

# POLICY GUIDE

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June 20

[See POLICY ALERT Nos. 164 and 220]

## 2270 RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education recognizes that religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal conviction rather than governmental authority and the students of this district are protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and by Article I, Paragraph 4 of the New Jersey State Constitution from the establishment of religion in the schools. **The First Amendment requires public school officials will to show be neutral in their treatment of religion in the school district, showing** neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religious expression **such as prayer.** Accordingly, ~~devotional exercises will be permitted in this district.~~

**The United States Department of Education's Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (USDOE Guidance) provides information on the current state of the law concerning religious expression in public schools.**

The following activities **as outlined in the USDOE Guidance** will be permitted **upon applying the governing constitutional principles in particular contexts related to:** ~~in the school district provided the activity is consistent with current United States Supreme Court decisions regarding the relationship between government and religion:~~ prayer during **non-instructional time**; organized prayer groups and activities; **teachers, administrators, and other school employees' activities; moments of silence; accommodations for prayer during instructional time;** ~~religious expression and~~ prayer in classroom assignments; student assemblies and ~~extra-curricular~~ **noncurricular** events; prayer at graduation; **and/or** baccalaureate ceremonies; ~~devotional exercises and other prayer and/or religion related activities.~~

The following activities **as outlined in the USDOE Guidance** will be permitted **upon applying the governing constitutional principles in particular contexts related to religious expression:** **religious literature; teaching about religion; student dress codes and policies; and/or religious excusals.** ~~The school district will not permit an activity if the activity advances or inhibits any particular religious expression that is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.~~



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**The Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 4071, is designed to ensure that student religious activities are afforded the same access to Federally funded public secondary school facilities as are student secular activities. The United States Department of Justice has developed guidance for interpreting the Equal Access Act's requirements outlined in the USDOE Guidance in the area of general provisions, prayer service and worship exercises, means of publicized meetings, lunch-time and recess, and leadership of religious student groups.**

~~The Board believes that an understanding of religions and the contributions that religion has made to the advancement of civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, the curriculum may be developed to include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the students, instruction about the religions of the world.~~

~~The Board also acknowledges the degree to which a religious consciousness has enriched the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the schools of this district frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may, therefore, be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the district. The Board directs that teaching staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way.~~

~~The Board recognizes that religious traditions vary in their perceptions and doctrines regarding the natural world and its processes. The curriculum is chosen for its place in the thorough and efficient education of the children of this district, not for its conformity to religious principles. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools so that they may privately accept or reject the knowledge so gained in accordance with their own religious tenets.~~



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**Any issues regarding religion in the schools and the provisions of this Policy shall be referred to the Superintendent of Schools who may consult with the Board Attorney.**

U.S. Const. Amend. 1

**The Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 4071**

U.S. Department of Education - Guidance on Constitutionally Protected  
Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools – ~~February 7, 2003~~

**January 16, 2020**

N.J. Const. (1947) Art. 1, para. 4

N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.6 et seq.; 18A:36-16

Adopted:



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[See POLICY ALERT Nos. 106 and 220]

## 8320 PERSONNEL RECORDS

The Board of Education believes that the orderly operation of the school district requires the retention of all records bearing upon an employee's qualifications for employment and employment history.

The Board requires that sufficient records be compiled and maintained to demonstrate an employee's qualifications for the position assigned; compliance with Federal, State, and local benefit programs; conformity to district rules; the proper conduct of evaluations; and the employee's entitlement, as appropriate, to tenure and seniority.

Only that information pertaining to the professional role of the employee and submitted by duly authorized school administrative personnel or the Board may be entered in an employee's personnel file.

The Superintendent shall be responsible for the custody and maintenance of personnel records. A single, central file of documents shall be maintained; temporary, subsidiary records will be permitted for ease in data gathering only. An employee's personnel file shall be maintained for six years following his/her termination of district service, provided the employment history record card is maintained a minimum of eighty years.

**A Board of Education and private agencies that provide educational services by means of public funds shall make employee records and information available for public access pursuant to N.J.S.A. 47:1A-10, the Open Public Records Act, but in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-120.(d) and 121.(d), and as provided in Policy and Regulation 8320 - Section G.** ~~Records maintained in the personnel files of this district are not public records and are not open to inspection except as provided for in this policy. Board minutes and other public records of this district and any computerized files maintained by this district may include only an employee's name, title, position, assignments, salary, payroll record, length of service in the district and in military service, the date and reason for separation from service in this district, and the amount and type of pension a former employee receives.~~

Personnel records may be inspected by school administrators to the extent that such inspection is required in the performance of the inspector's duties.



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Board members may have access to confidential information in the personnel files of only those employees recommended for or subjected to an employment action requiring a vote of the Board or where access to the information is essential for the performance of the Board member's duties. Board member access to personnel files is limited to the relevant portion of the file and is available only through the Superintendent. Board members may freely inspect employment applications filed by candidates for district positions.

An employee may inspect his/her personnel file provided that the employee requests such access in writing, reviews the record in the presence of the administrator designated to maintain the file, makes no alteration or addition to the file nor removes any material from it, and signs a log attached to the file indicating the date on which it was inspected.

An employee may appeal to the Superintendent the inclusion or exclusion of records or for appropriate administrative review of the accuracy of any record in his/her personnel file.

The Superintendent shall prepare rules enumerating the records to be maintained for each employee of this district, including, as a minimum and as appropriate to the position, the completed application form, employment contract(s), a copy of the employee's qualifying certification, transcripts, report of an employment physical examination, oath of allegiance, criminal background check, income tax forms, retirement registration, hospitalization forms, annuity forms, rate of compensation, attendance record, assignments to positions, completed evaluations, reports of disciplinary incidents, records of special awards or distinctions, and reports of annual or special physical and mental examinations.

