



ONTARIO EDUCATION SERVICES CORPORATION

## Professional Development Program for School Board Trustees

Modules

# 17

## Developing a Code of Conduct for Trustees

### TIP SHEET

- A Code of Conduct should contain well-articulated guidelines for appropriate interaction, participation and respectful communication.
- An effective board is a cohesive, collaborative decision-making body that sets high standards for itself. Board Codes of Conduct are designed by trustees for trustees.
- The Education Act (s.218.2(1)) permits a board to adopt a Code of Conduct that will apply to the members of the board, including elected trustees and First Nation trustees. The Ministry of Education expects student trustees to respect the provisions of the board's Code of Conduct.
- In proposed regulation the following six components for the Code of Conduct were outlined:
  - Integrity and dignity of office
  - Avoidance of personal advantage and conflict of interest
  - Compliance with legislation
  - Civil behaviour
  - Respect for confidentiality
  - Upholding decisions

- Suggested Steps for Creating a Code of Conduct
  1. Create a committee to work on the draft of the Code of Conduct
  2. Review the most current expectations and legislation from the Ministry of Education.
  3. Consider effective examples of Codes of Conduct in use in school boards.
  4. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association has developed a Template Code of Conduct and Enforcement which provides guidance in drafting a code that includes and addresses all of the essential components. <http://www.opsba.org/index.php?q=system/files/Board+Members+Code+of+Conduct+%28Final+-Feb+2012%29.pdf> This document also outlines a sample process for enforcement of the Code of Conduct.
  5. Present the draft Code of Conduct and Enforcement to the board of trustees for amendments or additions.
  6. Allow time for adequate review and discussion.
  7. Upon the approval of the Code of Conduct and Enforcement by the board of trustees, put it into effect and add it to the board's Policy Handbook.
  8. Review the Code of Conduct annually.
  
- Permissible sanctions for breach of the Code include one or more of the following:
  - Warning or requirement to engage in professional development
  - Censure of the trustee
  - Barring the trustee from sitting on one or more committees of the board for a specified period of time
  - Barring the trustee from attending all or part of a meeting of the board or of a committee of the board
  
- It is always advisable to consult legal counsel regarding the draft Code of Conduct and Enforcement procedures.