



**New Jersey Local Boards of Education:
A Guide for League of Women Voters of New Jersey Members**

**White Paper developed by
League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Committee**

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INTRODUCTION

New Jersey's Constitution requires the Legislature to “provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the State between the ages of five and eighteen years.” (N.J. Const., art. 8, § IV, ¶ 1.)

The purpose of this document is to provide background information to local Leagues when moderating school board forums and debates and to provide information to educate the public about their governance of schools by local Boards of Education (BoE). Specific topics covered in this document are:

- School District Configurations
- Roles and Responsibilities of BoE Members
- School Funding (including special education and school construction)
- Role of League of Women Voters (LWV) in School Board Elections
- Appendix, including a Glossary and Acronyms related to public education in New Jersey

Most of all, this document hopes to provide information that will help local Leagues educate voters on why it is important to vote in school board elections.

This document does not supplant the LWVNJ's [Study & Action 2021-2023 document](#), which describes the state program of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. For formal advocacy positions, please refer to that document, which is designed to help League leaders make use of LWVNJ public policy positions on a variety of issues, including education, to advocate at the state and local levels. A brief summary of the current LWVNJ Study & Action positions on education is included in the Appendix at the end of this document.

BACKGROUND

The League of Women Voters understands that public education is essential to democracy. Public education enables students to develop their full potential, which enables our democracy to flourish. In addition to providing basic knowledge, public education gives all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, an opportunity to build skills to help them become active and responsible participants in society after graduation.

Voters should be concerned with the makeup and operations of their local Boards of Education (BoE) because these individuals play a key role in developing the policies that are carried out by the professionals in their district, shaping the educational program offered to children. However, voters may not fully understand the roles and responsibilities—or the limitations—of school board members in the state of New Jersey.

In particular, the public should understand that local school boards are not legislative bodies: rather than passing laws governing education, their role is to develop and implement district policies that are consistent with NJ State Department of Education regulations and reflect the needs and interests of the local communities they serve.

A key component of any discussion of education policy—and its associated politics—is the funding of schools. Unfortunately, voters often focus only on the cost of public education, which is funded largely through local property taxes. However, to cite the remark often attributed to the behavioral psychologist and education researcher, Howard Gardner, “If you think education is expensive, try estimating the cost of ignorance.”

Ideally, school districts strive towards public participation and fostering a two-way relation between the school district and the community. This includes communicating with the public about policies, procedures, programs, problems, and progress of the school system through School Board meetings and other methods of outreach.

DIFFERENT SCHOOL DISTRICT CONFIGURATIONS

There are several public school configurations in New Jersey, including regional, consolidated, and countywide schools (including vocational schools), and those serving single municipalities. Of these, some serve only students from pre-K/kindergarten through grade 6 or 8, with a “sending” relationship to a high school serving several municipalities. Non-operating school districts do not operate any school facilities: all students attend school in other districts as part of sending/receiving relationships.

New Jersey had a total of 2,511 schools operating through 697 local educational agencies, which served 1.36 million students in the 2022-2023, school year, including 85 charter schools serving 58,569 children. In addition, there were 16 non-operating districts: that is, districts that do not operate any schools but instead pay tuition to the districts to which they send their students. All these educational agencies are accountable to the NJ State Department of Education, which is the administrative arm of the NJ State BoE, whose members are appointed by the governor.

Many other states have county-wide districts, and there has been a long-standing debate in New Jersey over the potential benefits and liabilities of consolidating districts within each of the state’s 21 counties, with the possibility of 3 additional separate districts for Newark, Camden, and Trenton.

