



PROFESSIONAL STANDARD OF ETHICS

*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength...
You must love your neighbour as yourself.*

Mark 12:30-31

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WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF THE
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Introduction

The Mission and Guiding Principles of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board are described in our *Multi-Year Plan: Strategic Direction 2010-2014*. This document describes who we are when we operate at our best.

As employees of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, we work within a community whose mission challenges us to deliberately act in ways that honour the public trust, build up the common good, and are reflective of Gospel values.

A Professional Standard of Ethics is intended to be a support as we live out our mission. It is not intended to provide answers to all ethical questions and challenges. Rather, it sets out the ideals for which we strive and acts as a guide and provides discernment processes on which to reflect while carrying out the responsibilities of our work.

A Professional Standard of Ethics calls forth the daily practice of fair, just and honest behaviours. These behaviours demonstrate our faithfulness to our mission and guiding principles.

Actions and decisions involving ethics and conscience affect all areas of our work. They can be related to issues such as resolution of conflicts between colleagues, wise use of resources and funds, assessment of students, or interactions with parents, business partners and the community. At times, such actions and decisions can be difficult. Due to their complex nature, open dialogue and questioning are important parts of ethical discernment. Strength, courage and character are required in making ethical decisions and in determining appropriate courses of action.

Understanding our personal viewpoints is important. There is often more than one right answer or resolution. Looking toward the viewpoints of all stakeholders and soliciting appropriate advice are keys to the decision-making process.

A Professional Standard of Ethics supports a culture of integrity, reflection, consultation, humility, risk taking, communication, creative yet careful forgiveness and trust. It helps us to build an institution that serves learners and their families reflecting the highest ideals of our call, the Gospel message.

Finally, this Professional Standard of Ethics serves as an umbrella for codes of behaviour and standards of practice that impact the education sector. Some examples of these are: *The Ontario College of Teachers; The College of Early Childhood Educators Code; The Association of Professional Student Services Personnel; the Code of Ethics applicable to those with business designations such as Certified General Accountant; Certified Management Accountant and the Board of Trustees Code of Conduct, Supply Chain Professional Code of Ethics from the Ontario Public Buyers Association as well as Regulations issued by the Minister concerning ethical behaviour of staff and trustees. This Professional Standard of Ethics incorporates the Ontario Broader Public Sector (BPS) Supply Chain Code of Ethics.*

Professional Standard of Ethics

As an organization we value and uphold...

Integrity

Dignity of Persons

Accountability

Fairness

Collaboration

Stewardship

Our Professional Standard of Ethics

Integrity

We need to be persons of good character who honour the public trust. We will demonstrate our integrity through the courage, honesty, sincerity, stewardship, humility and trustworthiness that we bring to our daily work.

Dignity of Persons

We need to honour the dignity of all people by encouraging caring and mutual respect. We need to safeguard equity to do our utmost to ensure fair treatment of all by taking action to deter harassment and discrimination.

Accountability

We need to be responsible to each other, the organization, applicable legislation, and the public trust. We will maintain the highest level of honesty, transparency and confidentiality respecting legal requirements and safety issues. We will acknowledge and update our understanding of our duties under the *Education Act (R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2)* and other applicable legislation and regulations.

Fairness

We need to be just and transparent in our personal and professional interactions through consistent, impartial and equitable responses. We will be compassionate as we exercise fairness, respecting the individual yet making decisions that reflect the common good.

Collaboration

We need to depend on each other, support one another and engage openly and continually in shared important decision making whenever possible. We will respect the process, the decision made and the collective wisdom that comes from the group.

Stewardship

We need to use all our resources wisely to ensure that they are available to the poor, to the powerless and to succeeding generations. We will seek creative, meaningful ways to meet this social responsibility and extend hope to all in the organization.

Reflection & Discernment

Guide

*“Each person must live their life as a model for others”
Rosa Parks*

Ethical Considerations. . .

We live in a fast-paced world that often makes reflection and vision development difficult. Sometimes we allow our day-to-day pressures to detach us from wisdom. The preceding principles are at the heart of our work on a daily basis. Our challenge is to integrate them into our actions and our being. The following reflective material makes these principles more particular, personal, practical and real.

The questions and considerations are not exhaustive. Individuals, work groups and departments are asked to create pertinent ethical questions and considerations collaboratively that reflect their day-to-day work life and experience, and come back to the table periodically to discuss them as well as new ideas, issues and scenarios.

During your reflection activities, you are encouraged to personalize the questions and dilemmas to make them most relevant to your experience.

Integrity

We need to be persons of good character who honour the public trust. We will demonstrate our integrity through the courage, honesty, sincerity, stewardship, humility and trustworthiness that we bring to our daily work.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *How does “integrity” guide daily interactions among us at work?*
- ✓ *How do we communicate our integrity and incorporate it into our daily actions? Is there a better way to communicate it to different individuals we seem to be failing to reach? Do we know why? How can we change behaviour to break down communication barriers?*
- ✓ *How can we identify situations when people’s actions positively reflect or, on the other hand, compromise their integrity?*
- ✓ *What is the best way to determine if a candidate for a position has integrity? Think of creative yet fair ways to try to make this determination.*
- ✓ *When is our integrity comprised? Think of possible scenarios. How can we avoid situations in which our integrity will be compromised?*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- × You wouldn’t believe him, would you?
- × I know I shouldn’t do this but I am going to do it anyway because it is more expedient.
- × It’s just _____, you know how s/he acts.
- × If we structure the contract this way, this is how you will personally benefit.
- × This is how we need it to look.
- × It’s just a small gift. Anyway, nobody will ever know how they received the contract.

