

School Board

Board Member Oath and Conduct

Each School Board member, before taking his or her seat on the Board, shall take the following oath of office: 1

I, (name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of member of the Board of Education² ~~(or Board of School Directors, as the case may be)~~ of (name of School District), in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and the laws of the State of Illinois, to the best of my ability.

I further swear (or affirm) that:

I shall respect taxpayer interests by serving as a faithful protector of the School District's assets;

I shall encourage and respect the free expression of opinion by my fellow Board members and others who seek a hearing before the Board, while respecting the privacy of students and employees;

I shall recognize that a Board member has no legal authority as an individual and that decisions can be made only by a majority vote at a public Board meeting; ~~and~~

I shall abide by majority decisions of the Board, while retaining the right to seek changes in such decisions through ethical and constructive channels;

As part of the Board of Education, I shall accept the responsibility for my role in the equitable and quality education of every student in the School District;

I shall foster with the Board extensive participation of the community, formulate goals, define outcomes, and set the course for (name of School District);

I shall assist in establishing a structure and an environment designed to ensure all students have the opportunity to attain their maximum potential through a sound organizational framework;

I shall strive to ensure a continuous assessment of student achievement and all conditions affecting the education of our children, in compliance with State law;

I shall serve as education's key advocate on behalf of students and our community's school (or schools) to advance the vision for (name of School District); and

Commented [BZ1]: "School District" is stated here as it is earlier in order to match the statute.

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ Although the policy is not required by State or federal law, each board member, before taking his or her seat on the board, must take an oath in substantially the form given in the statute as reprinted in this sample policy, §105 ILCS 5/10-16.5, amended by P.A. 100-1055, eff. 1-1-19). Districts often ask whether this applies only to newly elected board members or to all members elected and/or re-elected. To assure compliance, those members that are newly elected or appointed and returning by re-appointment and/or re-election should take the oath as the board determines it should be administered, i.e., examine the board's policy or its current practice for administering the oath of office.

This policy contains the verbatim oath because many of its provisions have policy implications. However, if a board prefers to remove the oath from the policy, it should replace the first sentence with this alternative:

Each Board member, before taking his or her seat on the Board, shall take the oath of office as prescribed in Section 10-16.5 of the School Code.

² Replace "Board of Education" with "Board of School Directors" throughout, when applicable.

I shall strive to work together with the District Superintendent to lead the School District toward fulfilling the vision the Board has created, fostering excellence for every student in the areas of academic skills, knowledge, citizenship, and personal development.

The Board President will administer the oath in an open Board meeting; in the absence of the President, the Vice President will administer the oath. -If neither is available, the Board member with the longest service on the Board will administer the oath. ³

The Board adopts the Illinois Association of School Boards' *Code of Conduct for Members of School Boards*.⁴ A copy of the *Code* shall be displayed in the regular Board meeting room.

LEGAL REF.: 105 ILCS 5/10-16.5.

CROSS REF.: 1:30 (School District Philosophy), 2:20 (Powers and Duties of the School Board; Indemnification), 2:50 (Board Member Term of Office), 2:100 (Board Member Conflict of Interest), 2:105 (Ethics and Gift Ban), 2:210 (Organizational School Board Meeting)

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³ Optional - State law allows the board to determine how the oath is administered, ~~105 ILCS 5/10-16.5, amended by P.A. 100-1055, eff. 1-1-19~~. Use the following alternative if a board does not want anyone to administer the oath:

Each Board member who is taking office shall read the oath during an open meeting and swear or affirm to follow it as indicated in the oath.

⁴ Although national and state associations have developed codes of conduct, each board may find it helpful, as part of its self-evaluation process, to consider what behavior members expect from each other. The resulting ethics statement may serve as an important step in new member orientation. For IASB resources, see: www.iasb.com/training/sch_bd_resources.cfm and www.iasb.com/training/schoolboardgovernancebooklet.pdf.