2022-2023 School Data ([New Jersey Public Schools Fact Sheet 2022-2023](#))

Local Educational Agencies (total)	697
Operating School Districts	593
Charter Schools	85
Renaissance Schools	3
Non-operating School Districts	16

Number of schools (total)	2,511
Elementary (any combination of preschool to grade 8)	2,006
Secondary (any combination of grades 9 to 12)	397
Combined (elementary and secondary)	108

Enrollment (total)	1.36 million
Public school enrollment	1.3 million
Charter school enrollment	58,569

Local school boards may be either directly elected by local residents or appointed by the local governing body. There are currently only 11 “Type I” school districts in New Jersey, meaning the mayor appoints board members. The rest of the school districts in the state are “Type II,” with voters electing members directly. The composition of the school board is determined by the configuration of the district:

consolidated schools have board members representing the different participating towns, while schools that serve single municipalities have boards made up only of local district residents.

Charter Schools

Charter school laws and structures vary nationwide. In New Jersey, charter schools have their own administrative structures and governing bodies, authorized directly by the NJ State BoE. The approval of these charter schools must be renewed every five years.

In NJ, education funding “follows the student.” The state uses a formula, based on the local district’s per-pupil costs, to determine the amount that must be allocated to a charter school operating in that district. In other words, whatever funding a local school district receives, including federal funds, if a student enrolls in a charter school or enrolls in a traditional public school in another district, the funding follows the student for the academic year.

Charter schools are not under the authority of the local school district in New Jersey, and their boards typically are elected only by parents of enrolled students, rather than the public. Therefore, this document is focused on the operations of traditional public schools.

Renaissance Schools

In 2012, the Legislature enacted the [Urban Hope Act](#) (N.J.S.A. 18A:36C) to empower qualified school districts to partner with experienced non-profit organizations to open renaissance schools in “persistently failing school districts.” Renaissance schools are essentially hybrid charter schools and, like charters, they operate under the authority of the NJ DoE’s [Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools](#). Unlike charters, which typically enroll students by lottery, Renaissance schools are required to provide seats to every child in the school's neighborhood. They are operated by private non-profit organizations (eg, [KIPP](#)) and receive public funding through the same means as other charter schools.

County Vocational Schools

NJ county vocational schools integrate academics and vocational training focused on career clusters (eg, engineering, aviation, allied health professions, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC among others). Students must apply for admission, which is usually open only to students who live in the county and can be highly competitive. Acceptance is typically based on testing in 8th grade and some schools also require interviews. These vocational schools are operated by and funded through the county: the county commissioners act as board members of these schools, as well as their respective community colleges. Some local school districts also offer "schools within schools" and/or “early college” programs for high-achieving students residing in the district.

BOARD MEMBERS

School board members are state officials, empowered by state law to govern the public schools at a local level. They receive no pay or benefits for their public service.

Qualifications

The legal requirements for becoming a member of a local board of education in New Jersey are straightforward. Candidates must:

- Be able to read and write
- Hold U.S. citizenship and one year's residency in the school district
- Be registered to vote in the district before filing the nominating petition
- Have no interest in any contract with, or claim against, the board
- Not hold office as mayor or member of the municipal governing body or, in the case of county school districts, the county governing body
- Not simultaneously hold two elective offices
- Not be disqualified from membership for the conviction of certain crimes. (Within 30 days of election or appointment to the board, a member must undergo a criminal history background investigation through the state Department of Education.)

All candidates for school board office must comply with the provisions of the New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act, as detailed by the [Election Law Enforcement Commission](#) (ELEC). BoE members also are required to pledge to a code of ethics drafted by the New Jersey Schools Association (see Appendix, NJSBA Code of Ethics).

New Jersey's [School Ethics Act](#) requires that new board members complete training during the first year of their first term. Since 2007, the training requirement includes the requirement that each board member complete a training program on school district governance in each of the subsequent two years of the board member's first term. The 2007 amendment also required all board members to complete an advanced training program within one year after each re-election or re-appointment. In 2010, the Act was further amended to require that board members complete a one-time training program on harassment, intimidation, and bullying in schools with the goal of creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students.

While some BoEs have had student members for many years, it is now required that each district containing a high school has an appointed high school student with ability to comment—but not vote—on moved items.