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Dignity of Persons

We need to honour the dignity of all people by encouraging caring and mutual respect. We need to safeguard equity and to do our utmost to ensure fair treatment of all by taking action to deter harassment and discrimination.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *How do we strive to uphold the dignity of all, yet honour the individual? Give concrete examples in your day-to-day work.*
- ✓ *How do we respect autonomy of the person when individuals have different perspectives and mean well, yet ethically disagree about a decision? How are you perceived by those who disagree with you? Do you strive to view the dilemma from their perspective? How?*
- ✓ *How does deliberately aligning decisions or actions that honour the most vulnerable amongst us uphold the dignity of persons without taking away from the whole?*
- ✓ *What can we do to better understand and appreciate differences within our community?*
- ✓ *How can the Board ensure that mutual respect and consideration of the individual becomes part of the culture of the organization? Please think of creative solutions if you can.*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- × It was just a joke.
- × What do you expect from me when there are 25 other students in the class?
- × You'd never hire someone like that, would you?
- × Did you hear about "X"?
- × I know I'm supposed to deal with people directly but I don't respect "X" so I'll go over his/her head and go to their boss. Boy will they be surprised!
- × Off the record, I spoke to _____ about the candidate. The information I have will change our hiring decision.

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Accountability

We need to be responsible to each other, the organization, applicable legislation, and the public trust. We will maintain the highest level of honesty, transparency and confidentiality respecting legal requirements and safety issues. We will acknowledge and update our understanding of our duties under the *Education Act (R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2)* and other applicable legislation and regulations.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *How are accountability and confidentiality maintained when we need to disclose shared information because of a threat to a third person? Do we know the law? How do we decide these close calls and conflicting interests?*
- ✓ *What is meant by full and open disclosure as it is applied to accountability in our diverse responsibilities? Name five to ten specifics.*
- ✓ *How can I balance and uphold the needs of my employer and fulfill my commitments as a professional? Do they conflict? When and how?*
- ✓ *How do we balance transparency and confidentiality with consistency when information about the reasons for the decision cannot be disclosed to the employee? With whom do I consult?*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- × Due to bad weather conditions, I drove a student to their home in the country. I hope you won't tell anybody about this.
- × I don't have a receipt for this, but put it under anything and I will purchase something else and give you a receipt.
- × It is my child's birthday but mark me down as sick.
- × I'll just remove that document while the file is being reviewed. It's easier this way.
- × I don't care what the collective agreement says, our school is different and I want it done this way.
- × It's just public money. Why should we try to get the best value for public money?
- × It's just one more job interview. What's the harm in fitting in _____'s daughter/son?
- × It's not your money, so why do you care? It's no big deal.
- × We are a small school with limited resources. We have different priorities.

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Fairness

We need to be just and transparent in our personal and professional interactions through consistent, impartial and equitable responses. We will be compassionate as we exercise fairness, respecting the individual yet making decisions that reflect the common good.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *What is the difference between equity and equality? When are they in conflict?*
- ✓ *What is the 'common good'?*
- ✓ *How do we achieve compassion balanced against or with justice in every decision that is made by the Board?*
- ✓ *What are we doing to create an environment of compassion and equity? How can we do better? Give three to five specifics.*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- ✗ Why can't it just be different for me? No one else needs to know.
- ✗ We claim to be a "Catholic Board", why aren't you being fair or compassionate?
- ✗ Just a minute, I don't think that action was unethical.
- ✗ That's the way things operate in the 'real world'.
- ✗ It's not fair that we have to go through these purchasing processes when I know someone who can do us a favour.
- ✗ Let's structure the interview questions to ensure that our candidate is the strongest.
- ✗ I have been working here for 25 years and deserve different treatment than _____ who has only been working here for two years. When he's been here as long as I have he can receive the same benefit.
- ✗ Let's structure the contract so that our preferred supplier has a fairer chance.
- ✗ We need that, just go ahead and copy it without permission. (print, audio, video, software)

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Collaboration

We need to depend on each other, support one another and engage openly and continually in shared important decision making whenever possible. We will respect the process, the decision made and the collective wisdom that comes from the group.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *Does collaboration mean consultation and consensus with respect to every decision? Why or Why not? When is consensus decision making appropriate and when is it not?*
- ✓ *What do we do when one of us is not invited to share her/his perspective or knowledge when important decisions are being made? Think of more than one situation and why it may happen.*
- ✓ *How do we as an organization agree on our goals of excellence? Define it and give examples.*
- ✓ *How can departments work together to ensure that the Board attains excellence? Give specifics that will help the Board.*
- ✓ *How can we ensure every endeavour will support the mission of the Board, and not a personal agenda? What are the danger signs? What feelings do we have internally?*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- ✗ I was given an opportunity to voice my concerns but disagreed with the decision so I am not going to follow it.
- ✗ Now that the decision has been made let's run it by a few people so that we can say that we have consulted them.
- ✗ Excellence is never attainable.
- ✗ People in that department don't know what they are doing. I wish I didn't have to deal with them at all.
- ✗ I don't agree with this decision and I will work to prove to others that it is not feasible.
- ✗ I know these are government regulations concerning ethics and transparency but I disagree with this government so I'll work to ensure these processes are not followed.

