and recommendations to the board in a timely manner.
- 31.90 Administrators, through the superintendent, propose long range plans, including school improvement plans and make recommendations using competent advice and assistance.
- 31.100 Administrators, through the superintendent, develop and maintain a public information program in accordance with board policies and administrative rules and regulations.
- 31.110 The superintendent accepts responsibility for placement planning for key positions as well as planning, initiating, maintaining and encouraging the use of an inservice program for administrators and board members.
- 31.120 Administrators respect all confidential information and refrain from disclosing opinions expressed in confidence by other administrators and board members.
- 31.130 The superintendent accepts responsibility for assisting board members in making a commitment to good boardsmanship and effective management of the district.
- 31.140 The superintendent will ensure the existence of the district's appropriate, fair and legal process for hiring and maintaining quality personnel including replacement of key positions.
- 31.150 The superintendent actively promotes and supports an administrative team concept of management.
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**PRINCIPLE IV:**

**Commitment to a Profession**

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**40.00 BOARD MEMBERS**

- 40.10 Individual board members, as locally elected officials with state delegated responsibilities, by their words and actions, reflect upon all board members, even beyond their own district.
- 40.20 The organizations for board members (MASB and NSBA) provide the standards for professional competence and performance to which each board member should aspire.
- 40.30 The board develops policy and due process procedures to receive any charges of misconduct and/or incompetence and reviews the charges before taking any remedial action. The board may seek assistance from appropriate organizations before such remedial action is taken.
- 40.40 The board shall belong to and be active in associations and organizations for board members.
- 40.50 The board expects and supports its administrators to be active members in their professional associations.



*The members and the board and all administrators associated with those who by their deeds and words, honor the “ethic of responsibility” and cause those “who would knowingly or unknowingly do harm” to be offered counseling. The profession shall provide not only the standard to judge competence but the means to acquire it.*

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**41.00 ADMINISTRATORS**

- 41.10 Administrators, as professionals, by their words and actions, reflect upon all other administrators.
- 41.20 The professional organization related to the expertise of administrators provides the standards of professional competence and performance by which the member shall be judged.
- 41.30 Administrators cooperate in the development and enforcement of due process procedures in the administration of charges of misconduct and/or incompetence. Administrators may seek assistance from appropriate organizations.
- 41.40 Administrators shall belong to and be active in their professional associations.
- 41.50 Administrators support board members being active members of their professional association, the Michigan Association of School Boards.

**Principle V:**

**Commitment to Serve Others Above Self**

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**50.00 BOARD MEMBERS**

- 50.10 Board members serve to assure that the mission of the district is achieved without discrimination.
- 50.20 The board, as a prerequisite to autonomy and maintenance of professionalism, acts to provide appropriate compensation for all employees.
- 50.30 When mutual trust does not exist between the board and superintendent and when the board has adequately apprised the superintendent of any irreconcilable differences, a mutually acceptable termination is in order.
- 50.40 When vested interests or conflict of interests arise on any issue, the involved board member shall refrain from all related deliberations and decisions, and from influencing the decision of other board members on such issues.
- 50.50 A board member does not use the board position as a means of self-aggrandizement or for promoting other political aspirations.

*The members of the board and all administrators are committed to serve society and are dedicated to improving the status and conditions of humankind by serving others.*

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**51.00 ADMINISTRATORS**

- 51.10 Administrators are dedicated to administering their specific area of responsibility as an articulate part of the educational mission to provide, without discrimination, the right of each person to equal educational opportunity.
- 51.20 Administrators, through the superintendent, evaluate and recommend appropriate compensation for all personnel within their area of responsibility.
- 51.30 Administrators enter into contracts with full intent to fulfill them in every respect. When a board and administrator mutually agree upon termination before the completion of the contract term, there shall be adequate time for the orderly transfer of responsibilities.
- 51.40 When a vested interest or conflict of interest arises involving an administrator, that administrator shall refrain from any recommendations or deliberations related to the issue.
- 51.50 Administrators do not use their position in the district as a means of promoting political aspirations of board members or themselves.

## **Operational Principles and Procedures**

### **Board of Education-Administration Relationships**

Suggested bylaw, policy and contract ideas that address the management-leadership potential of Michigan schools and maximize the professional growth and equitable treatment of administrators based upon the adopted Michigan Code of Ethical Relationships.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Congress of School Administrator Associations recommend that local boards of education adopt policies and procedures that insure the development of effective administrator teams. Such policies and procedures should deal with: (1) evaluation, (2) remediation and probation, (3) demotion, dismissal and non re-employment and (4) professional development.

The following descriptions are recommended for inclusion in board policy statement regarding these specific items.

#### **I. Evaluation:**

- A. Every administrative position shall have a written job description which specifies responsibilities and corresponding authority and support. Periodically, the superintendent, in consultation with the administrator, shall review the job description and modify it to reflect changes in the responsibilities of the position.
- B. The performance of every administrator shall be formally evaluated annually. This formal evaluation shall be based upon the job description, short-term and long-term goals and/or performance objectives. The formal evaluation procedures shall also:
  - (1) Be based on procedures and instruments understood by all parties at the outset of the contract period.

- (2) Indicate the person(s) responsible for performing the evaluation.
  - (3) Be followed by a written summary and a personal conference for re-enforcement.
- C. It is recommended that the board be solely responsible for continually evaluating the performance of its superintendent. Through its policies, the board should assign to the superintendent or designee the responsibility for evaluating other administrators.

## **II. Remediation and Probation The Superintendent**

### **The Superintendent**

- A. The board shall inform the superintendent of necessary remediation or possible probation in accordance with the existing contract terms.

### **Other Administrators**

- B. Annual formal evaluations of administrators shall be based on the job description, short-term and longterm goals and/or performance objectives. If deficiencies are identified, a plan of assistance will be cooperatively developed with the administrator indicating what is expected of the administrator and what the immediate supervisor will do to help the administrator achieve those expectations.
- C. A line of communication with continual observation and evaluation shall occur. A written evaluation and job status decision indicating remediation progress or failure to remediate should be made no less than 90 days (or in accordance with current law) before the end of the contract year.

### **III. Demotion, Dismissal and Nonrenewal:**

Every board should provide all administrators, other than the superintendent, who are not performing their professional responsibilities as prescribed by the board: (1) a notice and statement of reasons relating to the demotion, dismissal or nonrenewal of contract; (2) meeting with the board prior to demotion, dismissal, or nonrenewal of contract; and (3) the right to representation at the hearing to speak on their behalf

### **IV. Professional Development:**

Board bylaws and/or policy should recognize the need for professional development of administrators and board members. Bylaws and/or policies should encourage attendance at professional conferences, leadership in professional associations, completion of classes, seminars and workshops and other developmental activities. The bylaws and/or policies should describe provisions for released time, travel reimbursement, reporting results and other conditions appropriate for the exercise of professional development.

The board's bylaws, policies and procedures shall be reviewed as often as necessary and be continually updated to remain consistent with practice.

It is an expectation of the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Congress of School Administrator Associations that local boards and local administrators will adopt and comply with statements and principles outlined in this document by incorporating specific language in board bylaws and policy.





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