



Norwood Board of Education Board Training

February 2026

Kerri A. Wright, Esq.

A blurred photograph of a school hallway with students walking. A teal horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image.

School Ethics Act

School Ethics Act

- a. No school official or member of his immediate family shall **have an interest in a business organization or engage in any business, transaction, or professional activity**, which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his duties in the public interest;
- b. No school official shall use or attempt to use his official position to **secure unwarranted privileges, advantages or employment** for himself, members of his immediate family or others;

School Ethics Act

- c. No school official shall act in his official capacity in any matter where he, a member of his immediate family, or a business organization in which he has an interest, has a **direct or indirect financial involvement that might reasonably be expected to impair his objectivity or independence of judgment**. No school official shall act in his official capacity in any matter where he or a member of his immediate family has a personal involvement that is or creates some benefit to the school official or member of his immediate family;
- d. No school official shall undertake any **employment or service**, whether compensated or not, which might reasonably be expected to **prejudice his independence of judgment** in the exercise of his official duties;

School Ethics Act

- e. No school official, or member of his immediate family, or business organization in which he has an interest, **shall solicit or accept any gift, favor, loan, political contribution, service, promise of future employment**, or other thing of value based upon an understanding that the gift, favor, loan, contribution, service, promise, or other thing of value was given or offered for the purpose of influencing him, directly or indirectly, in the discharge of his official duties. This provision shall not apply to the solicitation or acceptance of contributions to the campaign of an announced candidate for elective public office, if the school official has no knowledge or reason to believe that the campaign contribution, if accepted, was given with the intent to influence the school official in the discharge of his official duties;
- f. No school official shall use, or allow to be used, his public office or employment, or any **information, not generally available to the members** of the public, which he receives or acquires in the course of and by reason of his office or employment, for the purpose of securing financial gain for himself, any member of his immediate family, or any business organization with which he is associated;

School Ethics Act

- g. No school official or business organization in which he has an interest shall represent any person or party other than the school board or school district in connection with any cause, proceeding, application or other matter pending before the school district in which he serves or in any proceeding involving the school district in which he serves or, for officers or employees of the New Jersey School Boards Association, any school district. This provision shall not be deemed to prohibit representation within the context of official labor union or similar representational responsibilities;
- h. No school official shall be deemed in conflict with these provisions if, by reason of his participation in any matter required to be voted upon, no material or monetary gain accrues to him as a member of any business, profession, occupation or group, to any greater extent than any gain could reasonably be expected to accrue to any other member of that business, profession, occupation or group;

School Ethics Act

- i. No elected member shall be prohibited from making an inquiry for information on behalf of a constituent, if no fee, reward or other thing of value is promised to, given to or accepted by the member or a member of his immediate family, whether directly or indirectly, in return therefor;
- j. Nothing shall prohibit any school official, or members of his immediate family, from representing himself, or themselves, in negotiations or proceedings concerning his, or their, own interests; and
- k. Employees of the New Jersey School Boards Association shall not be precluded from providing assistance, in the normal course of their duties, to boards of education in the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement regardless of whether a member of their immediate family is a member of, or covered by, a collective bargaining agreement negotiated by a Statewide union with which a board of education is negotiating.

A blurred background image of a school hallway. In the upper half, two people are walking away from the camera. In the lower half, several people are walking past wooden benches. The overall scene is brightly lit and has a motion-blur effect.

Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics

- a. I will uphold and enforce all laws, rules and regulations of the State Board of Education, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes shall 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 that 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.