BoE Elections

Until relatively recently, all BoE elections in NJ were held on the 3rd Tuesday in April; these April elections also were required to include a ballot referendum question asking the voters to approve the proposed operating budget for the upcoming year. Beginning with the [2012 school election](#), Type II (i.e., elected) school boards, municipal governing bodies, or voters (by way of petition) were permitted to move the annual April school election to the date of the November general election.

Districts that chose to move their elections were no longer required to subject their proposed operating budget to passage via a public referendum, where it might fail, but would be required to hold any budget increases to a maximum cap of 2% per year.

As of 2023, only 12 NJ districts held April elections. These districts are Cliffside Park, Fairview, Passaic, Totowa, Fredon, Montague, Irvington, Newark, North Bergen, Weehawken, West New York, and New Brunswick. The rest have switched to November elections. [The New Jersey School Boards Association \(NJSBA\) reports that](#) the change has resulted in higher voter participation, cost savings from eliminating an additional election, and greater budget stability.

Many observers were concerned that moving the elections to November would increase political party influence over the statutorily non-partisan board of education races, but state law prohibits political party designations beside BoE candidate names on the ballot, and bracketed groups may not use names that could be identified with a party. There is, however, no statute preventing political parties from endorsing school board candidates.

When organizing forums, local League of Women Voters Voter Services committees should take care to respect the nonpartisan nature of BOE elections. League-trained moderators provide essential guidance on how to ensure that forums are implemented in accordance with League standards to avoid any appearance of bias or partisan influence.

Roles and Responsibilities of BoE Members vs District Superintendent

The school board has a dual role: 1) to represent the concerns of the citizens, taxpayers, and parents to the school administrators; and 2) to represent the needs of the students and school district to the citizens, taxpayers and parents of the community.

The school board does not operate the district on a day-to-day basis; that is the job of the superintendent, who is the district's chief executive. The school board sets the policies, goals, and objectives for the district—and it holds the superintendent responsible for implementing and achieving those policies, goals, and objectives.

The superintendent is the only district employee who is directly hired by the school board. Superintendents are generally contracted to serve for a specified number of years, and the BoE has the option of renewing the contract as specified. All other district staff report, either directly or indirectly, to the superintendent. Although BoE members approve (or disapprove) hiring and/or firing decisions, recommendations come from the superintendent. In most cases, faculty and staff are members of unions operating under negotiated contracts agreed to by the BoE.

Policy Making

The New Jersey Constitution gives the Legislature the power to govern the schools. The Legislature delegates its power and function to make rules and regulations (within the law) to the State Board of Education. The State BoE's staff, the New Jersey Department of Education, has the authority to carry out the mandates created by those higher bodies. Within all these laws and regulations, local boards of education can develop their own policies covering a multitude of issues relevant to their local districts. Although specific policies of local school districts may vary to reflect local concerns, the overarching theme of school district policies remains similar.

There are aspects of local school operations that the state does not typically manage. These include a wide range of issues, ranging from student discipline and dress codes to whether the district will rent facilities to community groups after school hours. The state may require that local districts develop policies related to certain issues (for example, policies around harassment, intimidation, and bullying are state-mandated). Policies developed by local BoEs must not be arbitrary or capricious, or otherwise run afoul of state laws and regulations.

The NJSBA has published a [Manual of Positions and Policies on Education](#), which represents the Association's beliefs on board of education responsibilities, local school district operations, curriculum, funding, the roles of the State and Federal governments in public education, and other critical areas. Local Leagues can use this information to help them formulate relevant questions for Voter Guides that fairly reflect the scope of influence of board members and that will allow voters to better evaluate candidates for the BoE based on their responses. A better understanding of NJSBA positions and policies can also help the local League's Observer Corps assess board operations and report relevant information back to their membership.

There is a fine distinction between school policies and regulations: Policies create a framework within which the superintendent and other district staff can discharge their assigned duties, while administrative regulations define how a policy is executed. The Superintendent and Board should ensure that administrative actions are guided by board policy. Policies should clearly define what the board intends or requires, leaving the "how" of implementation and administration to the superintendent or their designees.

