

# DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Employee Code of Ethics

The Detroit Public Schools' (DPS) mission is *to develop a customer and data-driven, student-centered learning environment in which students are motivated to become productive citizens and life-long learners, equipped with skills to meet the needs of their next customer, be it higher education, or the world of work.* Accomplishing this mission takes teamwork, trust and commitment. Our Code of Ethics is intended to help us achieve success by setting common expectations and increasing trust, commitment and teamwork within the District, and between the District and the community.

### Core Principles

To accomplish our mission, we are committed to three core ethical principles:

- Commitment to Excellence
- District and Personal Integrity
- Responsibility

### Purpose

Our *Code of Ethics* helps develop trust by describing what the public can expect from us, and what we can expect from each other and our District. It plays a central role in our District's commitment to help District personnel achieve the highest ethical standards in their professional activities and relationships. Our goal is to create a culture that fosters trust, commitment to excellence and responsibility, personal and institutional integrity, and avoids conflicts of interest and appearances of impropriety.

### Application and Enforceability

This Code of Ethics applies to all District personnel including Board Members. Provisions of this *Employee Code of Ethics* are supported by State law, and School Board rules, regulations, standing orders and collective bargaining agreements. Violations of this *Code of Ethics* may result in administrative or disciplinary action under those laws, rules, regulations, standing orders and agreements.

### Making Ethical Decisions

While the Code of Ethics provides general guidance, it does not provide a complete listing or a definitive answer to every possible ethical situation. When making decisions, we should use good judgment to fulfill the spirit as well as the letter of the Code. When making decisions:

- Evaluate the situation and identify the ethical issues.
- Follow the rules. Consult the Code of Ethics, law, and District rules, regulations, standing orders, policies and procedures, and apply them to the situation.
- Ask for guidance from your supervisor. If your supervisor is involved in the problem, contact his or her supervisor, or the General Counsel's office for help. Ask for help early—before you act.
- Make and carry out a decision that is consistent with the rules and develops excellence, integrity and responsibility.

## **Commitments and Expectations**

To achieve our mission of educating students, we strive to create a DPS culture that fosters trust and focuses on excellence. Our goal is to develop a culture that is personally fulfilling, supports ethical decision-making, and provides an environment where hard work, creativity and innovation are the norm. To succeed, we must have the same expectations about how we will practice our commitment to excellence, integrity and responsibility in our everyday work.

**A. Commitment to Excellence.** *We are committed to being the best school district and personnel we can be, educating our students to their maximum potential. Everything we do has an impact on the classroom.*

1. **Set the example.** *We are committed to providing the best example we can, striving to demonstrate excellence, integrity and responsibility in our work.*
2. **Create an environment of trust, respect and non-discrimination.** *We are committed to creating an environment of trust, care and respect. We will not tolerate discriminatory or harassing behavior of students or colleagues.*
3. **Provide honest, accurate and timely information.** *We are committed to candor in our work relationships, providing other District personnel including supervisors, senior staff and Board members with accurate, reliable and timely information. We will not tolerate falsification or cheating.*
4. **Identify problems and help create solutions.** *We are committed to identifying areas for improvement within our District, and suggesting and implementing solutions that make us more successful.*
5. **Keep policies, procedures and rules.** *Our rules, policies and procedures are the foundation of trust and how our District conducts everyday business. They define our expectations and evaluation criteria. We are committed to following our Code of Ethics, laws, and District rules, regulations, standing orders, policies and procedures, recommending changes required to make them better, and will not tolerate improper conduct.*
6. **Report improper conduct.** *When someone does well, it reflects well on all of us. When we make a mistake, we strive to correct it and learn from it. We are committed to reporting gross mismanagement, significant waste of funds, abuse of authority, threats to safety, violations of our Code of Ethics, laws, rules, regulations, standing orders, policies and procedures, or other conduct that damages our integrity or reputation, to our supervisor, the Office of General Counsel or the Inspector General.*
7. **Keep colleagues safe from retaliation.** *We are committed to creating a work environment where problems can be reported and solved. We are prohibited from threatening, harassing, punishing or retaliating against employees who make good faith complaints.*

**B. District and Personal Integrity.** To maintain our integrity, we are committed to making decisions in the best interests of the District. We will avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of impropriety.

