



It is the purpose of this chapter to emphasize the need for purchasing ethics and to suggest selected Board and administrative policies concerning the procurement functions applicable to school districts. These suggestions are listed as guidelines for consideration by each district. Each suggestion should be carefully considered and evaluated before adoption by any school board.

The school board has a business as well as an educational function. In both fields, the Board is the policy maker, for one affects the other. Efficient and economic business procedures should be established in accordance with sound principles of business administration compatible with the needs of the educational program. These principles of administration should be governed by an established Code of Ethics and by General Policies of the Board.

I. Suggested Board Policies (Written)

- A. The procurement function is one of the major business responsibilities of the Board.
- B. The Board has the authority and responsibility for all purchase contracts of the district. This authority and responsibility can be implemented by staff with certain restrictions under provisions of various statutes.
- C. The purchasing authority and responsibility should be centralized under a purchasing manager or such other person who is officially designated by the School board. This permits the purchasing function to be supervised by a professionally qualified person and permits the establishment of uniform policies for internal and/or external purchasing functions.
- D. The purchasing manager should ensure performance within the limitations prescribed by law, by legal opinions, and in accordance with Board policies. This does not mean that the purchasing manager must be a legal expert, nor that they should not rely upon their own judgment when questionable points arise. It is only important that the purchasing manager learn basic school purchasing fundamentals so that they will recognize the need for legal guidance and obtain it when necessary.
- E. Six fundamental functions of the purchasing department are:
 - 1. Buy the proper product for the purpose required.
 - 2. Ensure that the product will reduce negative impacts to human health and the environment by purchasing environmentally preferable products or services whenever available.
 - 3. Have the product available when and where needed.
 - 4. Buy the proper quantity of the product.
 - 5. Pay the lowest possible price, consistent with the preceding principles.
 - 6. Ensure that the product meets all health and safety regulations.
- F. Approvals of purchase orders, if required by board policy, should be recorded in the minutes. Warrants (checks) for payment against purchase orders require approval in accordance with R.C.W. 28A.330.080. Districts may require the school board to approve a purchase order list as well as a list of warrants or a list of warrant registers.
- G. Specifications governing supplies, equipment and services are a joint responsibility of the educational and business departments. In the procurement function, the purchasing manager should do their utmost to ensure that the items and services specified will meet the needs of the educational program. It is the duty of the purchasing manager to stress the importance of standardization where possible.



II. Suggested Administrative Rules and Regulations

A. Specific Purchasing Assignments

1. The purchasing department should conduct all major purchase transactions for the district in accordance with district policies.
2. The purchasing department should identify, evaluate and recommend products and services that meet criteria which will have a lesser impact on human health and the environment compared to other similar products. This list of approved criteria is Exhibit I and will be periodic updated. The purchasing department will consult with County department users, technical experts, and others to maintain the environmental criteria by which to evaluate products. A team of staff and members will be formed to oversee environmental procurement efforts and measure the results.
3. The purchasing department should establish practical and efficient office procedures, reports, records, and systems that will allow the department to give maximum effort to the acquisition of supplies, equipment and services including the tracking of environmentally preferred products for the educational program and assist the administration in its role of management.
4. The purchasing department should maintain a library of current trade catalogs, which should be available to all departments.
5. The purchasing department should, when warehousing responsibilities are assigned, maintain a system of warehouse inventory control to account for available equipment and supplies. A catalog of current warehoused items should be maintained and distributed to all using departments.
6. The purchasing department should handle the disposal of all personal property declared surplus or obsolete by the school board. Consideration will be given to maximize the monetary return to the district in this process.

B. Purchasing and Staff Relationships

1. When possible requests for prices and purchases should be made through and by the purchasing department.
2. All communications with vendors should be through the purchasing department, except in special cases where the technical details make it advisable to delegate authority to others. Copies of all pertinent correspondence between vendors and district staff should be forwarded to the purchasing department.
3. In discussions with vendors and contractors, school district employees should be reminded that only the purchasing department has the authority to commit the expenditure of funds for supplies, equipment and services. Information with regard to prices paid for only the purchasing department should furnish specific items (i.e., contract pricing, bid pricing, bid information, etc.).
4. Purchases from district employees or their immediate family should be avoided. (It is suggested that the purchasing manager check with legal counsel on this matter for possible conflict of interest.)
5. The purchasing department should strive constantly to increase its knowledge of new and environmentally referred equipment, materials, services, sources, prices, and processes in manufacturing, and should keep other departments informed.
6. There should be recognition of the dependence between the instructional areas and the purchasing department.



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7. Purchasing department personnel should seek competent counsel from its colleagues regarding matters of common interest.
8. It is the responsibility of each using department to determine the quality and kind of supplies, equipment and services required, however, the purchasing department may question and/or make recommendations relative to quality, safety, health and economy. Disagreements that cannot be reconciled between the purchasing department and the requisitioners should be forwarded to the proper staff members or committee for a final decision.

C. Purchasing and Vendor Relationships

1. Opportunity shall be provided to all responsible vendors to do business with the district. The School board of a school district should adopt a policy regarding relationships with vendors (refer to RCW 42.23. Vendor visits should be promptly acknowledged and interviews granted or not, depending upon the circumstances. The purchasing manager must be the judge and should let the vendors know their preference in handling visits. Purchasing personnel are not required to place their time absolutely and indiscriminately at the disposal of all sales persons.
2. The purchasing department should not extend favoritism to any vendors. Each order should be placed on the basis of quality, price, service, delivery and any other applicable factors.
3. The purchasing department should conduct all necessary negotiations for any purchase order changes.
4. The purchasing department should not solicit funds or materials from vendors for any purpose or publicly endorse or promote commercial products.
5. The purchasing manager and staff should visit suppliers' places of business to acquaint themselves with the product lines carried and with the vendors' ability to serve the district.
6. When applicable, the purchasing department shall expedite the completion or required documentation (considering applicable discounts) to vendors

D. Policies Relative to the Bidding Activity

1. The purchasing department should periodically estimate requirements of standard items or classes of items and make quantity purchases to affect economies. Whenever storage facilities or other conditions make it impractical to receive all of any items at one time, the total quantity should be bid and staggered delivery dates made a part of the bid specifications. As an alternative, estimated quantities may be bid with delivery to be made "as requested." Negotiations may be entered into with the supplier whereby items may be stored at the supplier's warehouse for a minimal fee or for no fee at all.
2. Bid instructions and specifications should be clean and complete, setting forth all necessary conditions conducive to competitive bidding.
3. The purchasing department should seek bids from those sources able to offer the best prices consistent with quality, quantity, delivery service and environmentally preferable purchasing policy. When available, bids will incorporate directly or by reference independent third party standards and certifications for environmentally preferable products and services. The bidder must be both responsive and responsible. The bids should be publicly opened and read aloud at the prescribed time and place and tabulated for recommendation to the school board.



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4. After bids have been opened and tabulated, they shall be made available for public review. They should not be removed from the purchasing department.
5. Advertised bids received after time set for opening must, by law, be returned unopened to the bidder.
6. When two or more identical bids are received, the Board or its official designee may determine, by lot, which bid shall be accepted.
7. Whenever it appears to be in the best interest of the district, the purchasing department may participate in cooperative contracts with other school districts, County, State, and governmental agencies.
8. Supplies, materials and services may be purchased on a continuing contract for work, services, apparatus or equipment, not to exceed 5 years contract in compliance with RCW 28A.335.170. Materials or supplies contracts should not exceed 3 years.