Many local school districts post their policy manuals online. Most local boards' regulations and policy manuals are generally structured according to the recommendations of the NJSBA. In addition, many districts subscribe to independent school policy and regulation consulting services to ensure that their customized policy and regulation manuals are consistent with both State and Federal laws and are in compliance with State and Federal monitoring standards.

Although individual districts may organize their manuals differently, policy manuals typically cover the following topics:

- Bylaws
- Administration
- Oversight of programs, budgets, curricula, staffing, buildings and maintenance
- Teaching Staff Members
- Supporting Staff Members
- Pupils
- Finances
- Property
- Approval of personnel actions (e.g., hiring, firing, approve leave taking) based on recommendations of the Superintendent
- Union contract negotiations (including salaries and working conditions)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies
- Operations
- School climate (including harassment, intimidation, and bullying [HIB] policies)
- School-district community relations

SCHOOL FUNDING

Funding for public schools comes from local property taxes, aid from the State of New Jersey and aid from the federal government. State and federal aid come from a much broader tax base, e.g., payroll tax, sales tax on specific products, fees, and some types of corporate taxes. However, most New Jersey districts receive minimal aid from the federal government.

A large portion of New Jersey's annual state budget is devoted to schools. The 2021 state budget allocated 40% of the total \$41 billion to pre-kindergarten-12th grade costs, derived mostly from income taxes and other revenue. But the amount of state aid you get depends on your municipal wealth.

Budget allocations are based on student enrollment according to a complex and meticulous formula. New Jersey's School Funding Reform Act, or SFRA, was established in 2008, after a landmark series of court decisions in the 1980s and 1990s known as *Abbott v Burke*, which argued that the state's school funding rationale discriminated against poorer urban districts and favored wealthier suburban ones. The SFRA formula assigns a "weight" or value to every student in a district based on their various needs. Students enrolled in a free- or reduced-cost lunch program, for example, are considered "at risk" and given an additional weight, as are students considered to have Limited English Proficiency.

New Jersey spent, on average, \$10,725 per "weighted" pupil in 2022. The wealthier suburban districts comprise the highest spending group in the state at \$11,643 per weighted pupil.

There are three types of financial aid that the state awards local school districts annually through the state budget: equalization aid, categorical aid and grants earmarked for specific district(s) and/or specific purpose(s). Grants are completely at the discretion of the Legislature and the Governor." The combination of equalization aid and categorical aid is known as the funding formula. For more information, see: <https://www.njsba.org/news-information/parent-connections/school-finance-101/>

If you live in a low-income district, especially an urban one, most of your school district costs are covered by the state. If you live in a high-income district, then local property taxes pay for almost all your school costs. The rationale for this approach is that the amount of money spent on a child's education shouldn't depend on his or her parents' income or a family's ability to move into a high-quality school district. For more information, see: <https://njedreport.com/2021/02/22/explainer-how-are-schools-funded-in-new-jersey-and-why-are-my-property-taxes-so-high/>

Special Education

Education funding is a complicated topic. Some funding is provided by federal and state government, but it is the local school districts who are mainly responsible for a free appropriate public education, or FAPE.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to provide children with special education services as a condition of receiving federal funds, although the federal government does not provide full funding for special education.

The federal government provides three special education funding grants under IDEA. The largest is called IDEA Part B, which supports special education programs for K-12. Two smaller grants support preschool programs and programs for infants and families. For more information, see: <https://www.understandingspecialeducation.com/special-education-funding.html>

School Construction

School buildings in the US are used for learning, libraries, sports, feeding kids, community meetings, school programs, and in emergencies. Since each school is different, each school is funded differently.

The New Jersey Department of Education provides project-level funding to Regular Operating Districts, while SDA Districts (formally known as Abbott Districts) are managed by the state with funds paid directly to contractors.

The Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act (EFCFA) became law on July 19, 2000. The EFCFA provided certain levels of funding for facilities' improvements for both special needs and non-special needs districts. For more information, see: <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/how-your-state-funds-school-construction/>

ROLE OF LOCAL LEAGUES IN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

Local Leagues play a vital role in educating and empowering voters to participate in school board elections, both as voters and as candidates. The same principles that apply to the League's work in other elections apply to local races. First and foremost, the local League must remain nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to LWV members and the public.

Voter Outreach

Voter outreach and voter education are among the most important ways the League strengthens democracy. The election process is complicated, and it can be hard for voters to find unbiased information, especially for local elections. Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts should include outreach about school board elections.

GOTV is especially important in districts where school board elections are still held in April, when they may pass unnoticed by many voters. However, even in the majority of districts where BoE elections now occur as of the general elections in November, voters may be unaware of the importance of voting "the bottom of the ballot" where local candidates typically appear.

Vote411

Local Leagues should use Vote411 as a nonpartisan resource to educate voters about their local BoE races and candidates. Covering these local races on Vote411 is a great way ensure voters have a place to go to see what will be on their ballot in upcoming elections. Through Vote411, candidates receive an invitation to respond to the League's voter guide. The voter guide invites the candidates to answer, in their own words, questions regarding locally relevant school district issues that will help voters discern their positions. In addition to covering your local BoE race on Vote411, local Leagues and members can direct community members to the voter engagement tool via email, social media, at candidate forums, and in the press.

For more information, visit: <https://www.vote411.org/candidate-contact>.

Candidate Forums

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey commands a high level of public trust. A large measure of that is accomplished by hosting candidate forums that provide a *fair, informative, respectful, and inclusive* platform for candidates and others to present their views to the public. Local candidate forums must be moderated by a trained LWV moderator from another district to ensure both the reality and perception of fairness and a lack of bias.

League Trained Moderators

League Trained Moderators have undergone a rigorous course of training to ensure that they manage the discussion respectfully while maintaining order. These moderators represent the League to the candidates, speakers, media, and the public and are mindful of the need to protect the League's image and integrity. To request a moderator for a local forum, an official contact person from the local league (usually the Voter Service chair), should contact the LWVNJ Office (609) 394-3303).

ROLE OF LOCAL LEAGUES IN SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Observer Corps

The following information about the League of Women Voters Observer Corps program is taken in part from LWV's resource, "[Observing Your Government in Action: Protecting Your Right to Know.](#)"

The League of Women Voters encourages open, transparent, and accessible government. Starting a local League Observer Corps program is one way to meet this goal. Observer Corps help ensure that community members are aware of the decisions that impact their lives and they promote government transparency and accountability.

An observer is a local League approved and appointed member who attends a governmental meeting, notes what happens at the meeting, and reports back to the League and (hopefully) the community. By attending public meetings of local governmental bodies/agencies, observers learn more about what their government is doing. They learn about the issues facing their community and are empowered to take action, if warranted. They also learn how issues are being addressed.

Observers keep elected and appointed officials on notice; they let them know that someone is watching what decisions are being made and how they are being made. They help ensure that the issues facing their community are being handled in the open.

Ideally, observers monitor both the issues being discussed as well as the process by which they are being discussed. While not every item up for discussion will relate to a League's priorities, ensuring that the meeting is being conducted in an open and acceptable way is critical to all of the League's efforts and the health of our democracy.

League observers attend public meetings and workshops of the local BoE to listen to staff presentations, learn about upcoming agenda items and observe how Board members interact with the superintendent, district administrators, and teachers, as well as with the local community members who attend these meetings.

Local League Observer Corps should assess these interactions and communications in two distinct contexts: 1) their understanding of the intended role of the BoE in guiding district policy in the best interests of the student and the community (vs the day-to-day operations that are the purview of the district Superintendent); and 2) their understanding of the LWVNJ Study & Action positions on education (see Appendix). The Observer Corps should report back to their local Leagues on a regular basis to keep them informed about the various issues that are raised at these meetings.

