

Trustee Code of Conduct

Purpose Statement

This policy reflects our shared responsibility to foster compassionate, connected and personalized learning for all, grounded in equity, integrity and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Our purpose is to create safe, equitable learning environments that lift each learner to thrive, to grow, and to share their unique gifts by ensuring trustees demonstrate ethical leadership, uphold high standards of conduct, and commit to decolonizing and Indigenizing education.

Introduction

The Trustee Code of Conduct Policy provides a framework to ensure that trustees of the Comox Valley School District act in a manner that promotes the values and vision of the District. Trustees are entrusted to lead with transparency, integrity, and respect, ensuring that all decisions and actions are centered on student learning, equity, and well-being. This policy is grounded in the principles of decolonization and Indigenization and commits to upholding ethical governance that is aligned with our Strategic Plan's vision, values, and goals.

Guiding Values and Principles

Trustees are guided by the shared values of their Strategic Plan, ensuring that their actions and decisions align with the following principles:

- **Learning: Centering learning in all that we do.**
Trustees are committed to promoting environments where all students can access high-quality, personalized education that supports their growth, core competencies, and well-being.
- **Equity: Recognizing diversity as a strength and inclusion as a right.**
Trustees will lead with equity, advocating for fair treatment, opportunities, and outcomes for all students, especially those from historically marginalized communities.
- **Relationships: Connection, compassion and respect in all that we do.**
Trustees will engage with compassion, respect and connection, prioritizing healthy relationships within the Board, K'ómoks First Nation, Indigenous Communities, Partner

Groups, the broader School Community, and the public. Building strong relationships with local First Nations and respecting Indigenous perspectives and rights are paramount.

- **Safety: Learning communities where all feel safe and belong.**
Trustees are committed to fostering learning and working communities where all feel safe, respected and valued, ensuring that educational and workspaces support both the physical and emotional well-being of all students and staff.
- **Integrity: High ethical standards through transparency, honesty and accountability.**
Trustees will uphold high ethical standards, demonstrating transparency, honesty, and accountability in their governance roles. This includes acting in accordance with the *School Act*, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, the BC Human Rights Code and other relevant legislation.

Commitment to Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

Trustees recognize the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in shaping educational experiences that are inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive. In partnership with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, trustees will:

- Uphold the principles of reconciliation as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
- Work towards district policies, procedures, curricula and practices that reflect Indigenous histories, perspectives and knowledge.
- Engage in ongoing learning and reflection to better understand the impacts of colonization and actively participate in decolonizing education within the district.

Trustee Conduct and Responsibilities

Trustees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the Board's values as articulated in Policy 1 and, the principles of all policies. Specific expectations include:

- **Confidentiality:** Trustees must maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in closed sessions or designated as confidential and/or information that is reasonably considered confidential, respecting the privacy of students, staff, trustees, and community members; and
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Trustees are responsible for declaring any conflicts of interest in matters before the Board and must abstain from voting on or influencing decisions where such conflicts exist; and

- **Collaboration:** Trustees will work collaboratively with Board colleagues, district staff, Indigenous communities, and the school community to support student success and well-being. Trustees will act with a spirit of harmony and cooperation, recognizing that effective governance requires respectful and productive dialogue; and
- **Communication:** Trustees will communicate with integrity and clarity, both in person and online. This includes using social media responsibly and refraining from engaging in behaviours that could undermine the Board's integrity or relationships within the community.

Trustees as members of the corporate Board of Education will:

Integrity and Dignity of the Office:

1. Discharge their duties loyally, faithfully, impartially and in a manner, that will inspire public confidence in the abilities and integrity of the Board; and
2. Act as a trustee of this district and work carefully to ensure that it is well maintained, fiscally secure, and operating in the best interest of those served; and
3. Recognize that the expenditure of school board funds is a public trust and endeavour to see that the funds are expended efficiently in the best interests of learners in the district; and
4. Work together with trustee colleagues to communicate to the electorate, accurate information about the district and the schools; and
5. Do their utmost to attend regular Board meetings, committees of the whole and meetings of the Board committees to which they have been appointed, and meetings for which they have been appointed to serve as Board representatives, including communicating non-attendance to such meetings to the Board Chair; and
6. Provide leadership to the community through setting goals and policies for district operations and educational programs and by regularly evaluating to determine if intended results are achieved; and
7. Not use the position of trustee for personal advantage or to the advantage of any other individual apart from the total interest of the district, and resist outside pressure to so use the position.