N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-14.2; 18A:40-19; 18A:66-32

N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.

**N.J.A.C. 6A:32-4.3**

Adopted:



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## R 8320 PERSONNEL RECORDS

### A. Content of Record

1. A personnel file shall be assembled and maintained for each person employed by this district. Each file shall contain the original or copies, as appropriate, of the following documents regarding the employee:
  - a. The employee's current correct name, address, telephone number, and birthdate;
  - b. Application form, including transcripts of all academic work, records of prior military service, and other supporting documents;
  - c. Annual employment contract and/or annual salary notice, signed by the employee;
  - d. Certificates and/or licenses required for employment;
  - e. Documentation of fulfillment of requirements for any change in salary classification;
  - f. Income tax forms;
  - g. Retirement registration;
  - h. Hospitalization forms;
  - i. Annuity forms;
  - j. Rate of compensation;
  - k. Attendance record, including the starting and ending dates of all leaves of absence, whether the leave was paid or unpaid, and the purpose for which such leaves were granted;
  - l. Assignment to positions, including position title and building to which assigned;



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- m. Completed evaluations;
  - n. Reports of disciplinary incidents;
  - o. Records of special awards, commendations, or distinctions;
  - p. Oath of allegiance;
  - q. Reports of routine physical examinations; and
  - r. Reports of physical and mental examinations required for cause.
2. No information will be placed in an employees' file that does not pertain to the employee's position in this district and the performance of the employee's duties.
  3. The content of personnel files will be reviewed annually and material no longer required will be destroyed.
- B. Custodian of Personnel Records
1. The Superintendent is custodian of all personnel records.
  2. Personnel records shall be maintained in the office of the Human Resources, who shall be records manager responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the files and for supervising access to the files.
- C. Notice of Content of Files
1. Each employee shall be informed of the content of his/her personnel file.
  2. Each employee will be notified of the inclusion in his/her file of any document that was not received from the employee or at the direction of the employee.
    - a. No evaluation form will be placed in a personnel file until it has been reviewed and signed by the employee.



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- b. No copy of a memorandum or letter sent by an administrator or other school official to an employee will be placed in the employee's file unless the original and copy include the notation "cc: Personnel File" or other clear indication of the author's intention to place the memorandum or letter in the employee's file.
- c. No report or letter or memorandum from any source, other than documents referred to in paragraph C2b above, may be placed in an employee's file until a copy of the same has been delivered to the employee.

## D. Employee Access to Personnel Records

- 1. Each employee shall be granted access to his/her personnel file in accordance with these regulations, except as may have been negotiated with the employee's majority representative.
- 2. Written request for access shall be submitted to the Human Resources Department. Except in unusual circumstances, access shall be granted only during the regular working hours of the office in which the file is kept.
- 3. The employee shall review the record in the presence of the Human Resources Department representative and, at the employee's request, a representative of the employee.
- 4. No alteration or addition or deletion may be made to the file, except that the employee may append to any document in the file his/her comment on that document.
- 5. The employee may hand copy any portion of his/her file and may receive photocopies of records on payment of the copying fees established for copies of public records.

## E. Appeal of Content of the File

- 1. The employee may appeal to the Superintendent the exclusion or inclusion of any portion of his/her personnel file or the accuracy of any information in the file.





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2. An appeal must be made in writing on a form available in the office of the Superintendent.
  3. The Superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal as soon as possible, but not later than 14 working days from the time the written appeal is submitted. The Superintendent's decision shall be in writing and shall be delivered to the employee and the records manager responsible for the employee's file.
  4. Except as may be otherwise provided by contract negotiated with the employee's majority representative, the appellant may appeal the Superintendent's decision to the Board; a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.
- F. Access by Board Members and School Officials
1. Personnel files may be inspected by school officials only as required in the discharge of their professional or statutory duties and to the extent required in the discharge of those duties.
  2. Personnel files may be inspected by Board members when such inspection relates to the Superintendent's recommendation of a candidate for employment, promotion, transfer, dismissal, or discipline.
  3. Much of the information included in an employee's file is confidential; access to the employee's file for professional reasons necessarily imposes on the person reviewing the file the duty to respect the confidentiality of the record.
- ~~G. Computerized Records~~
- ~~1. Computerized personnel records may include only the following information about an employee:~~
    - ~~a. Name, address, and telephone number;~~
    - ~~b. Social security number;~~
    - ~~c. Current assignment;~~



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- d. ~~Work experience;~~
  - e. ~~Employment date; and~~
  - f. ~~Salary guide and step.~~
2. ~~Computerized information may be used only for the following purposes:~~
- a. ~~Payroll;~~
  - b. ~~An employee's individual employment record; and~~
  - c. ~~Studies, reports, or surveys conducted by the district or a governmental agency and authorized by the \_\_\_\_\_, provided that such studies, reports, or surveys do not identify specific employees.~~

## **G. Public Access to Employee Records and Information**

1. **A Board of Education and private agencies that provide educational services by means of public funds shall make employee records and information available for public access, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 47:1A-10, the Open Public Records Act, but in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-120(d) and 121.(d) in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:32-4.3 and as outlined in this Regulation.**
2. **In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 47:1A-10, notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. or any other law to the contrary, the personnel or pension records of any individual in the possession of a public agency, including but not limited to, records relating to any grievance filed by or against an individual, shall not be considered a government record and shall not be made available for public access, except that:**
  - a. **An individual's name, title, position, salary, payroll record, length of service, date of separation and the reason therefore, and the amount and type of any pension received shall be a government record;**