Providing Testimony

LWV members may comment as individuals at Board of Education Meetings on topics of concern regarding the public schools but may not represent the League of Women Voters at any level unless they are reading a statement or letter that has been previously approved by the League and is consistent with LWVNJ Study & Action positions. A local League may also choose to research a particular topic of interest or concern to the local public school district and, with permission of the superintendent and board of education, present their findings during a public meeting or workshop.

APPENDIX

Glossary and Acronyms

Abbott Districts

In 1981, the Education Law Center filed a complaint in New Jersey Superior Court on behalf of 20 children attending public schools in the cities of Camden, East Orange, Irvington, and Jersey City. The lawsuit challenged New Jersey's system of financing public education under the Public-School Education Act of 1975. This case, which eventually made its way to the state Supreme Court, led in 1985 to the first of a series of decisions known collectively as *Abbott v. Burke*. Amicus briefs were submitted by the League of Women Voters of New Jersey as well as others including: the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey; American Jewish Congress; Association for Children of New Jersey; Legal Services of New Jersey; Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry, et al.; Newark Teachers' Union, Local 481, AFT/AFL-CIO; New Jersey Black Issues Convention, Inc.; New Jersey Education Association; New Jersey School Boards Association; N.J. State Conference of NAACP Branches, et al.; Public Advocate. For more information, see: <https://edlawcenter.org/litigation/abbott-v-burke/abbott-history.html>

Abbott districts receive very high funding levels for K-12 and are the only districts in New Jersey where the state pays for Pre-K for all students. Abbott Districts are now referred to as SDA Districts, after the New Jersey Schools Development Authority (commonly referred to as NJSDA or SDA). This is the State agency responsible for fully funding and managing the new construction, modernization and renovation of school facilities projects in 31 New Jersey school districts known as the 'SDA Districts.'

Adequacy Budget

The Adequacy Budget is the state's calculation of the necessary funding level needed to provide a T&E to every student in every school district. Every year the state starts its Adequacy Budget calculation with a baseline of what it would cost to educate one elementary school student with no external factors considered. This baseline number is what is referred to as the Base Per Pupil Amount (BPA). In calculating the BPA, the state looks at a variety of factors, including teachers' salaries, costs of supplies, the rate of inflation, and more. For further information, see: <http://www.njsba.org/news-information/parent-connections/school-finance-101/>

EFCFA (The Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act)

The Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act (EFCFA, became law on July 19, 2000. The EFCFA provided certain levels of funding for facilities & improvements for both special needs and non-special needs districts.

Equalization Aid

Equalization Aid is the difference between the Adequacy Budget and the Local Cost Share, if one exists, covered by the state.

FAPE (Free Appropriate Education)

Local school districts are mainly responsible for providing funding for reasonable educational accommodations for students with special needs, or a free appropriate education (FAPE).

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Special education services were federally mandated in 1975 by the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This was later modified and became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990. IDEA requires states to provide children with special education services as a condition of receiving federal funds.

Local Cost Share

Local Cost Share is what the state believes local taxing authorities should be able to raise and earmark for the school district's budget.

Local Educational Agency

Local educational agency refers to a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within the state and recognized as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

SFRA (School Funding Reform Act)

The School Funding Reform Act of 2008 aims to quantify, in dollar terms, what it costs to provide students in each district with a "thorough and efficient education" or T&E. SFRA requires seven categories to be funded. These seven categories are separate from the Adequacy Budget. Additionally, the Governor has, from time to time, created other categories to address specific issues. Regardless of how many categories the Governor decides to create and fund, the SFRA requires seven categories be funded.

1. Special Education
2. School Choice Aid
3. Extraordinary Special Education
4. Adjustment Aid
5. Security Aid
6. Adequacy Aid
7. Transportation Aid

Student Learning Standards

Current guidelines created by the Department of Education and approved by the NJ Board of Education define legislative requirements by 9 different content areas, although a new K-12 information and media literacy requirement was [signed into law in January 2023](#). The content of Student Learning Standards must be updated by the State DoE every five years. Student Learning Standards content and sample lesson materials may become targets of community concern. Recent changes in the Health and Physical Education standards are one such example.

1. Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills
2. Comprehensive Health & Physical Education
3. Computer Science & Design Thinking
4. English Language Arts
5. Mathematics
6. Science

7. Social Studies
8. Visual & Performing Arts
9. World Languages

T&E (Thorough and Efficient)

T&E is the phrase most frequently cited in reference to public education in the Garden State. The wording comes from the 1875 state constitutional amendment requiring the state to provide “maintenance and support” for a system of free public schools for New Jersey’s children. For more information, see: [Thorough and Efficient: The Evolution of Public Education - New Jersey School Boards Association](#)

Code of Ethics for NJ School Board Members

The [School Ethics Act](#), N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 *et seq.* is intended to ensure that the conduct of school officials holds the respect and confidence of the people. The Legislature declared that school officials must avoid conduct which is in violation of their public trust or which creates a justifiable impression that the public trust is being violated. N.J.S.A. 18A:12-22(a). The School Ethics Act applies only to [school officials](#) as defined by N.J.S.A. 18A:12-23, which includes [administrators](#). The Act sets forth standards for the following:

1. [Conflicts of Interest for school officials](#) (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(a) through (k)), which applies to all school officials, i.e., board members and school administrators;
2. [Code of Ethics for School Board Members](#) (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(a) through (j)), which applies only to school board members and does not apply to administrators;
3. Annual disclosure of employment and financial Interests (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-25); and
4. School board member training requirements (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-33).

The following Code of Ethics was adopted by the Delegate Assembly of New Jersey School Boards Association on May 10, 1975; it was reaffirmed in May 1997. NJ school board members are the only elected officials in New Jersey who have a code of ethics.

- A. I will uphold and enforce all laws, state board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.
- B. I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the board.
- F. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.
- G. I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. But, 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 schools.
- H. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.
- I. I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties.
- J. I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

LWVNJ Study & Action

Study & Action is the state program of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and is affirmed by League delegates at biennial state conventions. It is designed to help League leaders make use of LWVNJ public policy positions to advocate at the state and local levels. The document can be accessed [here](#).

LWVNJ Study & Action positions on education, in brief, are:

Charter Schools:

Support charter schools to encourage innovation within the public schools, while preserving the public character of public education. Traditional public school districts should be protected from arbitrary funding changes with respect to charter school funding.

Private School Choice:

Oppose use of public funds to support students in nonpublic schools.

Public School Funding:

See Public Education Funding under Fiscal Policy.

School District Regionalization:

Support decision-making by residents of affected districts, so long as the right to equal educational access is not abridged. Support merger of some types of districts into a regional district, others into single k-12 districts, and elimination of districts with less than 500 students. Support revision of decision-making process for changes in tax-allocation formula. Oppose formation of countywide districts.

State Role in Achieving Quality Education:

Support the sharing of responsibility between state and local school boards for educational outcomes; support state assistance and monitoring; state-set curriculum content standards, and structural flexibility.

Teacher Certification and Professional Development:

Support continuation and improvement of the alternative route to certification to assure substantive training, valid evaluation and appropriate support. Support periodic renewal of certification and requirement of continuing professional development.

Tenure:

Support elimination of tenure for administrators.

Links to Resources

League of Women Voters of New Jersey contact information:

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www.lwvnj.org

League of Women Voters of New Jersey Member Resources:

<https://www.lwvnj.org/members>

LWVNJ Study & Action: [uploads-](#)

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New Jersey Department of Education: www.nj.gov/education/

NJDoE Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools:

www.nj.gov/education/about/divisions/charterrenaissance.shtml

New Jersey School Board Association: <https://www.njsba.org/>

Student Learning Standards press release:

www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562022/approved/20230104b.shtml

VOTE 411: www.vote411.org/