8. **Avoid conflicts of interest and improper outside income.** A conflict of interest can exist anytime our position or decisions provide us a financial benefit or improper advantage. We are permitted to receive outside income as long as it does not create a conflict with our District work. *We are committed to declining outside income that might be perceived as inconsistent, incompatible or in conflict with our official duties. We will not make decisions or use our position for personal benefit or to gain an improper advantage.*
9. **Decline gifts.** A gift is a benefit we receive for which we did not pay. Gifts can include merchandise, food, tickets, use of facilities, investments, rebates or discounts not offered to the public, or forgiveness of debt from vendors, lobbyists, parents, students or others. *We will not accept gifts or gratuities in excess of \$100 from a single source in a single year (aggregate retail value) or that give the appearance that the gift improperly influenced our decisions regardless of the amount. We will not solicit vendors, lobbyists, parents or others for anything that provides us a personal benefit different from the public.*
10. **Improper influence of family members and associates.** *We are committed to abstaining from decisions that could result in a direct benefit to a close relative or co-habitant including, but not limited to, hiring, promotion, discipline, evaluation or direct supervision.*
11. **Maintain appropriate relationships with students.** *We are committed to ensuring that employee-student relationships are positive, professional and non-exploitative. We will not tolerate improper employee-student relationships.*
12. **Keep procurement information confidential.** *To reinforce public trust and confidence in our procurement processes, we are committed to ensuring that procurement information is kept confidential, used only in the performance of our duties, and not released early to potential contractors.*
13. **Keep the contracting process objective.** *We are committed to making contract award recommendations in the best interest of the DPS. From the time an RFP, specification or other contract document is issued until the staff recommendation is made public we will not have contact concerning the contract with contractors participating in the process or their representatives.*
14. **Future employment.** In order to prevent conflicts of interest, DPS personnel are not permitted to discuss the possibility of future employment with a person or organization that might benefit from their official decisions. Contractors are required by the DPS to disclose all personnel, consultants and sub-contractors who were employees of the

District in the previous three years. The District will not contract with a contractor who compensates a former DPS employee to influence an action on a matter pending with the District if that employee, within the last twelve (12) months held a DPS position in which the employee personally and substantially participated in that matter. The DPS will not contract with a contractor that employs a former District employee who, while serving in a DPS position within the last two years, substantially participated in the development of the contract's RFP, requirements, specifications or in any other part of the contracting process. No former DPS official is permitted to lobby the District for one year after leaving the District. *We are committed to avoiding discussions about future employment with people or organizations who can benefit from our decisions, and will not take or influence official actions that might benefit that person or organization.*

15. **Uphold District interests in hiring and promotion.** *We are committed to hiring and promoting DPS personnel based on their qualifications and the job-criteria of the position, and will not tolerate improper practices.*

C. **Responsibility.** *We are committed to holding each other responsible for our performance as a District and as individuals.*

16. **Proper use of public position.** *We are committed to ensuring that our power and authority are used in an appropriate, positive manner that enhances the public interest and trust. We will not use our authority to improperly influence people or obtain preferential treatment.*

17. **Proper use of public resources** *Except for occasional and limited personal use that does not interfere with performance of duties or create an appearance of impropriety, we are committed to ensuring that DPS facilities, equipment, supplies, mailing lists or other District resources are used for District purposes only. Except for occasional and limited personal use we will not tolerate improper use of public resources, and will report and reimburse the District for significant costs of any limited personal use.*

18. **Leadership of District personnel and use of District time.** *We are committed to ensuring that DPS personnel are tasked to perform only District work on District working-time. We will not direct or permit District personnel to perform personal services on District working time and will report such incidents to our supervisor, the Office of General Counsel or Inspector General.*

19. **Uphold confidentiality.** *To achieve excellence, our District employees, parents and students must be able to discuss issues frankly, and when appropriate, in confidence. We are committed to abiding by all laws and District policies concerning confidential information, including student records, personnel files, agreements, and District records and policies. We will not reveal information which is exempt from disclosure pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act and state and federal law.*

20. **Waivers.** The Emergency Financial Manager, DPS Superintendent or their designees upon a showing of good cause may waive an ethics prohibition in writing with notification to the Board of Education.

## **References**

Michigan Revised School Code

Detroit Public Schools' Whistleblower Policy

Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), MCL 15.231 et seq.

Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act ("FERPA"), 20 U.S.C. 1232

Contracts of Public Servants with Public Entities Act 317 of 1968 (MCL 15.321-15.330)