EDUCATION DESIGN & INNOVATION COUNCIL

DESIGN INTEGRITY CHARTER

Protecting Originality • Encouraging Innovation • Building a Better Education Industry

PREAMBLE

The education furniture and technology industry depends upon creativity, investment and continual innovation.

Manufacturers, designers, architects, engineers and technology developers invest significant time, resources and expertise in creating products that improve educational environments and experiences. Small businesses may have borrowed from banks to bring their designs to market and some may have secured finance with their homes as collateral.

The **Education Design & Innovation Council (EDIC)** believes that a healthy industry is one in which businesses compete by developing new ideas, improving existing solutions and creating meaningful value for educators and students.

This Charter establishes the principles that EDIC members agree to support in relation to **original design, responsible competition and respect for intellectual property**.

By signing this Charter, members demonstrate their commitment to these principles and to helping create an industry in which innovation is encouraged rather than discouraged.

1. OUR CORE PRINCIPLE

We believe that innovation should be rewarded, not copied.

EDIC members recognize that healthy competition does not require competitors to reproduce another company's distinctive product, design or creative work.

Members commit to competing through:

- Original thinking

- Product improvement
- New technologies
- Better functionality
- Creative design
- Improved manufacturing
- Better service
- Genuine innovation
- Testing
- Use of Safe Materials
- Eco Packaging

Competition should encourage companies to ask:

> **"How can we make better solutions that improve education and protect our planet?"**

rather than:

> **"How can we make something that looks like theirs?"**

2. RESPECT FOR ORIGINAL DESIGN

EDIC members agree to respect the legitimate creative and intellectual property rights of other organizations.

Members will make reasonable efforts to ensure that products they design, manufacture, market or distribute are developed through legitimate and responsible processes.

Members should not intentionally reproduce another company's distinctive product design for the purpose of exploiting the original creator's investment, reputation or market position.

This principle applies whether or not the original product is protected by a registered patent, trademark, copyright or design right.

Nothing in this Charter creates or changes legal intellectual-property rights.

3. INDEPENDENT INNOVATION

Members are encouraged to maintain appropriate records demonstrating the development of their own products.

Where appropriate, these may include:

- Initial concepts
- Sketches
- Design drawings
- CAD files
- Prototypes
- Engineering documents
- Development dates
- Testing records
- Design revisions
- Photographs
- Product development correspondence
- Manufacturing records

Such records can help demonstrate that a product was independently conceived and developed.

4. COMPETITIVE INSPIRATION VERSUS COPYING

EDIC recognizes that innovation often builds upon existing technology, materials, manufacturing methods and established product categories.

Not every similar product represents improper copying.

Members acknowledge that:

Similarity alone does not necessarily establish copying.

When considering an alleged copying matter, relevant questions may include:

- Is the product independently developed?
- Are the similarities functional or aesthetic?
- Are the similarities common to the product category?
- Are distinctive design elements substantially reproduced?
- Was the competing product developed independently?
- Was the original product publicly available before the competing product was developed?
- Is there evidence that the design was deliberately reproduced?
- Are there meaningful differences between the products?

- Is their evidence of AI replication?

These questions should be considered objectively and on the evidence available.

5. RAISING A DESIGN INTEGRITY CONCERN

An EDIC member may submit a **Design Integrity Concern** when it reasonably believes that a product may have been improperly copied or substantially reproduced.

A submission should contain, where available:

1. Identification of the original product
2. Identification of the product alleged to be similar
3. Development and launch dates
4. Relevant design documentation
5. Photographs or product samples
6. Evidence of distinctive design elements
7. Explanation of the alleged similarities
8. Explanation of why the similarities are believed to be significant
9. Relevant intellectual-property information
10. Any other evidence the member considers relevant

Members agree that complaints should be made **in good faith**.

6. NO MALICIOUS OR FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS

EDIC must not become a weapon for commercial disputes.

Members agree not to use the Design Integrity process to:

- Harass competitors
- Damage a competitor's reputation
- Suppress legitimate competition
- Prevent lawful product development
- Make knowingly false allegations
- Create publicity around an unresolved dispute
- Gain an unfair commercial advantage

A member submitting a concern should genuinely believe that the matter deserves review.

7. FAIRNESS TO THE ACCUSED MEMBER

A company or individual whose product is the subject of a Design Integrity Concern will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond.

The responding member may provide:

- Development records
- Design documentation
- Prototype history
- Engineering information
- Evidence of independent development
- Explanations of product similarities
- Evidence identifying differences
- Relevant intellectual-property information

No member should be treated as having breached this Charter solely because a complaint has been made.

A complaint is an allegation — not a finding.

8. THE DESIGN INTEGRITY PANEL

EDIC will establish a **Design Integrity Panel** to review qualifying concerns.

The Panel includes appropriately qualified representatives drawn from the EDIC membership and, where appropriate:

- Manufacturers
- Product designers
- Architects
- Education-environment specialists
- Technology professionals
- Other relevant industry experts
- An independent chair or advisor

The composition of the Panel should be designed to promote **fairness, independence and balanced industry representation**.

