

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School
Policy B4: Code of Ethics
Adopted: October 20, 2020

The Board of Southwest Georgia STEM Academy adopts the following policy, effective on the date of adoption by the Board.

This policy establishes expectations of ethical conduct by members serving on the school's board. The school's board collectively and its members individually shall at all times operate in the most ethical and conscientious manner possible.

Domain 1. Board Authority Over Individual Authority

1. Authority of the board rests only with the board as a whole and not with any individual board member unless expressly provided for in the board's by-laws and/or through board resolution. As such, each member shall act accordingly.
2. The board vests authority for management of the school in the principal and in good faith, shall not undermine the authority of the principal or intrude into responsibilities that appropriately belong in the scope of management, including, but not limited to such functions as hiring, transferring, or dismissing employees.
3. The board shall make reasonable efforts to keep the principal informed of concerns or specific recommendations that any member of the board may bring forth to the board as a whole or a committee of the board.
4. The board shall honor the established protocol and respective policy related to student, parent, or staff grievances.

Domain 2. Duties and Responsibilities

1. Board members agree to communicate on board related correspondence in a timely manner defined as no more than 24 hours, unless impracticable.
2. Board members shall reflect through action that his or first utmost concern is for the welfare of the students served by the school.
3. Each member shall work diligently to uphold the mission of the school, to be an ambassador in the community for the school, and support the appropriate and efficient use of resources, including financial and human capital.
4. Each board member shall uphold and enforce laws, rules, regulations, and other mandates pertaining to public charter schools.

Domain 3. Accountability to Stakeholders and Community Relations

1. Board members shall at all times maintain transparency in matters protected by law and shall endeavor to provide information in a timely, concise, and relevant manner to all stakeholders.
2. Each board member shall be a positive ambassador for the school in the community and shall seek partnerships that enhance the school's programs, services, and resources.
3. Board members shall regularly and systematically communicate information to stakeholders including, but not limited to academic achievement and fiscal health of the school.
4. Board members shall, in a timely manner, communicate to the board or the [principal/other title/management organization] expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs.

Domain 4. Policy Development

1. Board members shall regularly review and revise policies that improve the programs, services, safety, and practices of the school.
2. Each board member shall make policy related decisions only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings following an established policy or procedure formally adopted by the board.

Domain 5. Board Meetings

1. To ensure proper execution of duties and active engagement in the work of the board, board members shall attend no less than 75% all board meetings and functions sponsored by the board.
2. To ensure proper execution of duties and active engagement in the work of the board, board members shall attend all meetings fully prepared to actively discuss and deliberate on matters requiring board attention or resolution. This extends to fully reviewing all documentation provided in advance of board meetings including meeting agendas, minutes, and attached documentations supporting board discussion or action.
3. Board members shall work in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion or philosophy that may arise during discussion and resolution of issues.
4. Each member shall comply with the provisions of the Open Meetings Act related to participating in executive/closed sessions.
5. Board members shall maintain confidentiality of all discussions and other matters pertaining to board business during executive sessions of the board or related to matters or information protected by law.
6. Each member shall in good faith make decisions related to the greater good as opposed to any particular segment or group.

7. Each board member shall engage fully in discussion prior to casting a board vote and shall vote only on matters where the member has full understanding and adequate and appropriate information to make an informed decision.
8. After casting a vote on any issue, each member agrees to abide by and support all majority decisions of the board.

Domain 6. Personnel

1. Board members shall only consider employment of personnel after receiving and fully considering the recommendation of the principal.
2. Consideration for employment of the principal shall be made based on the needs and interests of the school. Decisions shall be made based on qualifications, experience, philosophy, verifiable performance, and fiscal feasibility related to compensation. All hiring decisions shall be made in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Employment Act and shall not be made based upon race, gender or national origin or other factors prohibited by law.
3. Board members shall ensure regular and impartial evaluations of all staff and the appropriate supervisor or supervising body shall provide timely, written feedback related to formal evaluations.

