



COMMISSION SCOLAIRE
Eastern Townships
SCHOOL BOARD

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CODE OF ETHICS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

POLICY (P 042)

Policy Name	CODE OF ETHICS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES
Policy Number	P 042
Adopted Date by Council	April 26, 2022
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Source	Human Resources

1. **INTRODUCTION**

As a publicly funded institution, the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) must abide by public laws and regulations and ensure that its practices are impartial and transparent. As well, given that the school board is subject to scrutiny by the public, it must ensure that its employees conduct themselves in an exemplary manner to maintain the confidence and trust of the public it serves.

This Code of Ethics does not replace an obligation related to the conduct of an employee contained in a law, a collective agreement, an additional regulation, a policy of the school board, or in the rules of conduct adopted by a governing board. Nor does it replace any other rule of ethics that would apply to an employee by virtue of membership in a professional order or association. Those documents, which govern the operations of the ETSB render more complex the framework in which it must operate, and it is in this spirit that the code has been created.

2. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees of the ETSB, regardless of position and level of responsibility. While no policy can cover every situation, and since every person must be responsible for individual actions, a clear understanding of this Code of Ethics should prevent situations which could arise.

3. **DEFINITIONS**

Ethics: Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy. This obligation to be ethical calls for the good faith, prudence, and diligence of the employee. Ethical standards apply both individually and collectively.

Employee: Refers to any person who is part of the school board's workforce, working full-time or part-time, on a permanent, temporary, seasonal, occasional, or contractual basis, union member or not, including managers.

Integrity: To perform duties with integrity implies that employees honor their commitments with fairness and honesty. This obligation requires, for example, not to be involved in theft, fraud, or breach of trust. It also requires that the employee avoid any form of corruption or collusion.

Loyalty: Freedom of expression is a cherished right, but one must keep in mind the interest of the employer, which is also a public body. The criticism or denunciation of a fellow employee, or of the organization may damage its reputation.

Conflict of Interest: Where employees who, having an obligation to act in the best common interest of the ETSB, find themselves in a situation where their personal interests – family, friendships, financial, or social factors – could compromise their judgment, decisions, or actions in the workplace.

Gifts and Benefits: Includes any object of significant value, cash (or monetary equivalent), travel and accommodations, tickets to an event, a service, an advance, a loan, or any personal advantage.

Confidential Information: Any information on paper, electronic or other form, of a personal or private nature, on a school board stakeholder. It also designates any information that an employee is formally required to keep confidential, and any information transmitted to them or of which they become aware of in circumstances allowing a reasonable person to deduce that it should be kept confidential.

Information covered, but not limited to:

- The discussions on the negotiations in progress within the framework of the awarding of contracts for goods and services and the related documents.
- Negotiations within the framework of tenders as well as the information exchanged during these negotiations.
- Information related to the privacy of all employees, students, and their families.
- School board documents and projects under development.
- Inside information which concerns the school board, school organizations and other organizations, public or private, and which has not yet been disclosed by them.

4. **PURPOSE**

In order that the school board maintain its good reputation, high level of integrity and rigor in following proper procedures, as well as further strengthen its honest relationships with all stakeholders, community members and businesses, a Code of Ethics is required.

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide all employees with a framework which is aligned with the fundamental values of the organization and the ethical rules specific to the public sector.

5. **APPLICATION**

To meet the purpose, this document must be distributed to all employees of the ETSB. It is up to everyone governed by this code to uphold its contents, refer to it for decision making purposes, and participate in its application in order that fraudulent acts be non-existent, and integrity be maintained.

Everyone mentioned above should recognize that the ETSB, as a public institution, must seek to keep the community fully informed about the operation of its schools and centres, within rules of confidentiality found within this document. With this in mind, decision making processes should contain checks and balances following this Code of Ethics.

6. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The public reputation of the ETSB rests upon the conduct of its personnel, who must demonstrate professional ethics, both in the management of the public funds entrusted to them and in the provision of service to students.

