

## **Jefferson County Public Schools Ethics Guidelines**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Jefferson County Board of Education (the “Board”) believes that the Board, Superintendent, and all employees of the Jefferson County School District (the “District”) act in the highest ethical manner to preserve the public trust. To effectively carry out the duties and responsibilities entrusted to the Board, Superintendent and District employees, it is critical that clear, comprehensive ethical requirements are established so that the public has confidence in the operations and management of the Jefferson County Public Schools.

Our Ethics Guidelines describes what the public can expect from us and what we can expect from each other. It demonstrates our commitment to the highest standards for professional activities and relationships reflecting all our core values especially respect, diversity, and stewardship.

Our Ethics Guidelines helps us achieve success by setting common expectations and increasing trust, commitment, and teamwork throughout the District, and between the District and community.

### **Application and Enforceability**

The Ethics Guidelines applies to all District personnel, volunteers, or any party with access to District staff, students or information thereof. The Ethics Guidelines applies to all situations involving District business, contracts, student relations, and staff events, at any time during the year, including holidays, athletic seasons, contract negotiations, period of contract, and staff appreciation events. Provisions of these Ethics Guidelines are supported by State law, Board policies, and District personnel rules, regulations, and collective bargaining agreements. Violations of these Ethics Guidelines may result in administrative or disciplinary action under those laws, policies, rules, regulations, and agreements. In the event of any conflict, the provisions of those laws, policies, rules, regulations, and agreements shall take precedence over the corresponding provision in these Ethics Guidelines.

### **Making Ethical Decisions**

While the Ethics Guidelines 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 Ethics Guidelines. When making decisions:

- Evaluate the situation and identify the ethical issues.
- Follow the rules. Consult the Ethics Guidelines, law, and District rules, regulations, 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 Ethics Committee for help. Ask for help early—before you act.

- Make and carry out a decision that is consistent with laws, policies, rules, regulations, and agreements and develops excellence, integrity and responsibility.
- While exercising judgment on ethical matters, gifts, gratuities, contributions, meals, product, goods, or favors not exceeding \$50 or \$50 market value of goods or services per person per year from any one source would not be considered an ethical violation. As long as the matter of concern does not conflict with the District's vision or any relevant collective bargaining agreement, the dollar limit does not apply to Parent-Teacher Associations, including PTA, PTSA, and PTO, or bargaining units. Staff named, or likely to be named, to any JCPS bargaining unit negotiating team must conform to this dollar limit with respect to the bargaining unit(s) with which they will be negotiating.
- Ethical violations contained within this policy would be considered a violation if the benefactor of the violation was an immediate family member or co-habitant as if it was the employee benefitting directly. For this purpose, immediate family member includes spouse, children, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, or any half- or in-law of one of these groups.

### **Commitments and Expectations**

To achieve our mission of educating students, we strive to create a District culture that fosters trust and focuses on excellence. Our goal is to develop a culture that is professionally 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 standards about how we will practice our commitment to excellence, integrity and responsibility in our everyday work. To that end, every JCPS employee is **required** to view the annual Harassment and Discrimination Video and take the accompanying quiz provided by the department of Compliance and Investigations. The due date shall be provided to every employee each year. Failure to take the quiz may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**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, cheating, or purposefully withholding pertinent information. We will make every effort to create an accurate and reliable work product, including time and attendance and expense reporting.*

**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 Ethics Guidelines, laws, and District rules, regulations, 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 Ethics Guidelines, laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures, or other conduct that damages our integrity or reputation, to our supervisor, and/or the appropriate mandatory reporting agency (internal and external).*

**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 or any witness or person who participates in an investigation. In addition, any acts of retaliation for participating in a discrimination investigation may be addressed through the office of Compliance and Investigations.*

**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.

**1. 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.*

**2. Decline gifts.** A gift is a benefit we receive for which we did not pay. Gifts can include merchandise, food, services, tickets, use of facilities, investments, rebates or discounts not offered to the public or other JCPS employees, or forgiveness of debt from vendors, lobbyists, parents, students, staff or others. *We will not accept gifts or gratuities to any individual in excess of \$50 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 or accept gifts from vendors, lobbyists, parents or others for anything that provides us a personal benefit different from the public.*

**3. 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 (spouse, children, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, or any half- or in-law of one of these groups) or co-habitant including, but not limited to, hiring, promotion, discipline, evaluation, direct supervision, reference without disclosure of family relationship, contract award, contract supervision, or contract influence.*

**4. Maintain appropriate relationships with students.** *We are committed to ensuring that employee-student relationships are positive, professional and non-exploitative inside and outside of the school environment, excluding familial or guardian relationship matters. We will not tolerate improper employee-student relationships.*

**5. 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.*

**6. Keep the contracting process objective.** *We are committed to making contract award recommendations in the best interest of the District. Communications between District staff and potential vendors shall follow all stipulations in the Procurement Regulations of the Jefferson County Board of Education. Any vendor communications regarding active solicitations shall be immediately referred to the Purchasing & Bids Department.*

**7. Employee Contracting.** Employees may not contract for services that are otherwise paid through collectively-bargained or Board-approved employee salary or wage rates. *Employees may not be a contractor for services for their school or central office division.*

**8. Future employment.** In order to prevent conflicts of interest, District 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 District 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 District employee to influence an action on a matter pending with the District if that employee, within the last twelve (12) months, held a District position in which the employee personally and substantially participated in that matter. The District will not contract with a contractor that employs a former District employee who, while serving in a District 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 District 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.*

**9. Uphold District interests in hiring and promotion.** *We are committed to hiring and promoting District 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.*

**1. 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, obtain preferential treatment, or obtain personal advantage.*

**2. 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 District facilities, equipment, supplies, mailing lists, email, network, 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.*

**3. Leadership of District personnel and use of District time.** *We are committed to ensuring that District personnel perform only District work on District working time. Supervisors must not pressure staff within their division to perform personal services during work time or discounted personal services outside of work 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, and/or the appropriate mandatory reporting agency (internal and external). We will not accept any personal services from division subordinates if an established market rate is not paid and documentation is made available upon request.*

**4. Uphold confidentiality.** *To achieve excellence, all 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 confidential information, including any personally identifiable information, meeting content and the sources of comments, from staff, faculty, parents and closed Board of Education meetings, beyond the extent to which required by state and federal law.*