Code of Ethics

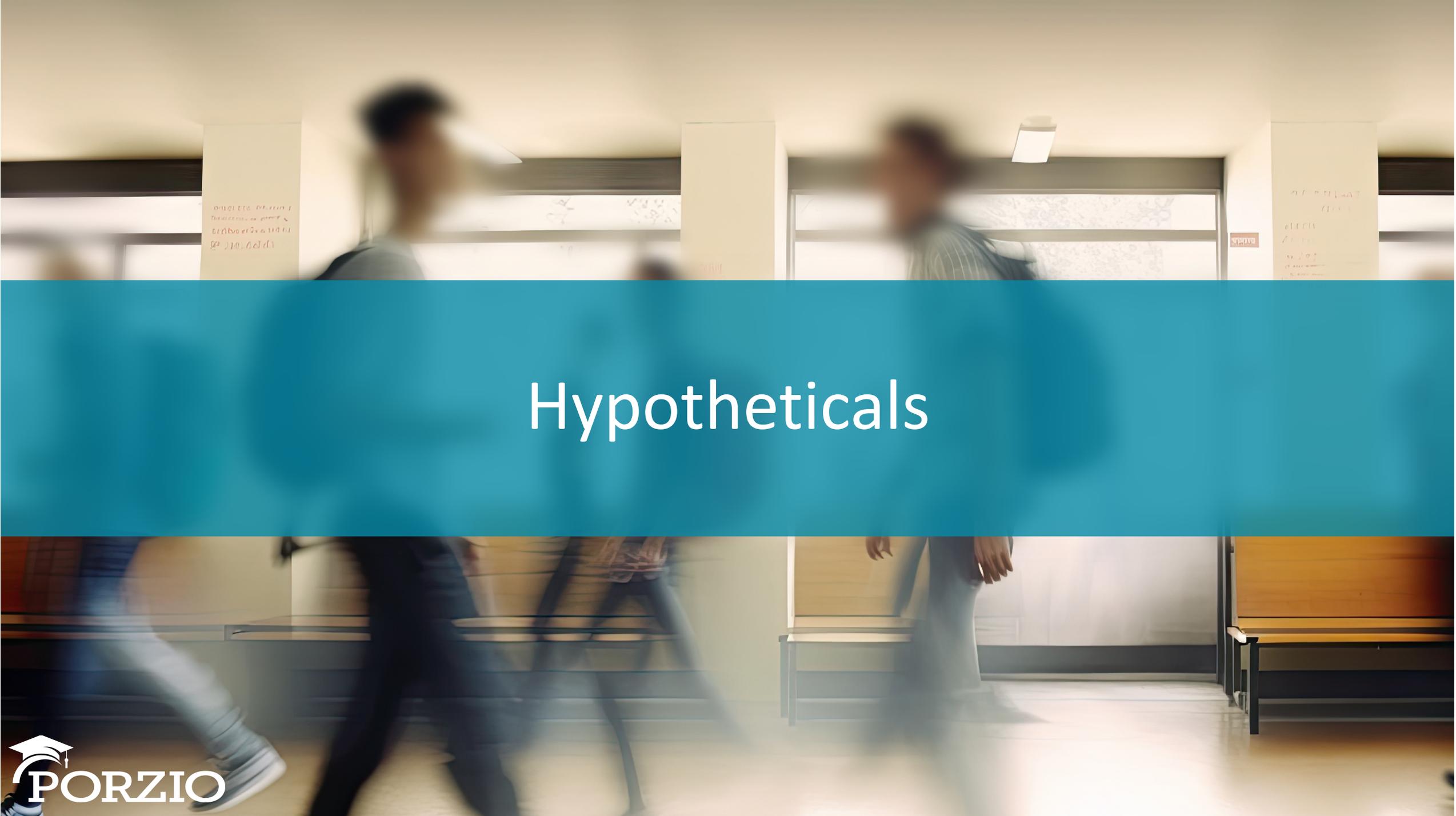
- d. I will carry out my responsibility, **not to administer the schools**, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run.
- e. I will recognize that **authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise 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.

Code of Ethics

- g. **I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools.** 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 school.
- h. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.

Code of Ethics

- 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 the complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

A blurred background image of a school hallway. In the upper portion, two students are walking away from the camera. In the lower portion, several students are walking towards the camera, their figures blurred to convey motion. The hallway has white walls, a polished floor, and wooden benches along the right side. There are posters on the walls and a window in the background.

Hypotheticals

Parental Concern

A middle school parent, frustrated that their son did not play more during a recent basketball game, approaches a school Board member to complain about the coach.

The coach and the Board member are friends, since their children are in the same soccer league. The member mentions the parent's complaint to the coach.



Misinformation

Two students get into a fight at school. The teacher who tried to break up the fight was hit by one of the students. The fight is talked about throughout the school community.

At the next Board meeting, a resolution for long term suspension was approved.

While in the grocery store, a Board member hears two parents discussing the fight. One of the parents incorrectly says that the school didn't discipline either student.

The Board member corrects the parent.

External Communication

The 1st Amendment v. School Ethics Act

The School Ethics Commission has explained that “Board members do not surrender the rights that they have as citizens such as freedom of speech when they become members of a school board. However, in exercising those rights, **the board members must comply with the School Ethics Act.**”

This must be kept in mind when a Board member expresses his/her opinion publicly; whether through a social media post, and email, or other public comment.

Issues Concerning the Board

1. Identify yourself as a Board member.
2. Indicate that the post is not authorized by or written on behalf of the Board.
- 3. Provide accurate information that is not confidential.**
- 4. Ensure that your action does not compromise the Board.**



In the Matter of Treston, Randolph Township Board of Education

Facts

Board member writes Op-Ed, endorsing four candidates and advocating against one candidate.

Board member inserted the following disclaimer:

"The author is writing this endorsement on his own personal behalf. His opinions are his own."

