

Advisory Opinion

Any Board member, candidate to be a Board member, Superintendent or employee subject to the provisions of the policies of the Ethics Code may request that the Ethics Review Panel issue an advisory opinion concerning the application of these policies.

Any person may file a complaint with the Ethics Review Panel alleging a violation of the Ethics Code.



This brochure only provides a brief summary of the Ethics Code. For a full text of these policies, please visit the BCPS website at:

https://www.bcps.org/board_of_education/ethics_review_panel/ethics_code

Ethics Review Panel

Members

Tim Topoleski, Ph.D., Chair
Term Expires: 12/31/2024

Thomas Keech, Esq., Vice Chair
Term Expires: 12/31/2025

Owen Jarvis, Esq., Panel Member
Term Expires: 12/31/2027

Georgios Makris, Esq., Panel Member
Term Expires: 12/31/2026

Ralph Sapia, Esq., Panel Member
Term Expires: 12/31/2023

Winopa Mbakop, CAP
Administrative Assistant to the
Ethics Review Panel

Board of Education of Baltimore County
Ethics Review Panel
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Revised: July 2023



Ethics Code

2023-2024

“A school official who violates the Ethics Code is subject to discipline, personnel action or removal from office, as provided by law and consistent with Board Policies and Superintendent’s Rules.” See, Board Policy 8361.

For more information, refer to the Board of Education of Baltimore County’s Ethics Code (Board of Education Policies 8360 through 8366)

The Ethics Code Board of Education Policies 8360 through 8366

The Ethics Code establishes guidelines of ethical and professional conduct consistent with the school system's *Precepts, Beliefs and Values* as well as the State's public ethics laws.

The Code outlines recommended behavior for members of the school Board, candidates to be members of the Board, the Superintendent and employees. All of these individuals are subject to the Code, which advocates positive behavior and avoiding impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. (See Board Policy 8361)



Key Provisions of the Code

Gifts. Policy 8362 establishes firm guidelines for accepting or soliciting any bequest or gift of money or property by schools or offices on behalf of the Board of Education. The Gifts Policy also establishes guidelines for accepting unsolicited gifts of nominal value (not to exceed \$20 in cost), ceremonial gifts and awards, and meals and beverages by a school official.

Conflict of Interest. Policy 8363 prohibits Board members, the Superintendent, and school employees, from participating in any school system matter that would directly or indirectly benefit their immediate family, or a business or organization with which they are affiliated. The Conflict of Interest Policy also addresses employment and financial interests, post-employment, contingent compensation, prestige of office, disclosure of confidential information, political activity, royalties, personal gain, and employee prohibitions.

Financial Disclosure Statements. Policy 8364 identifies Board members, candidates to be members of the Board and certain school system employees who are required to file an annual financial disclosure statement on or before **April 30th** of each year. Failure to timely file the statement may result in discipline, personnel action or removal from office.



Lobbying. Persons have engaged in "lobbying" as defined by Policy 8360 when they spend more than \$25 in a calendar year for activities, food, entertainment or other gifts in order to influence or attempt to influence a school official. Policy 8365 governs the annual reports that lobbyists must file with the Ethics Review Panel as well as the Panel's lobbyist registration requirements.

Ethics Review Panel. Policy 8366 establishes the Board's Ethics Review Panel. The Panel consists of five members who are residents of Baltimore County and who are appointed by the Board of Education for staggered five-year terms.

The Panel:

- Serves as an advisory body to the Board;
- Creates, receives, reviews and maintains all forms required by the Ethics Code, including financial disclosure statements;
- Interprets the Ethics Code and provides advisory opinions to persons subject to the Code;
- Processes and makes determinations regarding complaints alleging violations of the Ethics Code;
- Refers findings regarding complaints and other enforcement matters to the Board of Education for action; and
- Establishes a public information and education program regarding the purpose and implementation of the Ethics Code.