Domain 7. Financial Governance

1. Board members shall refrain from and guard against use of any board member for personal or partisan gain or to benefit any person or entity over the interest of the school. Such gain refers to more than nominal or incidental amounts which would tend to impair or hinder independent judgment or action in the performance of official duties.
2. Each board member shall require and regularly review financial information and shall ensure proper stewardship of public funds related to appropriate, efficient, and responsible use. In addition, each member shall carefully protect and monitor the fiscal health of the school and support actions which ensure sustainability of the school.

Domain 8. Board Member Conduct

1. Each board member shall conduct him or herself publicly in a manner befitting a public official and shall remember that personal actions and behavior reflect upon the school.
2. Members shall communicate with fellow board members, staff, parents, and community members in a respectful, professional manner at all times. Each member shall refrain from any private action which would compromise the integrity, honor, function, or reputation of the board or the school.

3. Every member of the board shall annually file a written statement acknowledging that he or she is in compliance with this Code of Ethics and supports the responsibilities of board service.

Domain 9. Conflicts of Interest

1. Board members shall annually notify the board in writing of any known potential or actual conflicts of interest.
2. Each member of the board shall publicly announce potential or actual conflicts prior to board discussion or action and shall excuse themselves from deliberation, discussion, or vote. Such announcements shall be recorded in the official board minutes.
3. Any board member suspecting a potential or actual conflict of interest of self or another member has a duty and obligation to announce the possibility prior to board deliberation, discussion, or resolution.
4. Each member of the school's board shall comply with conflicts of interest policies of the board, and all laws, rules, regulations, and related requirements established by the State Board of Education, district authorizers, or the Internal Revenue Service.
5. No member shall vote or otherwise participate in the negotiation or making of any contract or agreement with any business, entity, or individual in which he/she and his/her relative or other close relationship has a financial, either direct or indirect, interest.
6. Members shall not solicit, accept, or agree to accept gifts, loans, gratuities, discounts, payments, or services from any individual, entity, or business in exchange for information, resolution, or partisan favor.
7. No member shall have a direct or indirect relationship with individuals, entities, or businesses or have personal interest, directly or indirectly, in school real estate, school textbooks, equipment, buses, school materials, or other supplies or services procured on behalf of the school.
8. No member of the board shall facilitate, support, or provide access to surplus materials or property of the school to individuals, entities, or businesses.
9. Members of the school board shall not serve on the governing body of private K-12 institutions or public boards which otherwise compromise the member's ability to appropriately fulfill duties to the school and serve the best interests of the school foremost.
10. Members of the board shall not hold public office during service on the board.
11. School board members shall not be employed by the State Department of Education, the local Board of Education, or serve concurrently as a member of the State Board of Education

12. Each board member shall be independent of each of the other members and shall not be related by familial, personal, or business connections.
13. No member of the board may be employed by the board for any position within the school.
14. No member of the board may be in partnership or sole owner of a business conducting business with the board.
15. No member of the board may be affiliated in a manner which poses a conflict as described herein with a bank or financial institution doing business with the board.
16. No member of the board may employ or promote any person who is a relative of any board member unless a public, recorded vote is taken on such employment or promotion as a separate matter from any other personnel matter.
17. Violation of this conflict of interest policy and disclosure requirements may constitute malfeasance, which is a violation of non-profit regulations. Such action shall be subject to suspension or removal from board service and may require legal action on the part of the school for violation of fiduciary duty.
18. As used in this policy, "relative" shall mean any individual who is related to the board member as a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, husband, wife, grandmother, grandfather, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, any relative living in the household of the board member, a person who is engaged to be married to the board member, an individual who is generally known as the individual intended to marry or with whom the board member intends or actually shares a household, or any other natural person sharing legal residence, either business or personal.

