

CODE OF ETHICS FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Effective Catholic school board members must:

1. Give the necessary time, thought, and study to the work of the board and attend and participate at board meetings
2. Work with other board members in a spirit of cooperation despite differences of opinion
3. Realize that the welfare of those for whom the educational programs are designed comes first in all decisions
4. Base personal decisions upon all available facts in each situation, voting with honest conviction, unswayed by partisan bias
5. Be able to abide by and uphold the final decision of the board, regardless of how he/she voted
6. Keep in mind that while the primary function of the board is to establish the policies that will give direction to the educational programs, the implementation of these policies is the function of the principal and staff
7. Realize that as an individual, he/she has no authority outside the meetings of the board and must, therefore, conduct his/her relationships with staff members, the local citizenry, and all media of communication on the basis of this reality
8. Refer persons with problems of an administrative nature to the proper administrative officer and never attempt to perform functions that are out of his/her field
9. Keep all confidences shared during executive sessions or closed meetings of the board
10. Never use his/her position on the board to benefit any one or any agency apart from the total interest of the school

(Adapted from *Ascent to Excellence in Catholic Education: A Guide to Effective Decision-Making*, by Mary Angela Harper, Ph.D.)

USING CONSENSUS AS A MEANS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Consensus is a decision process that makes full use of available resources. It does not mean complete unanimity. It means that everyone is willing to accept the decision and at least go along with it and support it. The Handbook for Building Better Boards lists some guidelines group members need to keep in mind when attempting to arrive at consensus:

- Avoid arguing for your own rankings. Present your position as lucidly and logically as possible, but listen to the other members' reactions and consider them carefully before you press your point.
- Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate. Instead, look for the next most-acceptable alternative for all parties.
- Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict and to reach agreement and harmony. When agreement seems to come quickly and easily, be suspicious. Explore the reasons and be sure everyone accepts the solutions for basically similar or complementary reasons. Yield only to positions that have objective and logically sound foundations.
- Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote, averages, coin-flips, and bargaining. When a dissenting member finally agrees, don't feel that she/he must be rewarded by having his/her own way on some later point.
- Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision process. Disagreement can help the group's decision because with a wide range of information and options, there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions.
- Be willing to accept a decision which may not be its first choice, but may be the best the group can make after weighing alternatives and the concerns of members.
- If consensus is not achievable, the leader must determine whether to continue the discussion at the next meeting or bring the matter to majority vote.

In the revised Handbook for Parish Councils, Kittle Morrison is quoted as saying that if consensus is not reached, the experience should not be considered as lost or a waste of time. The good thing that comes out of a consensus approach is that each participant comes to an awareness of being heard and that his/her stand is given a chance.

The Handbook for Parish Councils further states that the respect model should be used in running meetings:

- R** - responsibility (for what you say)
- E** - empathetic (listen empathetically)
- S** - sensitive (be sensitive to those around you)
- P** - ponder (think about what you say before you say it)
- E** - examine (examine your motives and the perspective of others)
- C** - confidentiality (it stays here!)
- T** - tolerate (be tolerant of all God's children)

EVALUATION TOOL

Please circle the appropriate response.

1. The meetings start and end on time.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

2. The physical setting is comfortable and conducive to conducting council activities.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

3. There is time built in for prayer and socializing.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

4. The minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda were sent to members prior to the meeting.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

5. The content of the meeting requires reporting, discussing, and decision making.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

6. The members are encouraged to participate in the discussions.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

7. The consensus approach to decision making is used.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

8. The members come well prepared to discuss the items on the agenda.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

9. Time for study and formational experiences is built into the meetings.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*

10. Members listen carefully to one another, and try to understand one another's position before responding.
Never *Seldom* *Usually* *Always*