7. **COMPETENCY AND STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR**

The duty of competence includes the performance of the work, but also continued training, within the employment category.

Employees of the ETSB must perform duties and tasks related to their jobs competently, by providing the requested service, in an appropriate and satisfactory manner. It is essential that employees be conscientious when carrying out their work, to ensure the proper functioning of the educational institution. This, in turn, will support the ETSB in reaching its mission, success for all students.

As members of the Eastern Townships School Board we:

- Comply with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures whether on school board property, on school buses, while in attendance at authorized events or venues, or in the larger context of our school board community.
- Respect our work schedules and honor all employment contracts until fulfillment or termination.
- Perform our duties with loyalty and integrity.
- Fulfill all responsibilities diligently and conscientiously.
- Conduct ourselves prudently, not only regarding the employer's material property, but also to the people with whom we interact in the workplace.
- Contribute to respect for the dignity, health, and safety of the people who frequent our workplace.
- Ensure that decisions made while performing our duties are made in good faith and are only influenced by factors which are in the interest of the students and in line with the school board's mission, vision and values.

8. **CIVILITY**

ETSB employees must always maintain exemplary professional behavior. Inappropriate behavior harms the work environment, interpersonal relationships with other employees, and work performance.

In addition, those individuals who exercise a management function and have decision-making powers have important ethical obligations. In fact, they must be transparent in their management and act with fairness and demonstrate respect. Therefore, as members of the Eastern Townships School Board we:

- Respect differences in everyone, their cultures, their ideas, and their opinions.
- Carefully choose comments so as not to damage the reputation of others.
- Treat everyone with consideration and respect, using polite and courteous behavior and avoiding any form of discrimination prohibited by law.
- Foster a climate of trust, empathy, and collaboration with a consistent awareness of the health and well-being of individuals in the workplace.
- Deliver critical feedback respectfully and courteously with an intention to assist and support.
- Maintain communications, both verbal and non-verbal, in a manner that would not be seen as embarrassing, offensive, degrading, or insulting by someone else in the workplace.
- Make decisions, as part of the school team, based on work-related factors and with an intent to collaborate with everyone involved in the decision-making process.

- Maintain the confidentiality of information regarding an incident with others in the building. If a situation should escalate, seek out advice and assistance from a supervisor, manager, member of the Human Resources team and, or a union representative in a timely manner.

9. **RESERVE & NEUTRALITY**

We all have an ethical obligation to demonstrate adherence to the values, beliefs, and knowledge that the school system seeks to communicate to students. The reason for this requirement is the position of role model held by all employees.

This obligation also applies outside the workplace and during working hours. The employees' conduct, reflecting the values of society, their ethical obligations extend to all their actions.

In addition, employees must maintain a professional distance in their relations with students both during working hours and outside the school context, by avoiding establishing friendships liable to compromise their objectivity and impartiality vis-à-vis to these.

With all of this in mind, as members of the Eastern Townships School Board we:

- Exercise caution and good judgment *in expressing our political opinions* in public, through social networks, when these may prove to be incompatible with the mission of the ETSB and the neutrality of the Quebec state and public bodies.
- Remain politically unbiased *while performing our duties*; nothing in this regulation prohibits an individual from being involved in a community or political activity; from taking part in meetings associated with these activities, or from making legal payments to a political party, to an organization controlled by a political party or to a candidate in an election.
- Pay attention to comments that could harm the interests of the ETSB, their image or their reputation.
- Avoid associating personal statements with the school board or one of its establishments in discussion and chat groups or using any other means of exchanging opinions in such a way as to suggest that the opinions expressed are endorsed by the school board or one of its establishments, unless this is done by an authorized person in the exercise of their duties.
- Respect that oral and written communication with the media, in the name of the ETSB, is to be conducted only by the persons designated as official spokespersons by the Chairperson of the Board or the Director General.

The points in this list do not indicate that the employee must remain completely silent or entirely renounce their freedom of expression or the exercise of their rights, but rather that these rights must be exercised in balance with those of the organization, and the population it serves.