Compliance with Legislation:

1. Observe bylaws and rules of order, the policies and procedures of the district, and the laws, rules and regulations governing education in British Columbia, the *BC School Act*, BC Human Rights Code, the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*; and
2. Respect and understand the roles and duties of individual trustees, the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools and the Chair of the Board.

Civil Behaviour:

1. Represent the Board of Education responsibly in all Board-related matters and act with decorum at all times. (Decorum: behaviour that is controlled, calm, and polite); and
2. Work with trustee colleagues, the Superintendent of Schools and the district as a whole, in a spirit of respect, openness, harmony and co-operation, encouraging the free exchange of diverse views on any topic at all times and expressing any contrary opinions in a respectful and constructive manner; and
3. Not make disparaging remarks in or outside Board meetings, about other Board members or their opinions, and be respectful of staff, students and the public; and
4. Use social media responsibly, including an acknowledgment that opinions expressed are those of the individual not the Board.

Upholding Decisions:

1. Base their decisions on all available facts, data and perspectives of an issue, respect the opinions of others and diligently pursue what they believe to be in the best interest of the students and others of the district; and
2. Accept that authority rests with the Board and that no trustee has individual authority to direct district staff other than that delegated by the Board; and
3. Uphold publicly the majority decisions of the Board of Education and the implementation of any Board resolutions; and
4. Accept that the Chair of the Board is the spokesperson to the public on behalf of the Board, unless otherwise determined by the Board. No other trustee will speak on behalf of the Board unless expressly authorized by the Chair of the Board or Board to do so. When individual trustees express their opinions in public, they must make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the Board.

Respect for Confidentiality:

1. Keep confidential any information disclosed or discussed at a meeting of the Board or committee of the Board, or part of a meeting of the Board or committee of the Board that was closed (in-camera) to the public, and keep confidential the substance of deliberations of a meeting closed (in-camera) to the public unless required to divulge such information by law or authorized by the Board to do so; and
2. Not use confidential information for personal gain or to the detriment of the Board or district; and
3. Not divulge confidential information, including personal information about an identifiable individual or information subject to lawyer-client privilege that a trustee becomes aware of because of their position, except when required by law or authorized by the Board to do so.

Commitment to Ongoing Learning and Reflection

Trustees will engage in ongoing professional development and self-reflection to enhance

their governance capabilities and understanding of the design principals of the Strategic Plan. The Board will provide training during onboarding and throughout a trustee's term to support their growth and alignment with the values of this policy. The learning may take many different forms including presentations at Board and Committee of the Whole meetings, working sessions, attendance at various conferences, as well as training provided by Staff.

Written Commitment and Affirmation

To demonstrate the expectation of adherence to the Trustee Code of Conduct, Trustees will sign Policy 4 when taking the Oath of Office and thereafter, annually. Upon assuming office, Trustees will read aloud, "I [insert name], have read, understand and agree to adhere to Policy 4 – Trustee Code of Conduct."

Conclusion

The Trustee Code of Conduct Policy reflects our commitment to ethical governance, decolonization, and the creation of inclusive and equitable learning environments. Trustees pledge to embody the values of learning, equity, relationships, safety, and integrity, ensuring that all actions are aligned with our shared vision of compassionate, connected, and personalized learning for all.

Appendix A – Breaches of Trustee Code of Conduct – Procedures

In the event of a breach of this policy, the Board may take a range of actions. The Board of Education will endeavour to encourage a restorative justice process that prioritizes healing and relationship-building.

The specific procedures related to addressing Breaches of conduct can be found in Appendix A: Breaches of Trustee Code of Conduct – Procedures. This section outlines detailed procedures for addressing breaches of conduct and applying sanctions as per the Trustee Code of Conduct. It includes the specific steps for conciliatory measures, complaint handling, and the sanctions process. For full details, refer to the attached document.

Policy Type	Governance
Adopted	September 2019
Replaces (if applicable)	
Amended	May 2025
Editorial Change	
Next Review Date	2028
Responsible Operational Leader	The Board of Education

Appendix A – Trustee Breaches of Conduct

In alignment with our commitment to ethical governance, cultural respect, and relationship-building, this appendix provides a structured process to address breaches of conduct in a manner that promotes healing, learning, and mutual understanding. The Board's approach is grounded in the principles of restorative justice, Indigenous perspectives, and the values of the Strategic Plan, emphasizing accountability, transparency, and equity.

In the Event of a Breach

In cases where a breach of conduct may have occurred, the Board may take various actions, including but not limited to:

- Encouraging a restorative justice process that centers on healing and relationship-building.
- Creating a reflective and corrective action plan focused on responsibility, personal growth, and reconciliation.
- Engagement in relevant training or coaching to foster development and awareness.
- Passing a motion of censure or removal from committees if allowed under the School Act.