IMO Treston, *Comm'r of Educ (Sept. 2021)*

Appropriate Disclaimer Example

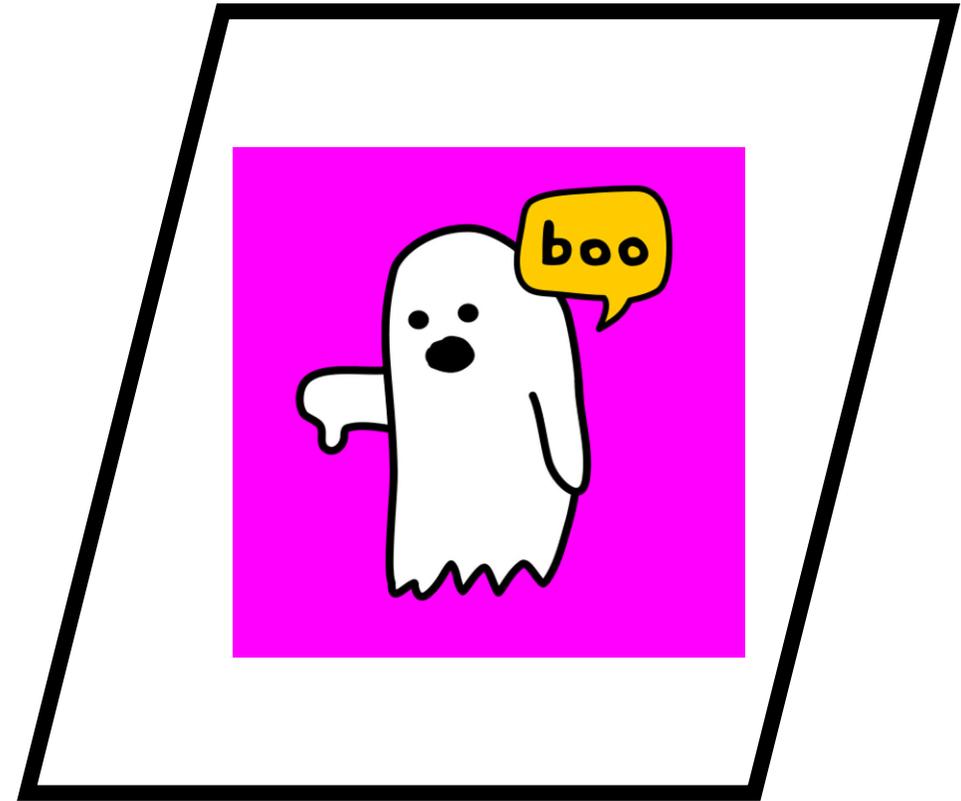
“
The following statements are made in my capacity as a private citizen, and not in my capacity as a board member. These statements are also not representative of the board or its individual members, and solely represent my own personal opinions.
”

Social Media Post

A Board Member shares an article on her personal Facebook page regarding the appointment of a new Commissioner of Education.

Above the article, the Board member includes the thumbs down emoji.

No other language is included.



Opinions

Board Member posts on his personal Facebook page, which includes the proper disclaimer.

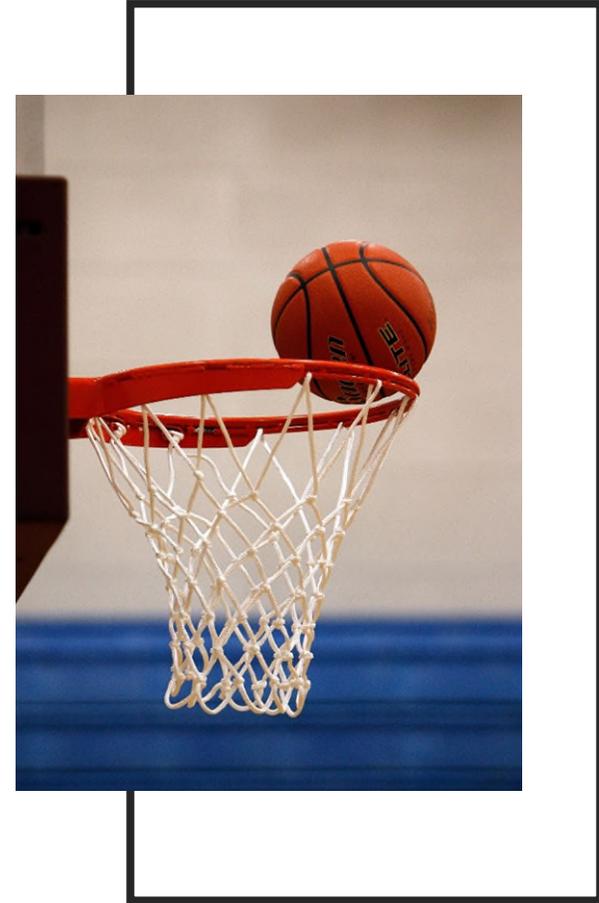
“At tomorrow night’s meeting, the Superintendent will be proposing a change to the District’s curriculum. I think the Superintendent’s curriculum is dangerous and will harm our children. Please come to tomorrow’s meeting and let the Superintendent hear how we feel about his disruptive curriculum.”



Fact Gathering

At the Board's next meeting it will be voting on the purchase of new basketball hoops. A Board member requests permission from the superintendent and enters the gymnasium to examine the current baskets.

He goes 3 for 4 at the free throw line.





Thank You

Kerri A. Wright