

Branchburg Township
Board of Education
Ethics Training

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Legal Powers of Board Members

- One member of a deliberative body
- A policy-making and oversight role
- No executive authority

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(b)

No school official shall use or attempt to use his official position to secure unwarranted privileges, advantages or employment for himself, members of his immediate family or others.

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(c)

No school official shall act in his official capacity in any matter where he or a member of his immediate family has a personal involvement that is or creates some personal benefit to the school official or member of his immediate family.

NJSBA Code of Ethics

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1

I will confine my board action to *policy making, planning, and appraisal*, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.

I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run.

I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.

Interaction with Community

- Avoidance of perceived Board endorsement of positions
- No authority to act or make commitments
- Social Media/Required disclaimers

The “Disclaimer” Requirement

- Disclaimers are required except where they aren't
- Even a disclaimer won't protect you in some cases

I will *hold confidential* all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. In all other matters, I will provide *accurate information* and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its school.

I will *support and protect school personnel*
in the proper performance of their duties.

I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on the complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

Personnel Matters and Labor Negotiations

- Relatives employed in the district
- Board members or relatives employed by other districts

Volunteering

- Involvement in PTOs and similar organizations permissible, but must recuse from any Board matters involving them
- Must refrain from volunteer activities involving executive authority or constant presence in the buildings

Recap

- Don't use your Board position to secure benefits for you, your family or your friends
- Respect the chain of command and honor confidentiality
- Appearances matter!

Open Public Meetings Act

- All “meetings” must be in public with advance notice
- Special meetings
- Emergency Meetings

- All proceedings at “meetings” must be in public, except for certain subjects specified in the statute
- No closed session exception for “stuff we’d just rather discuss privately”
- Minutes must be kept

- **Personnel matters**
- **Student-related matters**
- **Consultations with legal counsel**
- **Labor relations matters**
- **Security-related matters**
- **Negotiations of contracts with vendors and others**

Open Public Records Act

- Public entitled to all “government records” except where privileged under the statute
- “Government records” includes any district-related information in whatever format we keep it

Examples of “Government Records”

- Emails
- Text messages
- Voicemail messages

Thank You!

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