The procedures detailed below are designed to uphold accountability and provide a respectful, culturally attuned approach to resolving breaches.

Addressing Breaches of Conduct

Restorative Practice

A trustee who believes that a trustee colleague has breached the Code of Conduct is encouraged to seek resolution through restorative, conciliatory measures before lodging an official complaint. This approach aligns with our commitment to dialogue, respect, and building trust within the Board.

1. **Individual Conversation:** The trustee who perceives a breach is encouraged to address the matter privately with the trustee involved. This initial step reflects Indigenous conflict-resolution practices, focusing on respect and understanding.
2. **Conciliatory Engagement:** If the private conversation does not yield a resolution, the

trustees may seek the support of the Board Chair or Vice-Chair to facilitate a constructive dialogue. If the concern involves the Chair, the Vice-Chair will facilitate.

3. **Third-Party or Indigenous Circle Facilitation:** By mutual agreement, a third party may be engaged, or an Indigenous Circle may be held, led by a qualified facilitator to foster a respectful, values-centered dialogue. This reflects our commitment to inclusive and culturally responsive practices.

Formal Process for Addressing Breaches

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be filed according to the following steps:

1. **Filing Complaint**
A trustee wishing to file an official complaint under the Code of Conduct will deliver a written complaint to the Board Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Chair is involved) within 30 days of the alleged breach, outlining the nature of the complaint and the specific sections of the Code alleged to have been breached. The Chair will share the complaint with all trustees within five days of receipt.
2. **Maintaining Confidentiality**
To protect the integrity of the process, all details of the complaint remain strictly confidential, and public disclosure is a violation of the Code of Conduct. The Board Chair may disclose information only at the Board's direction following a Code of Conduct hearing.
3. **Supporting a Hearing**
At least one other trustee must support the complaint in writing within three days of receiving it. If no support is provided, the complaint will not proceed, and the Board Chair will inform all trustees in writing that no further action will be taken.
4. **Convening the Hearing**
When a complaint is supported, the Board Chair will convene a closed (in-camera) meeting to allow the complainant trustee to present their views on the alleged breach. The Board Chair will outline the nature of the alleged breach at the start of the meeting.
5. **Ensuring Fairness and Confidential Deliberation**
The Chair will ensure that the following sequence is followed for a fair and balanced hearing:
 - **Complainant Presentation:** The complainant trustee presents their case, either in written or oral form.
 - **Respondent Presentation:** The respondent trustee presents their response.
 - **Opportunity for Replies:** Both parties are given opportunities to reply to each other's statements.

- Trustee Questions: Trustees may ask questions of both the complainant and respondent.
 - Final Comments: Both parties have a final opportunity to comment.
6. Private Deliberation and Resolution
After the presentations, all parties except trustees without conflicts of interest will leave the room. The remaining trustees deliberate in private, ensuring cultural sensitivity, transparency, and equity in their decision. If additional clarification is needed, the hearing may be adjourned to collect further information.
 7. Issuing Sanctions
Depending on the circumstances, the Board may institute any of the following sanctions:
 - Personal Letter of Censure: A confidential letter from the Board Chair to the offending trustee.
 - Public or Private Motion of Censure: Passed by a majority vote.
 - Committee or Appointment Removal: The trustee may be removed from Board committees or appointments by majority vote.
 8. Document Retention and Public Disclosure
All documentation related to the hearing will be returned to the Secretary Treasurer after the conclusion of the hearing and retained in compliance with legal standards. The Board may, at its discretion, disclose findings to the public to promote transparency and accountability.

Breach of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to the Board's operations. Should a suspected breach occur, the following process is followed:

1. Independent Investigation: The Board Chair will ask the Secretary Treasurer to appoint an independent investigator under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
2. Review and Recommendations: The investigator provides findings to the Board Chair, which are reviewed in a closed (in-camera) meeting where the trustee in question may offer additional information.
3. Board Decision: If a breach is confirmed, the Board may issue a censure or escalate the matter in alignment with our commitment to ethical governance and transparency.

This updated Appendix A maintains all procedural steps while integrating principles of restorative justice, reconciliation, and respect for Indigenous perspectives, consistent with the Board's Strategic Plan.

Legal and Policy	Policy 4 – Trustee Code of Conduct
References:	British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) Criteria for Trustee Codes of Conduct School Act (RSBC 1996, c. 412) 49, 50, 55-64, 65, 85, 94, 95

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