Values for Defining Professionalism in
School Business Management

**Introduction**School business officials have many roles in their school systems and serve a variety of stakeholders. They are responsible for ensuring every educator has the tools to provide an effective learning experience and every child in the school system has the resources necessary to learn. This includes everything from reliable transportation and nutritious meals to secure and safe buildings and up-to-date technology.

Values provide the framework for school business officials’ ethical decision making and are important to the integrity of the profession as well as the educational community. This document outlines core values for professional practice in school business management and can serve as a foundation from which to assess and meet the professional development needs of school business officials and promote the highest quality of professional practice.

# Values That Define Professionalism in School Business Management

Professionalism paves the way for greater trust and respect from others. ASBO International has identified five values that define professionalism for school business officials and that align with the ASBO International Code of Ethics and the ASBO International Professional Standards.

**Competence** – Acquires and maintains the highest level of specialized knowledge and skills necessary for effective school business management.

**Integrity** –Avoids conflicts of interest and preferential treatment involving themselves as well as other individuals and groups.

**Professional and Personal Growth** – Develops and maintains the leadership skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex work environment and constantly re-evaluates capabilities to maintain quality business practices by anticipating needs of students.

**Responsibility** –Maintains and upholds the highest standards for the safety and security needs of students, administrators, teachers, and staff.

**Accountability** – Acts in an ethical, transparent manner and pursues appropriate measures to report and correct the unethical and inaccurate practices of others.

# Putting Values into Practice

An expanded definition of each value is provided here, followed by an example of how each value will positively affect each of the key stakeholders with whom the school business official interacts.

These key stakeholders include

* The school system: School system and school-based decision makers, including superintendents, school board members, school administrators, and educational leaders .
* The profession: Colleagues and peers around the world who have similar fiscal responsibilities.
* The community: Parents and students who are served by the school system.

## Competence: School business officials acquire and maintain the highest level of specialized knowledge and skills necessary for effective school business management.

**Expanded Definition**: The school business professional demonstrates, via valid assessment provided by the Certified Administrator of School Finance and Operations® (SFO®) certification or other credible licensure or certificate programs, the standards of professional competence. Competence should reflect all recognized areas of direct responsibility, including the educational enterprise; financial resource management; human resource management; facility management; property and acquisition management; information management; and ancillary services (risk management, transportation, and food service). [1]

Competence affects

1. **The school system**: Identifies professionals who possess specialized competencies and skills and demonstrate commitment to their job and profession by staying abreast of issues in the field, and assures the district they have or will hire one of the most qualified applicants in the field of school business management.
2. **The profession:** Sets high standards for effective school business management by using valid assessment tools to evaluate knowledge and skill.
3. **The community**: Establishes qualifications for the appropriate management of school system funds, which increases protection for the public.

**Integrity: Avoids conflicts of interest and preferential treatment involving themselves, other individuals, and groups.**

**Expanded Definition**: School business professionals make fiscal integrity a key priority and never use their position for personal gain. They maintain honest and ongoing communication with all school system stakeholders and perform their responsibilities with utmost adherence to a strong code of ethics, assuring the community the maximum return for their investment.

Integrity affects

1. **The school system:** Encourages staff collaboration and teamwork, and helps build public confidence in the school system leadership and educational goals and direction.
2. **The profession:** Establishes credibility and sets the foundation for connections and partnerships within the broader community.
3. **The community:** Builds public and professional trust in school leadership decisions.

**Professional and Personal Growth – Develops leadership skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex work environment and constantly re-evaluates capabilities to maintain quality business practices by anticipating future needs of students.**

**Expanded Definition:** The successful school business official remains dedicated to ongoing education, personal growth opportunities, and professional development throughout their career. They make the time to learn, align professional development goals with school system needs and educational goals, and are committed to building overall leadership skills.

Professional and personal growth affects

1. **The school system:** Helps fill knowledge gaps and cultivate leadership skills that could lead to improved practices.
2. **The profession:** Encourages information sharing, which fosters peer connections and can lead to operation efficiencies.
3. **The community:** Through effective professional development, could help improve school business management practices and promote transparency.

**Responsibility – Upholds the highest standards for the safety and security needs of students, administrators, teachers, and staff.**

**Expanded Definition:** School business officials have a duty to maximize resources for classroom instruction and provide a safe, caring, respectful, and productive teaching and learning environment. They make every effort to commit to innovation and cost-effective solutions that promote positive social responsibility principles and improve the overall student environment for learning.

Responsibility affects

1. **The school system:** Exhibits a school system's culture of innovation and dedication to promoting a healthy learning environment for students.
2. **The profession:** Puts the well-being of students at the forefront of decision making and reflects a commitment to the social and environmental implications of school decisions.
3. **The community:**  Promotes a healthier school environment for students and makes a positive impact on society.

**Accountability – Acts in an ethical and transparent manner and pursues appropriate measures to report and correct the unethical and inaccurate practices of others.**

**Expanded Definition:** School business officials are accountable for the effective, efficient, and proper procurement of property, materials, equipment, and services according to appropriate laws and ethical practices. They avoid preferential treatment of one outside interest group, company, or individual over another. They welcome transparency and demonstrate sound fiscal management practices.

Accountability affects

1. **The school system:** Builds trust and support from the community through open communication and encourages collaborative decision making.
2. **The profession:** Demonstrates the efficient expenditure of budgeted funds and builds support in the community.
3. **The community:** Fosters engagement and provides the necessary information to discuss educational goals and direction**.**

**How Can You Use This Document?**

This document can be used by individuals interested in starting a career in school business management or advancing in the profession. It also can be used to help prepare professional development workshops for conference planning and presentation and can serve as a starting point for school districts who are developing assessment tools, position descriptions, and job interview questions for candidates.

References

1. Association of School Business Officials International. (2010). *ASBO International Professional Standards.* Reston, VA: Author.
2. Association of School Business Officials International. (2005). *ASBO* *Values for Defining Professionalism in School Business Management*. Reston, VA: Author.
3. Association of School Business Officials International (2005). *ASBO* *Code of Ethics*. Reston, VA: Author.

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**ASBO International**

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) is the professional association for school business management. Since 1910, ASBO has been developing school business leaders and has set the standard for values, ethics, and best practice in the profession through quality professional development, education, SFO certification, and legislative advocacy. For more information visit www.asbointl.org