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School

Policy B5: Conflicts of Interest

Adopted: October 20, 2020

Amended: October 21, 2021

1. No Board member shall use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure unwarranted privileges, advantages, or employment for himself or herself, his or her immediate family member, or others.
2. No Board member shall act in his or her official capacity in any matter where he or she, his or her immediate family member, or a business organization in which he or she has a material financial interest that would reasonably be expected to impair his or her objectivity or independence of judgment.
3. No Board member shall solicit or accept or knowingly allow his or her immediate family member or business organization in which he or she has an interest to solicit or accept any gift, favor, loan, political contribution, service, promise of future employment, or other thing of value based upon an understanding that the gift, favor, loan, contribution, service, promise, or other thing of value was given or offered for the purpose of influencing that board member in the discharge of his or her official duties.
4. No Board member shall use, or knowingly allow to be used, his or her official position or any information not generally available to the members of the public which he or she receives or acquires in the course of and by reason of his or her official position for the purpose of securing financial gain for himself or herself, his or her immediate family member, or any business organization with which he or she is associated.
5. No Board member or any of his or her immediate family members or business organization in which he or she has an interest shall represent any person or party other than the charter school in connection with any cause, proceeding, application, or other matter pending before the local school system in which he or she serves or in any proceeding involving the local school system in which he or she serves.
6. No Board member shall be prohibited from making an inquiry for information on behalf of a student or parent enrolled in the school if no fee, reward, or other thing of value is promised to, given to, or accepted by the school board member or his or her immediate family member in return thereof.

7. No Board member shall be deemed in conflict with these provisions if, by reason of his or her participation in any matter required to be voted upon by the Board, no material or monetary gain accrues to him or her as a member of any profession, occupation, or group to any greater extent than any gain could reasonably be expected to accrue to any other member of that profession, occupation, or group.
8. No Board member may also be an officer in any organization that sells goods or services to the school, except as provided in Code Section 20-2-505 and excluding nonprofit membership organizations.
9. No Board member shall be deemed in conflict with these provisions if, by reason of his or her participation in any matter required to be voted upon by the Board, no material or monetary gain accrues to him or her as a member of any profession, occupation, or group to any greater extent than any gain could reasonably be expected to accrue to any other member of that profession, occupation, or group.
10. No Board member shall sell to the board any supplies or equipment used, consumed, or necessary in the operation of any public school in this state unless there are fewer than three sources for such supplies or equipment within the county; provided, however, that any purchase pursuant to this subsection for supplies or equipment that is equal to or greater than \$10,000.00 shall be approved by a majority of the members of the board in an open public meeting. Any member violating this shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.
11. The Board may not do business with a bank or financial institution where a Board member is an employee, stockholder, director or officer when such board member owns 30% or more stock in that institution.
12. No Board member may have a financial interest in school buses, bus equipment or supplies, provide services for buses owned by the Board, or sell gasoline to the Board from a corporation in which the Board member is a shareholder.
13. No Board member shall disclose to or discuss any information which is subject to attorney-client privilege belonging to the School Board to any person other than other Board members, the Board attorney, the school leader, or persons designated by the school leader for such purposes unless such privilege has been waived by a majority vote of the whole Board.
14. No Board member shall vote on the employment or promotion of any of his or her immediate family members. No immediate family member of a Board member may be employed or promoted unless a public, recorded vote is taken separately from all other personnel matters.

15. No Board member may be employed in any position in the school.
16. No Board member shall be employed by the State Department of Education or serve concurrently as a member of the State Board of Education.
17. No Board member shall serve on the governing body of or be employed by a local school system from the geographic region which the charter school serves.
18. Each member of this Board understands and acknowledges that no person shall be eligible for appointment as a member of a local board of education unless he or she:
 1. Has read and understands the code of ethics and the conflict of interest provisions applicable to members this Board and has agreed to abide by them; and
 2. Completes annual training on conflicts of interest
 3. Agrees to disclose any conflicts of interests