



Presented by:

Tony Jones

NJSIG Loss Control Manager

Lou Giannetto

NJSIG Claims Manager

Dr. Christopher Manno

BCSS/BCIT Superintendent

Mark Finkelstein

MRESC Superintendent



Ethics Complaints:

The Impact on School Districts, Board Members & Finances

Code of ethics

'School Ethics Act'

The Legislature find and declares:

- a. In our representative form of government it is essential that the conduct of members of local boards of education and local school administrators hold the respect and confidence of the people. These board members and administrators must avoid conduct which is in violation of their public trust or which creates a justifiable impression among the public that such trust is being violated.
- b. To ensure and preserve public confidence, school board members and local school administrators should have the benefit of specific standards to guide their conduct and of some disciplinary mechanism to ensure the uniform maintenance of those standards among them.

Role of the Board (Governance & Finance)



Common Ethics Complaints

- 1. Financial Exposures**
- 2. Public Comments**
- 3. Social Networking**

Financial Exposures



1. Board Member should know if a family member is seeking employment with district.
2. Board Member should not be involved in the interviewing process or contact anyone who is involved in the interview process.

Public Comments



1. 1st Amendment
2. Do not make a comment
3. You cannot divorce yourself from a Board Member
4. “No Public Comment”
5. Board Member act as a Group
6. A simple opinion can be perceived as speaking on behalf of the Board
7. Poisoning the Well

Social Networking



1. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ect.
2. Personal settings should be adjusted so that only 'Friends' can view posts and comments.
3. May violate Open Public Meetings Act
4. Statements made not as a quorum of the Board
5. Perception that it is part of Public Board Member opinions

Superintendent as the Operational Manager

- 1. Code of Ethics Training**
- 2. Recommendations**
- 3. Board Attorney**
- 4. What happens when complaint is made?**

Code of Ethics Training



Training should be conducted by
Superintendent in conjunction
to the NJSBA

Recommendations

1. Only the Superintendent should respond after a failure of an administrator violation
2. No public comments
3. Add a disclaimer



Board Attorney

Should be protecting Board Members from themselves.




What happens when a complaint is made?

1. Name of school and/or person is anonymous
2. Can give advisory opinions
3. File complaint with Ethics Commission (appeal to Commissioner of Education)



Ethics Decisions

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1. Censure
 2. Reprimand
 3. Suspension
 4. Termination from the Board

Board Minutes



1. All notes are recorded
2. Who voted yes/no and who abstained is documented
3. During Executive Session, notes need to be more accurate

Review Quiz



Quiz

1. Board President did not stop audience participation who was criticizing district personnel. **Y/N**
2. Board Member requested that an Honors Class not be cut because her granddaughter was part of the class. **Y / N**
3. Board Member called district Principal to inquire about the job performance of the Director of Special Services. **Y / N**
4. Board Member walked through school ignoring security procedure. **Y / N**
5. Board Member makes a comment to the newspaper about an employee. **Y / N**
6. Board Member states that he/she disagrees with the Superintendent at a parent meeting at the school. **Y / N**
7. Board Member asks an employee to meet with her/him off premises to discuss another employee. **Y / N**
8. Board Member meets with a teacher at 2 p.m. in school and makes suggestions for the summer program. **Y / N**



The Big Three

Proactive Measures to Promote Ethical Actions

1. Communication
2. Training
3. Team Building



Communication

- We all know... *“It’s the Superintendent’s job to run the district; and, the Board’s job to ensure that the district is well run.”*
- Through communication, help BOE members know the district is well run.
- Key Types of Communication:
 - Immediate Updates – no surprises
 - Detailed Weekly Updates
 - Weekly Chats with President
 - Monthly Achievement Reports



Training

- Board President Training
- BOE Member Training
- Policy and Regulation
 - District Organization; Chain of Command
 - Public Complaints and Grievances



Team Building

- Developing an effective team is purposeful work.
 - It does not come easily.
- Study Together...examples:
 - *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Lencioni
 - *Gung Ho*, Blanchard and Bowles
- Attend to the Team Often...no “One and Done”
 - Annual Retreat - one day on District, one day on Board
 - Spending regular Work Session time revisiting Team Building - an investment

Questions?

