SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

State Board of Education

Model Code of Ethics and Effective Board Governance

(Third & Final Reading)

November 3, 2026

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The Trustee's Charge

The citizens of South Carolina entrust local boards of trustees with one of the State's highest public responsibilities: governing public education for the benefit of present and future generations.

The authority vested in a board member is not personal. It is exercised in trust for the students, families, educators, taxpayers, and communities served by the district.

Effective trustees govern with integrity, humility, courage, transparency, and sound judgment. They establish the direction of the district, faithfully steward public resources, employ and evaluate the superintendent, and remain steadfastly focused on improving educational opportunities and outcomes for every student.

This Model Code establishes the standards of ethical conduct and effective governance expected of every local board of trustees in South Carolina. It reflects the State Board of Education's expectation that public office will be exercised with integrity, fidelity to law, respect for the public trust, and an unwavering commitment to the success of South Carolina's students, and that adherence to these expectations will be taken seriously as an essential condition of effective board service.

ARTICLE I

Title, Authority, Purpose, Findings, and Definitions

Section 1.01. Title.

This policy shall be known as the South Carolina State Board of Education Model Code of Ethics and Effective Board Governance ("Model Code").

Section 1.02. Authority.

This Model Code is adopted pursuant to the authority granted to the State Board of Education by the Constitution and laws of the State of South Carolina, including the requirements of Act 191 directing the State Board to develop a model code of ethics for adoption by local boards of trustees.

Nothing in this Model Code supersedes federal law, state law, or duly adopted local board policy. In the event of any conflict, applicable law shall govern.

Section 1.03. Purpose.

The purpose of this Model Code is to establish uniform expectations for ethical conduct and effective governance by members of local boards of trustees.

This Model Code is intended to:

1. strengthen public confidence in the governance of South Carolina's public schools;

2. promote ethical leadership and faithful stewardship of public resources;

3. clarify the respective responsibilities of local boards of trustees and superintendents;

4. encourage governance practices that improve educational opportunities and outcomes for students; and

5. foster transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in board governance.

This Model Code further makes clear that the moral and ethical duties of trustees are continuing obligations of public office, and adherence to those duties is expected, observable, and subject to appropriate review through lawful governance, oversight, accountability, and corrective processes.

Section 1.04. Findings.

The State Board of Education finds that:

A. The South Carolina Constitution places upon the General Assembly the responsibility to provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free public schools. Local boards of trustees play an essential role in fulfilling that constitutional responsibility.

B. Effective governance is indispensable to effective schools. The quality of board leadership directly influences district vision, policy, stewardship of public resources, organizational stability, and educational success.

C. Board members serve as fiduciaries on behalf of the students, families, taxpayers, and communities of South Carolina and are expected to exercise the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.

D. Ethical governance requires more than compliance with minimum legal requirements. It requires informed judgment, responsible stewardship, transparency, accountability, fidelity to the public trust, and a steadfast

commitment to improving student outcomes, all of which are expected of board members throughout their service.

E. The Board governs through the establishment of mission, vision, goals, policy, fiscal oversight, and accountability. Administrative responsibility rests with the superintendent, who manages the day-to-day operations of the district and implements Board policy.

F. Public trust is strengthened when boards conduct business openly, make decisions based upon evidence and the educational interests of students, faithfully steward public resources, and continuously improve their effectiveness as governing bodies.

Section 1.05. Definitions.

For purposes of this Model Code:

Board means the elected or appointed board of trustees of a South Carolina school district, including a charter school board, charter school authorizer board, or the South Carolina Charter School District Board, other than the State Board of Education.

Board Member means a person holding membership, whether by election or appointment, on a board of education, including a charter school board, charter school authorizer board, or the South Carolina Charter School District Board, other than the State Board of Education.

District means a public school district organized under the laws of South Carolina.

Governance means the exercise of the Board's authority through the establishment of mission, vision, goals, policy, fiscal oversight, and accountability.

Administration means the management of district operations under the authority of the superintendent.

Public Resources means district funds, facilities, property, equipment, technology, personnel, information, and any other assets entrusted to the district.

Student Outcomes means measurable educational results reflecting student learning, achievement, growth, readiness, safety, well-being, and successful preparation for college, career, military service, and civic life.

Conflict of Interest means any circumstance requiring disclosure or recusal under applicable law or that otherwise creates the appearance that official judgment may be improperly influenced.

