

0142.1 - NEPOTISM

The Board of Education adopts this Nepotism Policy as a condition of receiving State aid pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-6.2.

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, the Superintendent of Schools or 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, partner, civil union partner, domestic partner, child, parent or sibling residing in the same household, whether related by blood, marriage or adoption.

“Other” when describing personal or professional relationships between individuals and Board members or the Superintendent 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 Superintendent to any employment position in this district.

The Superintendent shall not recommend to the Board for initial hire any relative of a Board member or of the Superintendent, 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 it is not feasible to eliminate such a direct or indirect supervisory relationship, appropriate screens and/or alternate supervision/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.

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 Superintendent shall not be prohibited from continuing to be employed in the district. This includes employees who must be renewed annually by the Board. The Superintendent may recommend those employees for reemployment, transfer, promotion or removal.

A relative of a school Board member or Superintendent 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 Superintendent, principal or any administrator or supervisor(s) in the chain of command between the employee and Superintendent.

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/Superintendent 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 Superintendent 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:

- 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, that Board member or school administrator shall be prohibited from participating in any way in negotiations, including but not limited to, being a member of the negotiating team or being present with the Board of Education in closed sessions when negotiation strategies are being discussed, prior to the Board of Education attaining a Tentative Memorandum of Agreement with the bargaining unit that includes a salary guide and total compensation package. Once the Tentative Memorandum of Agreement is established, a school district administrator with an immediate family member who is a member of the same State-wide union in another school district may fully participate in the process, absent other conflicts.

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.

N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-6.2

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