

**Policy**

NEPOTISM

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

“Nepotism” shall be defined as the showing of favoritism to an employee or candidate for employment based on the existence of a “conflicted relationship” with a board member or chief school administrator.

“Conflicted relationship” includes but is not limited to an immediate family member, a relative, and any other relationship that create a justifiable impression that the public trust may be violated.

“Conflicted board member/administrator” shall mean any board member or administrator with a conflict of interest, regardless of the source of conflict as identified in the definitions below.

“Relative” shall be defined as an individual’s spouse, civil union partner, domestic partner, or the parent, child, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepparent, stepchild, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother or half-sister, of the individual or of the individual’s spouse, civil union partner or domestic partner, whether the relative is related to the individual or the individual’s spouse, civil union partner or domestic partner, by blood, marriage or adoption.

“Immediate family” shall be defined as board member or school administrator, their spouse, civil union partner, domestic partner, child, parent or sibling residing in the same household, whether related by blood, marriage or adoption.

“Other” when describing relationships between individuals and board members or the chief school administrator includes but is not limited to in-law, cousin, cohabitating partner, and step daughter-in-law and any other personal or professional relationship that creates the justifiable impression that the public trust is being violated.

Employment and Supervision of a Relative

The board of education, in order to avoid both the reality and the appearance of conflict of interest in employment, will not initially appoint a relative of a board member or of the chief school administrator to any employment position in this district.

The chief school administrator shall not recommend to the board for initial hire any relative of a board member or of the chief school administrator, unless the person is subject to the exception below. Nor shall any person be considered for employment in any position in which he/she would come under the direct or indirect supervision of any relative. Where is not feasible to eliminate such a direct or indirect supervisory relationship, appropriate screens and/or alternative supervision and reporting mechanisms shall be put in place;

No conflicted administrator shall supervise, or exercise authority over personnel matters in which the administrator has a conflict. No board member shall deliberate or vote on a matter involving the member’s conflicted relationship. Nor should the board member be present for any confidential discussion of employment matters in which they have a conflict. Neither should the board member receive confidential information pertaining to a matter in which they have a conflict.

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Exceptions Regarding Employment

Persons who are employees of the board on the date that this policy initially becomes effective or the date a relative becomes a board member or chief school administrator shall not be prohibited from continuing to be employed in the district. This includes employees who must be renewed annually by the board. The chief school administrator may recommend those employees for reemployment, transfer, promotion or removal.

A relative of a school board member or chief school administrator may be initially employed by the district provided that the district has obtained the approval from the executive county superintendent of schools. Such approval shall be granted only upon demonstration by the school district that it conducted a thorough search for candidates and that the proposed candidate is the only qualified and available person for the position. Per diem substitutes and student employees may be excluded from the initial hiring aspects of this nepotism policy.

Participation in Employment Related Matters

Conflicted board members may not participate in employment matters concerning the chief school administrator, principal or any administrator or supervisor(s) in the chain of command between the employee and chief school administrator.

Prohibited activities for conflicted board members include hiring of the selection agency, criteria, job description, voting to advertise for applicants, search committee, vote to hire and any evaluation and contract discussion post-hire.

Conflicted board members may not be present in closed session when discussions regarding the administrators take place and should not be privy to executive session materials until such time as the minutes are made available to the general public.

Board Member/Chief School Administrator Participation in Negotiations

A. In-District Bargaining Units

When a board member or school administrator is in a conflicted relationship which prohibits participation in collective negotiations, that board member or school administrator shall not participate in any way in negotiations. This includes, but is not limited to, setting negotiation parameters, being a member of the negotiating team, receiving negotiations updates, voting on the proposed agreement and post-contract participation in grievances. Nor shall that board member or school administrator be present with the board in closed session when negotiation strategies are being discussed. A school administrator may provide technical information that is necessary to the collective bargaining process when no one else can provide that information.

Board members or the chief school administrator are similarly precluded from participation in negotiations with any bargaining unit whose members have supervisory authority over a family member or other conflicted connection.