Confidential Information means information made confidential by federal law, state law, court order, attorney-client privilege, or lawful executive session.

ARTICLE II

The Five Duties of a School Board Trustee

Section 2.01. General Principle.

Every responsibility contained in this Model Code arises from five fundamental duties accompanying service as a member of a local board of trustees.

These duties are intended to guide the conduct of every board member and the governance of every local board.

Section 2.02. Duty to Students.

Board members shall place the educational interests of students above personal, political, organizational, or special interests.

The Board shall make improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students the central consideration in its governance decisions.

Section 2.03. Duty to Govern.

Board members shall faithfully exercise the governing responsibilities entrusted to the Board by law.

The Board governs through vision, policy, strategic priorities, fiscal oversight, and accountability.

The Board does not administer the day-to-day operations of the district.

Section 2.04. Duty to Steward Public Resources.

Board members shall faithfully steward the financial and physical resources entrusted to the district.

The Board shall allocate resources prudently, transparently, and in a manner that advances the educational mission of the district.

Section 2.05. Duty to Uphold the Public Trust.

Board members shall conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the integrity, impartiality, and effectiveness of public education.

Board members shall comply with all applicable laws governing ethical conduct and public service.

Section 2.06. Duty to Improve.

Board members shall continually strengthen their effectiveness as governors through learning, self-evaluation, thoughtful deliberation, and responsible oversight.

Continuous improvement is an ongoing obligation of public service.

ARTICLE III

Governance Framework

Section 3.01. Distinction Between Governance and Administration.

Effective public education depends upon a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent.

The Board governs.

The Superintendent administers.

Respect for these distinct responsibilities is essential to effective governance.

Section 3.02. Responsibilities of the Board.

The Board shall:

1. establish the district's mission, vision, and strategic priorities;
2. adopt policies governing the district;
3. employ and annually evaluate the Superintendent;
4. adopt and oversee the district budget;
5. steward district resources;
6. monitor district performance;
7. establish accountability for results;
8. ensure compliance with applicable law; and
9. evaluate its own effectiveness as a governing body.

Section 3.03. Responsibilities of the Superintendent.

The Superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the district and is responsible for:

1. administering district operations;
2. implementing Board policy;
3. supervising district personnel;
4. managing district finances consistent with the adopted budget;
5. advising the Board regarding educational, operational, and financial matters;
6. reporting district performance to the Board; and
7. carrying out other responsibilities assigned by law or Board policy.

Section 3.04. Collective Authority.

The Board acts only as a legally constituted public body.

Individual board members possess no authority to bind the district, supervise employees, direct district operations, or commit district resources except as authorized by law or official Board action.

No individual board member shall represent that he or she speaks on behalf of the Board unless authorized by Board action.

Section 3.05. Principles of Effective Governance.

The Board shall govern through:

- clearly articulated goals;
- sound policy;
- responsible stewardship of public resources;
- transparent decision-making;
- regular monitoring of district performance; and
- accountability for results.

The Board should avoid involvement in matters that are administrative in nature except as necessary to fulfill its legal responsibilities.

ARTICLE IV

Duty to Students

Section 4.01. Statement of Principle.

The educational success of students is the central purpose of public education and the highest priority of every board of trustees.

Every significant decision of the Board should advance the district's mission of preparing students for success in college, career, military service, and civic life.

Section 4.02. Governing Standard.

Board members shall exercise the authority of public office in the best interests of all students served by the district.

The Board shall establish ambitious expectations for student achievement while recognizing its responsibility to provide the governance, oversight, and support necessary to help students succeed.

Section 4.03. Student-Centered Governance.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Board shall:

A. establish clear goals for improving student achievement, growth, readiness, and opportunity;

B. maintain high expectations for every student;

C. promote safe, orderly, respectful, and academically focused schools;

D. regularly review objective measures of district performance;

E. evaluate significant policy and budget decisions according to their likely impact upon student outcomes; and

F. promote continuous improvement throughout the district.

Section 4.04. Decisions Based Upon Evidence.

Board decisions shall be informed by reliable information, sound educational practice, objective evidence, and the Board's adopted goals.

Board members shall seek sufficient information to make informed decisions and remain open to evidence presented during Board deliberations.

Board members shall avoid predetermined decisions before considering information properly presented to the Board.

Section 4.05. Long-Term Stewardship of Student Success.

The Board shall exercise its authority with due regard for the long-term educational interests of students.

