

## **Boardsmanship for Student Success**

A sound code of conduct for school board members begins with a genuine commitment to striving for high and equitable achievement for ALL the students in your district. By serving public education in an ethical manner, you can make a difference in the lives of the children you serve. Practicing these four principles ensures effective boardsmanship:

### **Honesty**

Tell the truth. Any hint of dishonesty prohibits you from building the trust you will need to work with your team, the staff and the public.

### **Fairness**

It is difficult to balance the needs when there are limited resources. Keep fairness in mind when forming your views. Remember that people want to feel valued and respected, even if you disagree.

### **Trust**

As an elected official, you must be honest and trustworthy. People from all the different constituencies you serve will want to know you can be trusted to do the work you are elected to do. Learn what it will take to trust others, your colleagues, the superintendent, presenters at board meetings, etc.

### **Integrity**

Keeping integrity at the forefront of your decisions and actions will help you make effective decisions.

## **Additional practices for effective boardsmanship**

It is unethical to use your elected office for personal gain. Also, be careful not to make promises you cannot keep. Recognize the limits of your authority as an individual board member. The board meeting as a whole has the power. It is important that you support and communicate the board's decisions even when you disagree. In addition to understanding the importance of ethics in board service, the following list can help you to be more effective:

- Do your homework before board meetings
- Keep abreast of current educational issues
- Make attendance at board meetings a priority
- Know your board's parliamentary procedures
- Learn how to analyze and present facts and data
- Devote sufficient time to board service
- Be open minded, considering alternatives to solutions

- Listen to the opinions of others: parents, students, staff, and community members
- Be courteous to those who contact you, even when you disagree
- Remember the chain of command
- Respect the fact that you are a member of a team
- Represent the board's decisions in the public, even if you are in the minority view
- Act as an advocate for public education
- Share your ideas with the board - diverse views are critical in making good decisions
- Listen to and respect others' views
- Become well versed in what it will take to improve student achievement in your district
- Respect the confidentiality, candor, and trust of closed sessions
- Work as part of a team
- Respect the role of the superintendent

Boardmanship involves sharing your views with the board. What skills and talents do you bring to the district? What is your level of expertise? What would you like to see changed in the district? You will need to get to know what your fellow board members would like to see changed too. Together you make decisions that affect students in your district. Boardmanship is essential in creating an environment where the board can function efficiently in pursuit of reaching high standards for student achievement in the district.

From the Wisconsin School Boards Association  
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