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Stewardship

We need to use all our resources wisely to ensure that they are available to the poor, the powerless and to succeeding generations. We will seek creative, meaningful ways to meet this social responsibility and extend hope to all in the organization.

Please reflect on the following:

- ✓ *If you believe that all students can learn, what do you do to further ensure their success? Try to think of special needs and special gifts and how to address them.*
- ✓ *What plans do we have to protect the non-renewable resources that have been identified at our site? Name all of the ones you can and think of practical, yet creative, ways to handle them.*
- ✓ *Given our limited financial resources, what effect will the decisions of today have on our operations, staff or students in the future? Think of ten specifics.*

Personalized questions to be developed . . .

If you hear the following statements (this includes hearing yourself using them), consider the ethical implications:

- × Why should I waste my time on this student?
- × Waste? Maybe, but I am in a hurry and just need to get the job done.
- × I'll be retired by then, so why worry? Someone else can deal with it.
- × How can this be arranged so no one is the wiser?
- × Why bother? No one will find out that we did it this way and we have to hurry!
- × It's our money, we raised it and we can spend it on what we want.
- × Don't worry, it's only government money. If we don't use it wisely the government will bail us out.
- × I know this project will help our environment but all these procurement steps we have to go through takes up so much time, why don't we just forget about it and take the easy way out?

Personalized considerations to be developed . . .

Decision-Making Models

*Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you,
but let your behaviour change, modeled by your new mind...*

*Each of you must judge yourself soberly
by the standard of the faith God has given you.*

Romans 12:2-4

Our Decisions . . .

In making our best decisions, we trust the Holy Spirit, our personal goodness and that of the community. The power of good decision-making tools and the necessity of an organization to apply good decision-making tools in their practice can never be underestimated. The Holy Spirit's powerful gift of prayerful discernment always assists us in our decision making.

Finally, our Professional Standards of Ethics supports a culture of reflection, humility, creative, yet careful risk taking, communication, forgiveness and trust. It helps us to build an institution that serves learners and their families reflecting the highest ideals of the Gospel.

Sample Ethical Decision-Making Tools. . .

The following simple tool is made available to assist you in your ethical decision-making processes. Individuals, departments and the System may find the framework useful. A number of additional decision making models that provide more specific and detailed guidance are provided on StaffNet to meet the varying needs and purposes of groups and individuals. The use of the tools over time will increase comfort with their application, so some patience is needed in their continuing use. Furthermore, we bring our faith-based perspectives when applying these tools.

There are challenges and benefits to using these tools. One of these challenges is to understand how our perspectives may be skewed by our past experiences, our knowledge or lack of knowledge, or our emotions (fear, anger, jealousy. . .). There are times when we think we have the only right answer, we act too quickly or your emotions get in the way of making sound decisions. The task is always to explore the issues, consult others appropriately, if needed and always keep in mind the common good.

Model A

- I Identify** and explore the ethical question being posed. This question may contain an element of controversy or conflict.
- D Determine** all the facts. Realize that in choosing which facts are important and which are **not**, you are often making choices based on your own beliefs, experiences or values. Others involved in the situation may see different facts as more important.
- E Examine** the competing or conflicting values, needs and wishes of people **and** organizations. **Evaluate** how various choices fit with the *Professional Standard of Ethics* (Integrity, Dignity of Person, Accountability, Fairness, Collaboration, and Stewardship).
- A Assess** the possible solutions. Ask someone in confidence to help you if needed. Then, act upon the best option.
- S See** what the results were. Look at who was affected and how. Were the short and long-term results what you expected? Did they create complications or create precedents that were difficult to deal with? Consider any changes that you would make in future situations as well as any actions you might take currently to improve it. Continue to integrate your personal values, knowledge, experience **and** standard of **ethics** within your practice.

Acknowledgements

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The following are sources of role specific Code of Ethics for those working in the Education Sector. If no specific Code of Ethics applies to your role, you are covered by the overall *Professional Standard of Ethics* outlined in this document.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

- ⇒ **The College of Teachers**
- ⇒ **The College of Early Childhood Educators**
- ⇒ **The Association of Professional Student Services Personnel**
- ⇒ **Certified General Accountants**
- ⇒ **Certified Management Accountants**
- ⇒ **The Ontario Broader Public Sector**
- ⇒ **The Ontario Public Buyers Association**
- ⇒ **The Board of Trustees Code of Conduct**
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