Board members should avoid decisions that provide short-term advantage at the expense of sustained educational improvement or fiscal stability.

Section 4.06. Equal Educational Opportunity.

Board members shall support policies that provide students access to a high-quality public education consistent with the Constitution and laws of the United States and the State of South Carolina.

Section 4.07. Responsibility to the Entire District.

Board members are elected or appointed to serve the interests of the district as a whole.

While individual members may receive input from constituents, parents, employees, students, or community organizations, governance decisions shall be made based upon the interests of all students and the district as a whole.

No Board member shall advocate for preferential treatment inconsistent with law or Board policy.

Section 4.08. Student Outcomes as the Measure of Governance.

The Board recognizes that successful governance is ultimately measured by whether the district continuously improves opportunities and outcomes for students.

Accordingly, the Board shall regularly review progress toward its adopted goals and use that information to guide future policy, budgeting, and strategic planning.

ARTICLE V

Duty to Govern

Section 5.01. Statement of Principle.

The Board governs through vision, policy, stewardship, and accountability.

The Superintendent administers district operations.

Effective public education requires mutual respect for these distinct responsibilities.

Section 5.02. Governing Standard.

Board members shall faithfully discharge the governing responsibilities entrusted to them by law and shall refrain from assuming responsibilities assigned to the Superintendent or district administration.

Section 5.03. Collective Authority.

The Board exercises its authority only when acting as a legally constituted public body.

Individual Board members possess no independent authority to:

A. supervise district employees;

B. direct district operations;

C. commit district resources;

D. negotiate contracts on behalf of the district;

E. promise Board action; or

F. bind the district except as authorized by law or official Board action.

Section 5.04. Governance Responsibilities.

The Board shall:

A. establish the district's mission, vision, and strategic priorities;

B. adopt policies governing the district;

C. adopt and oversee the annual budget;

D. employ and annually evaluate the Superintendent;

E. monitor district performance;

F. steward public resources;

G. ensure legal compliance; and

H. evaluate the effectiveness of Board governance.

Section 5.05. Governance Through Policy.

The Board governs primarily by:

- establishing direction;
- adopting policy;
- allocating resources;
- monitoring results; and
- holding the Superintendent accountable.

The Board should avoid involvement in operational decisions except where required by law or necessary to fulfill its governance responsibilities.

Section 5.06. Relationship with the Superintendent.

The Superintendent serves as the Board's sole employee unless otherwise provided by law.

The Board shall establish clear expectations for Superintendent performance through:

- strategic goals;
- adopted policies;
- annual budget;
- performance measures; and
- annual evaluation.

Board members shall communicate operational concerns through the Superintendent or through procedures established by Board policy.

Except as otherwise authorized by law, Board members shall not direct district employees regarding operational matters.

Section 5.07. Superintendent Evaluation.

The Board shall annually evaluate the Superintendent using objective criteria adopted by the Board.

Evaluation shall consider, at a minimum:

A. progress toward Board goals;

B. student outcomes;

C. implementation of Board policy;

D. fiscal stewardship;

E. organizational leadership;

F. legal compliance; and

G. recruitment, development, and retention of high-quality personnel.

The purpose of evaluation is to strengthen leadership, improve organizational performance, and advance the educational mission of the district.

Section 5.08. Board Decision-Making.

Board members shall:

A. prepare for meetings through timely review of agendas and supporting materials;

B. actively participate in Board deliberations;

C. exercise independent judgment;

D. ask thoughtful questions before voting;

E. consider recommendations from district administration, legal counsel, auditors, and other qualified professionals;

F. deliberate respectfully; and

G. base decisions upon applicable law, Board policy, evidence, and the educational interests of students.

Section 5.09. Unity of Governance.

Board members are expected to deliberate openly and thoughtfully before Board action is taken.

Once the Board has acted lawfully, individual Board members shall respect and support the implementation of the Board's official action while retaining the right to advocate for future policy changes through established Board processes.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a Board member from expressing personal opinions or proposing reconsideration of future Board actions consistent with applicable law, Board procedures, and the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Section 5.10. Board Culture.

Effective governance depends upon trust, professionalism, and mutual respect.

Board members shall foster a governance culture characterized by:

- integrity;
- civility;
- transparency;
- professionalism;
- thoughtful deliberation;
- accountability; and
- continuous improvement.

Disagreement regarding policy strengthens governance.