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

A Panel member must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest.

A Panel member should not participate in the review of a matter where they:

- Have a direct commercial interest
- Work for a directly involved company
- Have a significant financial relationship with a party
- Have another relationship that could reasonably affect their impartiality

The Panel may require a conflicted member to withdraw from discussion and decision-making concerning that matter.

10. EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

The Panel will seek to base its consideration on evidence rather than reputation, commercial influence or personal relationships.

The Panel may consider:

- Product development records
- Dates and chronology
- Drawings and prototypes
- Product specifications
- Photographic comparisons
- Distinctive design features
- Functional requirements
- Publicly available information
- Registered intellectual-property rights
- Evidence of independent development
- Statements from the parties
- Evidence from independent dealers or architects
- Other relevant evidence

The Panel may request additional information where necessary.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

EDIC members agree to treat Design Integrity proceedings as confidential unless disclosure is:

- Required by law
- Authorized by the parties
- Necessary to protect the legitimate interests of EDIC
- Approved under the organization's governing procedures

Members should not publicly characterize an unresolved matter as a confirmed case of copying.

The Council should take reasonable steps to protect commercially sensitive information submitted during a review.

12. OUTCOMES

Following review, the Panel may determine that:

A. The concern is not substantiated

There is insufficient evidence to conclude that the product breaches the principles of this Charter.

B. The matter requires further information

Additional evidence or clarification is required.

C. The parties should enter constructive dialogue

The Panel may recommend direct discussion, mediation or another appropriate form of dispute resolution.

D. The Panel identifies conduct inconsistent with the Charter

Where the evidence supports such a finding, the Panel may recommend an appropriate response under EDIC's governing rules.

Possible responses may include:

- Private notice of concern
- Request for corrective action
- Voluntary modification of a product
- Mediation
- Formal warning

- Membership review
- Suspension of membership
- Other measures established by EDIC's membership rules

Any disciplinary measures should be proportionate, transparent and consistent with the organization's governing documents.

13. EDIC DOES NOT REPLACE THE LAW

This Charter is an industry code of conduct.

It does not replace or override:

- Patent law
- Copyright law
- Trademark law
- Registered design rights
- Trade-secret law
- Contract law
- Competition/antitrust law
- Consumer protection law
- Courts or tribunals
- Arbitration agreements
- Other applicable laws or regulations

Members remain responsible for obtaining appropriate professional legal advice concerning their individual circumstances.

14. RESPECT FOR COMPETITION

EDIC exists to encourage innovation — not to restrict legitimate competition.

Members must not use the organization to:

- Fix prices
- Divide markets
- Allocate customers
- Restrict legitimate competitors
- Exchange commercially sensitive competitive information

- Coordinate bids or purchasing
- Prevent lawful market entry

EDIC activities should remain focused on **design integrity, innovation and responsible industry conduct**.

15. SUPPORTING DESIGNERS

EDIC recognizes the important role played by designers.

Members are encouraged to create environments in which designers can:

- Experiment
- Take creative risks
- Develop new ideas
- Challenge existing assumptions
- Create distinctive products
- Learn from failure
- Receive recognition for innovation

The industry should reward people who create the next generation of education products.

16. SUPPORTING INNOVATION

Members recognize that protecting innovation is not simply about protecting existing products.

It is about encouraging the next generation of ideas.

EDIC therefore encourages members to invest in:

Research
Design
Technology
Materials
Sustainability
Manufacturing innovation
Learning-environment innovation
Human-centered design

The objective is a continuously evolving education industry.

17. MEMBER COMMITMENT

By signing this Charter, we confirm that our organization supports the principles of:

ORIGINALITY

We support the development of original products and ideas.

FAIR COMPETITION

We compete through innovation, quality, service and value.

RESPECT

We respect the creative work and legitimate intellectual-property rights of others.

INTEGRITY

We will raise concerns honestly and in good faith.

EVIDENCE

We support fair, evidence-based review of design-integrity concerns.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will respect the confidentiality of appropriate proceedings.

INNOVATION

We will encourage designers and companies to continue creating new solutions for education.

18. OUR INDUSTRY PROMISE

By becoming an EDIC member, we join other organizations in supporting a simple principle:

> **A better education industry is built when great ideas are encouraged, original design is respected, and competition drives innovation.**

We want designers to be excited about creating.

We want manufacturers to be confident investing.

We want architects to have access to genuinely innovative products.

We want dealers to have confidence in the products they represent.

And ultimately, we want schools and students to benefit from an industry that continues to move forward.

MEMBER SIGNATURE

Organization: _____

Representative: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

EDIC Membership Number: _____

MEMBER DECLARATION

By signing this Charter, our organization confirms that it supports the principles contained within the **Education Design & Innovation Council Design Integrity Charter** and agrees to operate in accordance with the applicable EDIC membership rules and procedures. We give permission for our company logo to be featured on the EDIC website as a supporting member.