In education, employee neutrality is even more important as bias, or the appearance of bias would undermine the credibility of the ETSB with the public.

10. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Employees must remain free of interests or relationships which are harmful or detrimental to those of the ETSB. Employees should avoid a real or perceived conflict of interest which could tarnish their own or the organization's image.

As members of the Eastern Townships School Board we:

- Will refrain from acting directly or indirectly, as a partner, shareholder, director, officer, employee, agent or consultant of any business enterprise or organization when a person's influence or position with the board could be used to benefit the other organization/enterprise or the individual.
- Will refrain from using material property, intellectual property, information, or services of the ETSB for purposes other than those of the Board.
- Will not grant access to ETSB buildings to a third party who is currently or potentially bidding for a contract, except for bidders who have already been awarded a contract and are currently working on ongoing projects. Nor shall we use, or allow use of ETSB buildings, or materials to the benefit of a third party, or to our own person.
- Will avoid exercising any direct or indirect pressure on any members of a selection committee or on the persons responsible for hiring or promoting individuals; this is particularly applicable in situations involving family relationships or friendships with the individual concerned.
- Will avoid giving preferential treatment when responding to requests made by other employees. The processes, procedures and rules of the system are the same for everyone.

11. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

All employees must conform to the Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information (R.S.Q., c. A-2.1) regarding the conservation, access, transmission and distribution of personal information by taking all necessary measures to protect **confidential information** obtained, used, communicated, retained or destroyed.

As members of the Eastern Townships School Board we:

- Take appropriate measures to properly dispose of documents containing this information (shredding, archiving, deleting, computer destruction, etc.). For professionals belonging to an order, upon leaving the school board, all files and information contained within shall be stored in line with the rules set by this order.
- Hand over all documents containing this information in their possession at the time of departure.
- Respect all individuals' right to privacy and the confidentiality of information which pertains to them.
- Discuss confidential information in a place and in a manner that ensures this right to privacy and avoid sharing confidential information with volunteers.
- Refrain from using information obtained as an employee of the ETSB to derive a personal benefit or advantage therefrom or for a related party, except for information that has entered the public domain or that is required to be released in virtue of applicable legislation or by order of a legal authority having jurisdiction.

- Publish only with permission from the affected individual, personal information in the form of written text, online meetings, videos, photographs, or other visual documents showing that person in activities in such a way as they may be identified by name.

Employees should only access confidential information required by their duties. This obligation applies even if the employee does not intend to disclose this information.

12. **GIFTS AND BENEFITS**

Employees of the ETSB are prohibited from accepting or seeking to obtain for personal gain any [gifts and benefits](#) while in the exercise of their functions. Except for minor tokens of advertisement, objects that are common and of minimal value, or small sample products all offers of benefits by vendors or suppliers must be refused. Furthermore, the offer must be disclosed by the employee and discussed with the immediate supervisor.

13. **CONCLUSION:**

The examples cited in this document are given for the purpose of illustrating concepts for further understanding and thus, the code does not mention all preferred actions, nor all those to be avoided and must be given a broad and liberal interpretation.

In case of doubt in any given situation, individuals should consult their superiors regarding the proper steps to be taken, as breach of this Code of Ethics may result in disciplinary measures.

14. **REFERENCES**

This Code of Conduct is developed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations notably:

- [The Education Act \(R.S.Q., c. I-13.3\)](#)
- [The Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information \(R.S.Q., A-2.1\)](#)
- [The Civil Code of Quebec \(notably sections 321 to 325 and 2088\)](#)
- [Les Directives Concernant la Gestion des Contrats D’approvisionnement de Services et de Travaux de Construction des Organismes Public \(C.T.215340\)](#)
- [P013- Purchasing Policy](#)
- [P020- Communications Policy](#)
- [P024- Policy on Telecommunications, Network and Computer Resource Usage](#)
- [P024-3 – Code of Conduct-ETSB Personnel](#)
- [P028- P002- Procedure for the Management of Student Records](#)
- [Dignity in the Workplace](#)