Personal attacks, intimidation, retaliation, harassment, or conduct that materially interferes with the Board's ability to govern effectively are inconsistent with this Code.

ARTICLE VI

Duty to Steward Public Resources

Section 6.01. Statement of Principle.

Public resources are entrusted to local boards of trustees for the benefit of the students and citizens of South Carolina.

Board members serve as fiduciaries of that public trust and shall exercise prudent stewardship over district funds, facilities, personnel, property, and other public assets.

Every financial decision should advance the educational mission of the district while preserving the long-term financial health of the organization.

Section 6.02. Governing Standard.

The Board shall faithfully steward public resources through sound financial oversight, responsible planning, transparency, accountability, and lawful administration of district assets.

The Board shall ensure that financial decisions support the district's strategic priorities and improve opportunities and outcomes for students.

Section 6.03. Strategic Allocation of Resources.

The Board shall allocate public resources in a manner consistent with its adopted mission, goals, strategic plan, and budget priorities.

Accordingly, the Board shall:

A. adopt budgets that reflect Board priorities;

B. align financial resources with strategic goals;

C. periodically evaluate whether major expenditures are advancing Board priorities;

D. consider the educational impact of significant financial decisions; and

E. review programs and initiatives to determine whether they continue to warrant investment.

The Board recognizes that responsible stewardship includes not only approving expenditures, but periodically evaluating whether those expenditures continue to serve students effectively.

Section 6.04. Fiscal Oversight.

The Board shall exercise independent oversight of the financial condition of the district.

Board members shall:

A. regularly review financial reports;

B. monitor revenues and expenditures;

C. ensure that appropriate internal controls are maintained;

D. review audit findings;

E. monitor implementation of corrective actions arising from audits or other financial reviews; and

F. require timely reporting regarding significant financial risks affecting the district.

Section 6.05. Financial Sustainability.

The Board shall govern with due regard for the long-term financial stability of the district.

Accordingly, Board members should consider:

- recurring costs associated with new initiatives;
- long-term maintenance obligations;
- debt service obligations;
- enrollment trends;
- projected revenues;
- capital needs; and
- financial risks.

The Board should avoid creating ongoing financial obligations without a reasonable plan for sustaining those commitments.

Section 6.06. Capital Assets.

The Board shall exercise prudent oversight of district facilities, transportation assets, technology, equipment, and other capital resources.

Long-range capital planning should support the educational mission of the district while protecting public investments.

Section 6.07. Procurement and Contracting.

The Board shall promote fairness, transparency, competition, and integrity in procurement and contracting.

Board members shall not:

A. seek preferential treatment for vendors or contractors;

B. interfere with procurement processes except through lawful Board action; or

C. attempt to influence contract awards for personal or political purposes.

Section 6.08. Responsible Use of Public Resources.

Public resources shall be used solely for authorized public purposes.

Board members shall not knowingly authorize or permit the misuse, waste, abuse, or diversion of district resources.

District personnel, facilities, equipment, information, and financial resources shall not be used for private benefit except as authorized by law or Board policy.

Section 6.09. Transparency in Financial Reporting.

The Board shall encourage clear, timely, and understandable financial reporting.

Board members should receive sufficient financial information to enable informed governance decisions and meaningful oversight of district finances.

Section 6.10. Continuous Evaluation.

Faithful stewardship requires continual evaluation.

The Board shall periodically review whether district programs, services, and investments continue to advance the Board's adopted priorities and contribute to improved educational outcomes.

Where appropriate, the Board should reallocate resources to better support student success and organizational effectiveness.

ARTICLE VII

Duty to Uphold the Public Trust

Section 7.01. Statement of Principle.

The authority entrusted to a board member is a public trust.

Board members shall conduct themselves in a manner that preserves public confidence in the integrity, impartiality, transparency, and effectiveness of public education.

Section 7.02. Governing Standard.

Board members are expected to model the ethical conduct they require of the district. Their actions, communications, decisions, and use of public authority should reflect the moral responsibility of public office.

Board members shall comply with all applicable laws governing ethical conduct and public service.

Board members shall conduct themselves honestly, impartially, and independently, avoiding both actual conflicts of interest and conduct that reasonably creates the appearance of improper influence.

Section 7.03. Compliance with Law.

Board members shall comply with:

A. the Constitution and laws of the United States;

B. the Constitution and laws of South Carolina;

C. the South Carolina Ethics Reform Act;

D. the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act;

E. all other laws governing local boards of trustees; and

F. duly adopted Board policies.

Section 7.04. Conflicts of Interest.

