

SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICER & EMPLOYEE CODE OF ETHICS

The Board of Education is committed to avoiding any situation in which the existence of conflicting interests of any Board member, officer, or employee may call into question the integrity of the management or operation of the school district. The Board recognizes that sound, ethical standards of conduct serve to increase the effectiveness of District officers and staff as educators and public employees in the community. Adherence to a code of ethics promotes public confidence in the schools and furthers the attainment of district goals.

The Board also recognizes its obligation to adopt a code of ethics setting forth the standards of conduct required of all Board members, District officers, and employees under the provisions of the General Municipal Law. Therefore, every Board member, officer, and employee of the District, whether paid or unpaid, shall adhere to the following code of ethics.

1. Assuring the opportunity for high quality education for every student and making the well-being of students the fundamental principle in all decisions and actions.
2. Representing the entire community without fear or favor.
3. Accepting all responsibilities as a means of unselfish service, while not using their positions for personal gain.
4. Acting as part of an educational team with mutual respect and regard for each other's respective responsibilities and duties.
5. Preserving the obligation of having all issues considered fairly and without bias.
6. Upholding the principles of due process and individual dignity and protecting the civil and human rights of all.
7. Maintaining high standards and the effectiveness of education through research and continuing professional development.
8. Obeying all national, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to education and public agencies.
9. Instilling respect for community, state, and nation.

Statutory Conflicts of Interest

It is a conflict of interest for a Board member, officer or employee to benefit personally from contracts made in their official capacity.

- “*Contract*” is defined broadly to include any claim or demand against the district or account or agreement with the district, whether expressed or implied which exceeds the sum of \$750.00 in any fiscal year.
- An “*interest*” is defined as a direct or indirect benefit that runs to the employee as a result of a contract with the district.

No Board member, officer or employee shall have an “*interest*” (i.e., receive a direct or indirect benefit as the result of a contract with the district) in:

1. a firm, partnership or association in which they are a member or employee;
2. a corporation in which they are an officer, director or employee;
3. a corporation in which they, directly or indirectly, owns or controls 5% or more of the stock;
4. a contract between the district and their spouse, minor child or dependents, except for an employment contract between the school district, a spouse, minor child or dependent of a Board member authorized by §800(3) of the General Municipal Law or §3016 of the Education Law.

1. Gifts: Board members, officers or employees shall not directly or indirectly solicit any gift or accept or receive any gift having a value of seventy-five dollars (\$75) or more, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise, or any other form, under circumstances in which it could reasonably be inferred that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their official duties or was intended as a reward for any official action on their part. However, the Board welcomes and encourages the writing of letters or notes expressing gratitude or appreciation to staff members. Gifts from children that are principally sentimental in nature and of insignificant financial value may be accepted in the spirit in which they are given.

2. Confidential information: Board members, officers or employees shall not disclose confidential information acquired by them in the course of their official duties or use such information to further their personal interest. This includes matters discussed in a properly convened executive session. However, the Board, acting as a whole, may decide to disclose such information where disclosure is not prohibited under the law. Additionally, disclosure of such information is not prohibited where it is warranted to appropriate law enforcement entities for investigation and possible action, or where a board member is compelled to reveal the information in a court case.

3. Representation before the Board or District: Board members, officers or employees shall not receive or enter into any agreement, expressed or implied, for compensation for services to be rendered in relation to any matter before the school district.

4. Disclosure of interest in matters before the Board: A Board member, officer or employee of the district, whether paid or unpaid, must publicly disclose the nature and extent of any interest they or their spouse have, will have or later acquire in any actual or proposed contract, purchase agreement, lease agreement or other agreement involving the school district (including oral agreements), to the governing body and their immediate supervisor (where applicable) even if it is not a prohibited interest under applicable law. Such disclosure must be in writing and made part of the official record of the school district. Disclosure is not required in the case of an interest that is exempted under Section 803(2) of the General Municipal Law. The term “interest” means a pecuniary or material benefit accruing to an officer or employee.

5. Investments in conflict with official duties: A Board member, officer or employee shall not invest or hold any investment directly in any financial, business, commercial or other private transaction that creates a conflict with his or her official duties. Exceptions to the conflict of interest law can be found in Section 802 of the General Municipal Law (see 2160-E.1).

6. Private employment: A Board member, officer or employee shall not engage in, solicit, negotiate for or promise to accept private employment when that employment or service creates a conflict with or impairs the proper discharge of his or her official duties.

7. Future employment: A Board member, officer or employee shall not, after the termination of service or employment with the district, appear before the Board in relation to any action, proceeding, or application in which they personally participated during the period of his or her service or employment or that was under his or her active consideration.
8. Involvement with Charitable Organizations: A Board member, officer or employee may be involved as a volunteer, officer or employee in a charitable organization which has a relationship with the district. If a Board member is a board member, officer or employee of the charitable organization the Board member must disclose such relationship in writing to the district, and the Board member must recuse himself or herself from any discussions or votes relating to the charitable organization which may come before the Board. When participating in the activities of the charitable organization, the Board member, officer or employee shall not disclose any confidential information learned in the course of his or her official duties or use such information to further personal interests. Additionally, the Board member, officer or employee shall not make representations on behalf of the district unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board.

Distribution of Code of Ethics

The Superintendent of Schools shall cause a copy of this Code of Ethics to be distributed to every member of the Board, every officer and employee of the school district. Each officer and employee elected or appointed thereafter shall be furnished a copy before entering upon the duties of his or her office or employment. In addition, the Superintendent shall ensure that a copy of Article 18 of the General Municipal Law shall be kept posted in each public building under the district's jurisdiction in a place conspicuous to the district's officers and employees.

Reporting Concerns

Any person who either seeks to clarify a situation that he or she believes to be a violation of the Code of Ethics, or who wishes to report a potential violation, should contact the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, or the Superintendent.

Penalties

In addition to any penalty contained in any other provision of law, any person who shall knowingly and intentionally violate any of the provisions of the Board's code of ethics and its accompanying regulation may be fined, suspended or removed from office or employment, as the case may be, in the manner provided by law.

Ref: General Municipal Law §§806-808
Opn. St. Comp. 2008-01
Appeal of Rivers, 60 EDR Dec. No 17,989 (2021)
Application of the Board of Education, 57 EDR Dec. No. 17,147 (2017)
Application of Nett and Raby, 45 EDR 259 (2005)

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