B. Out-of-District Similar Statewide Bargaining Units

1. When a board member is a member of an out-of-district similar statewide union or when a board member or school administrator is in a conflicted relationship involving an immediate family member who is a member of an out-of-district similar statewide union with which the board is negotiating, that board member or school administrator shall not participate in any way in negotiations. This includes, but is not limited to:

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- a. Developing negotiation parameters;
- b. Being a member of the negotiating team;
- c. Receiving confidential negotiations information updates;
- d. Voting on the contract; and
- e. Grievance participation.

A school administrator may, however provide technical information that is necessary to the collective bargaining process when no one else in the district can provide that information.

- 2. When a board member or school administrator is in a conflicted relationship involving a relative who is a member of an out-of-district similar statewide union with which the board is negotiating, there is no conflict unless the relative has a union leadership position in the state-wide union or local union that has the ability to affect negotiations. Union leadership positions in the state-wide union or local union that have the ability to affect negotiations include but are not limited to:

- a. Officer;
- b. Grievance chairperson;
- c. Building representative;
- d. Negotiation committee member.

A school official who has a conflicted relationship with any employee of the district or an employee in another out-of-district similar statewide union as of the effective date of this policy shall declare such relationship to the board immediately.

Doctrine of Necessity

When a quorum of the board has conflicted interests, the doctrine of necessity may be invoked in order to allow conflicted board members to participate in the negotiation process and vote. The doctrine of necessity may be invoked for the negotiation team or superintendent search committee only when the board of education has fewer non-conflicted board members than are required, pursuant to statute, to take action. The board shall only invoke the doctrine of necessity after consultation with the board attorney. When invoking the doctrine of necessity, the board shall state publically that it is invoking the doctrine of necessity with the reasons for doing so and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest. The board shall read the resolution invoking the doctrine of necessity at a regularly scheduled public meeting, post the notice of the resolution for 30 days and provide the School Ethics Commission with a copy of the resolution.

Implementation

The connections and relationships that create a conflict of interest for an individual board member's participation in board decisions are subject to changes that result from commissioner rulings or changes in law. Therefore, the board shall consult with the board attorney as necessary and appropriate for guidance and clarification related to the implementation of this policy.

Adopted:	June 2010
Revised:	April 2016
NJSBA Review/Update:	January 2019
Readopted:	April 20, 2016, December 11, 2019

Key Words

Nepotism, Hiring Relatives, Relatives, Doctrine of Necessity

**Legal References:** N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1                      General mandatory powers and duties

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<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:12-2	Inconsistent interests or office prohibited
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:12-21 <u>et seq.</u>	School Ethics Act
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:16-1	Officers and employees in general
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:27-4.1	Appointment, transfer, removal or renewal of officers and employees; exceptions
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 52:13D-13 and 21.2	State conflict of interest law
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:4-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Appealable decisions
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:23A-1.2 <u>et seq.</u>	Fiscal accountability; definitions
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:23A-6.2 <u>et seq.</u>	Fiscal accountability; nepotism
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:28-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	School Ethics Commission

In the Matter of the Election of Dorothy Bayless to the Board of Education of the Lawrence Township School District, 1974 S.L.D. 603, reversing 1974 S.L.D. 595

Shirley Smiecinski v. Board of Education of the Township of Hanover, Morris County, 1975 S.L.D. 478

Scola v. Ringwood Bd. of Ed., 1978 S.L.D. 413

Salerno v. Old Bridge Board of Ed., 1984 S.L.D. (April 28)

Larsen v. Woodbridge Board of Ed., 1985 S.L.D. (March 18)

Scannella v. Scudillo, School Ethics Decision, Complaint No. C-14-93, (February 3, 1994)

In the Matter of Frank Pannucci, 2000 S.L.D. March 1, State Board Rev'g Commissioner 97 NJAR 2d (EDU) 339

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A01-93

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A021-93

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A10-93

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A07-94

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A33-95

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A03-98

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A14-00

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A03-13

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A15-13

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A22-13

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A09-14

School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A10-14

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- School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A11-14
- School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A43-14
- School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A03-15
- School Ethics Commission, Advisory Opinion, A05-15
- N.J. Department of Education 05-13-09 Broadcast # 1 "Nepotism Policy Clarification"

**Possible**

- Cross References:**
- \*4111 Recruitment, selection and hiring
  - \*4119.21/4212.21 Conflict of interest
  - \*4211 Recruitment, selection and hiring
  - \*9270 Conflict of interest

\*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.