Board members shall avoid conflicts of interest and faithfully comply with all disclosure and recusal requirements imposed by law.

Board members shall not participate in matters in which participation is prohibited by law.

Whenever uncertainty exists, Board members should seek guidance from Board counsel or other appropriate legal authority before participating in Board action.

Section 7.05. Improper Personal Benefit.

Board members shall not use public office to obtain improper financial gain, employment opportunities, contracts, favors, or other personal benefits for themselves, members of their immediate family, or any business or organization with which they are associated.

Section 7.06. Gifts and Favors.

Board members shall not solicit or knowingly accept gifts, favors, services, or other things of value when doing so would violate applicable law or reasonably create the appearance that official judgment has been compromised.

Nothing in this section shall prohibit conduct expressly permitted by law.

Section 7.07. Transparency.

The Board shall conduct the public's business openly except where confidentiality is authorized or required by law.

Board members shall promote public understanding of Board actions through honest, accurate, and timely communication.

Section 7.08. Confidentiality.

Board members shall safeguard confidential information acquired through Board service.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

A. student records protected by law;

B. personnel information made confidential by law;

C. attorney-client privileged communications;

D. matters lawfully discussed in executive session; and

E. any other information made confidential by federal or state law.

Nothing in this Code shall prohibit disclosure when disclosure is required or expressly authorized by law.

Section 7.09. Public Communications.

Board members should communicate with honesty, professionalism, and respect.

When expressing personal opinions regarding district matters, Board members should take reasonable care to distinguish personal views from official Board action unless authorized to speak on behalf of the Board.

Section 7.10. Political Activity.

Nothing in this Code shall be construed to limit the constitutional rights of Board members to participate in the political process.

However, Board members shall not:

A. use district funds, facilities, equipment, personnel, or other public resources for campaign purposes except as authorized by law;

B. represent personal political positions as official Board positions without authorization; or

C. use Board office to obtain improper political advantage.

Section 7.11. Professional Conduct.

Board members shall conduct themselves with integrity, civility, professionalism, and respect.

Board members shall treat fellow trustees, district employees, students, parents, and members of the public with dignity and courtesy.

Disagreement regarding policy is an expected and healthy part of public governance.

Personal attacks, intimidation, retaliation, harassment, discrimination, or conduct that materially interferes with the Board's ability to govern effectively are inconsistent with this Code.

ARTICLE VIII

Duty to Improve

Section 8.01. Statement of Principle.

Effective governance requires continual learning, thoughtful reflection, and a commitment to improvement.

Board members accept a continuing responsibility to strengthen their knowledge, improve their effectiveness as governors, and enhance the Board's ability to fulfill its responsibilities on behalf of students and the public.

Section 8.02. Governing Standard.

The Board shall cultivate a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating its governance practices, strengthening Board capacity, and encouraging professional development consistent with the responsibilities of public office.

Section 8.03. Board Member Development.

Board members shall complete all orientation and continuing education required by South Carolina law.

Beyond minimum statutory requirements, Board members are encouraged to pursue continuing education in areas including:

A. governance and board leadership;

B. ethics and public accountability;

C. school finance and fiscal stewardship;

D. educational accountability and student outcomes;

E. strategic planning;

F. school safety and risk management;

G. legal responsibilities of public boards; and

H. other subjects that strengthen effective governance.

Professional development should enhance the Board's ability to govern and should not substitute for the administrative responsibilities assigned to the Superintendent.

Section 8.04. Governance Effectiveness.

The Board should periodically evaluate its effectiveness as a governing body.

The evaluation should consider:

A. progress toward Board goals;

B. effectiveness of Board meetings;

C. adherence to this Code;

D. governance practices;

E. Board culture and collaboration; and

F. opportunities for continued improvement.

The Board should use the results of its evaluation to strengthen governance and improve organizational performance.

Section 8.05. Strategic Planning.

The Board shall periodically review the district's mission, vision, strategic priorities, and governance practices to ensure continued alignment with the educational needs of students and the expectations of the community.

Strategic planning should guide Board decisions regarding policy, budgeting, Superintendent evaluation, and long-term district priorities.

Section 8.06. Superintendent Leadership.

The Board recognizes that selecting, supporting, and evaluating the Superintendent is among its most important responsibilities.

The Board shall establish clear expectations for Superintendent performance and provide regular feedback consistent with the Board's adopted goals and evaluation process.

Evaluation should promote organizational excellence, professional growth, and continuous improvement.

Section 8.07. Effective Board Meetings.

Board meetings should be conducted in a manner that promotes thoughtful deliberation, transparency, informed decision-making, and efficient use of public time.

Whenever practicable, meeting agendas should emphasize matters requiring Board governance rather than routine administrative reporting.

Board members should receive sufficient information before meetings to permit informed deliberation.

ARTICLE IX

Accountability and Implementation

Section 9.01. Individual Responsibility.

Each Board member is individually responsible for understanding, honoring, and complying with this Model Code and all applicable laws governing public service. Ethical service includes not only avoiding unlawful conduct, but consistently demonstrating the integrity, impartiality, stewardship, transparency, and respect for the public trust expected of public officials.

Compliance with this Code is an ongoing obligation throughout a member’s service on the Board and may be reviewed as part of the Board’s lawful governance, self-evaluation, training, corrective action, and accountability processes.

Section 9.02. Board Responsibility.

The Board shares collective responsibility for promoting, reinforcing, and monitoring ethical conduct and effective governance in a manner consistent with applicable law.

When concerns arise regarding compliance with this Code, the Board should address those concerns promptly, fairly, consistently, and in accordance with applicable law, recognizing

that public confidence depends on visible commitment to ethical standards and responsible follow-through.

Section 9.03. Corrective Action.

When appropriate and consistent with applicable law, a Board may respond to violations of this Code through one or more of the following:

A. informal counseling;

B. additional education or governance training;

C. public admonition or censure;

D. consultation with legal counsel;

E. referral to the South Carolina Ethics Commission or other governmental authority having jurisdiction; or

F. any other action authorized by law.

The purpose of corrective action is to promote ethical governance, preserve public trust, address conduct inconsistent with this Code, and encourage future compliance with the moral, ethical, and legal responsibilities of board service. A referral to the South Carolina Ethics Commission is not a finding that an ethical violation occurred.

Section 9.04. Cooperation.

Board members shall cooperate with lawful investigations conducted by governmental authorities having jurisdiction over alleged violations of law.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to waive any constitutional or statutory rights afforded to any Board member.

Section 9.05. Construction.

This Model Code establishes standards of ethical conduct and effective governance.

Nothing in this Model Code shall be construed to:

A. create a private cause of action;

B. establish an independent basis for civil liability;

C. expand or diminish duties otherwise established by law;

D. impair any immunity otherwise provided by law;

E. supersede federal or state law; or

F. limit the authority of any governmental entity having jurisdiction under applicable law.

ARTICLE X

Adoption and Annual Acknowledgment

Section 10.01. Local Adoption.

Local boards of trustees shall adopt this Model Code with such modifications as may be appropriate to reflect local policies and procedures, provided those modifications remain consistent with applicable law.

Section 10.02. Annual Acknowledgment.

Each Board member should annually acknowledge, in writing, the continuing moral, ethical, and legal responsibilities of board service, including:

A. receipt of this Code;

B. review and understanding of its provisions;

C. commitment to comply with applicable law and Board policy;

D. completion of required training, where applicable; and

E. continued commitment to ethical leadership and effective governance.

The acknowledgment should be maintained among the official records of the Board.

The annual acknowledgment should support the Board's broader responsibility to reinforce expectations, document training and review, and identify opportunities to strengthen ethical governance and board effectiveness.

Effective Date

This Model Code shall become effective upon adoption by the State Board of Education and is intended to serve as the State Board's model code for adoption by local boards of trustees pursuant to Act 191.

School Board Service as a Public Trust

Service as a member of a local board of trustees is among the highest forms of public service entrusted to the citizens of South Carolina.

Trustees are elected not to advance individual interests, but to govern in the best interests of all students, taxpayers, and the communities they serve.

Faithful governance requires integrity, sound judgment, responsible stewardship of public resources, respect for the rule of law, transparency in public service, and an unwavering commitment to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for every student.

Public confidence in education is earned through ethical leadership, effective governance, and measurable results for students.

This Model Code reflects the State Board of Education's expectation that every trustee will honor both the authority and the responsibility entrusted to public office by governing with fidelity to law, respect for the public trust, steadfast dedication to the success of South Carolina's children, and a continuing willingness to be held accountable for the moral and ethical duties of board service.