395-26SEC
OAL Dkt. No. EEC-04337-26 (EEC-01472-21, EEC-01474-21, EEC-01476-21, and EEC-01477-21 (consolidated) on remand)
SEC Dkt. Nos. C76-20, C77-20, C79-20, and C75-20
Agency Dkt. No. 326-07-26

New Jersey Commissioner of Education

Final Decision

Michael D'Andrea,

Complainant,

v.

Anthony Ayres, Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,

Respondent.

And

Jennifer Lewis-Gallagher,

Complainant,

v.

Anthony Ayres, Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,

Respondent.

And

Therese Bonmati,

Complainant,

v.

Anthony Ayres, Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,

Respondent.

And

Debra DeFelice,

Complainant,

v.

Anthony Ayres, Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,

Respondent.

The Commissioner has reviewed the July 28, 2026 decision of the School Ethics Commission (SEC). The SEC recommended that respondent Anthony Ayres, a member of the Monroe Township Board of Education, be reprimanded pursuant to a settlement agreement entered into by the parties in resolution of complainants' allegations that respondent violated the School Ethics Act.

Upon review, the Commissioner concurs with the penalty recommended by the SEC. Accordingly, respondent is hereby reprimanded.

IT IS SO ORDERED.[1]

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Date of Decision: September 30, 2026
Date of Mailing: September 30, 2026

[1] This decision may be appealed to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-9.1. Under *N.J.Ct.R.* 2:4-1(b), a notice of appeal must be filed with the Appellate Division within 45 days from the date of mailing of this decision.

Before the School Ethics Commission
Final Decision

Michael D'Andrea,
Complainant

OAL Docket No.: EEC-04337-26
ON REMAND from

v.

OAL Docket No.: EEC-01472-21
SEC Docket No.: C76-20

Anthony Ayres,
Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,
Respondent

Jennifer Lewis-Gallagher,
Complainant

OAL Docket No.: EEC-01474-21
SEC Docket No.: C77-20

v.

Anthony Ayres,
Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,
Respondent

Therese Bonmati,
Complainant

OAL Docket No.: EEC-01476-21
SEC Docket No.: C79-20

v.

Anthony Ayres,
Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,
Respondent

Debra DeFelice,
Complainant

OAL Docket No.: EEC-01477-21
SEC Docket No.: C75-20
CONSOLIDATED

v.

Anthony Ayres,
Monroe Township Board of Education, Gloucester County,
Respondent

I. Procedural History

The above-captioned matter arises from four separate, but related Complaints filed with the School Ethics Commission (Commission) by Debra DeFelice (C75-20), Michael D'Andrea (C76-20), Jennifer Lewis-Gallagher (C77-20) and Therese Bonmati (C79-20) (Complainants), alleging that Anthony Ayres (Respondent), a member of the Monroe Township Board of Education (Board), violated the School Ethics Act (Act), *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-21 *et seq*. More specifically, the Complaints alleged that Respondent violated *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(a) (C75-20), *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(b) (C75-20), *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(e) (C75-20 and C77-20), *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(f) (C75-20, C77-20 and C79-20), *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(g) (C75-20, C76-20, C77-20 and C79-20) and *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(h) (C75-20) of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members (Code).

At its meeting on January 26, 2021, the Commission voted to transmit each of the matters to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) where Complainant(s) would carry the burden to prove that Respondent violated the cited provisions of the Code.

The matters were consolidated at the OAL by Order dated September 30, 2021. The parties agreed to amicably resolve the matter and, on or about February 10, 2025, the parties placed the terms of the settlement on the record. Thereafter, the parties sought to execute a written agreement, but could not agree on the inclusion of a release clause. The Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) issued an Initial Decision on December 22, 2025, which concluded that the parties shall be bound to the terms of their settlement as placed on the record, and ordered that the conditions imposed on Respondent in the settlement "constitute the penalty and imposition of reprimand or censure." Respondent filed exceptions to the Initial Decision, in accordance with *N.J.A.C.* 1:1-18.4, and Complainants filed a reply thereto. At its meeting on February 24, 2026, the Commission voted to reject the Initial Decision and to remand the matter to the OAL for further review and consideration.

At the OAL on remand, the parties again agreed to settle the matter, and on May 5, 2026, the parties indicated that they wished to reaffirm their agreement of February 10, 2025, and agreed upon the sanction of reprimand. The ALJ issued an Initial Decision on May 22, 2026, which approved the terms of the settlement and recommended a penalty of reprimand.

At its meeting on June 23, 2026, the Commission reviewed the Initial Decision, and at its meeting on July 28, 2026, the Commission voted to adopt the Initial Decision as its Final Decision. However, the Commission also voted not to take a position on the enforceability of the parties' written settlement agreement. Additionally, the Commission recommended that the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) impose a penalty of reprimand, consistent with the terms of the settlement agreement.

II. Analysis

After pre-hearing discussions on May 5, 2026, the parties advised that they wished to reaffirm their settlement agreement of February 10, 2025, which was placed upon the record, and

the parties agreed upon the sanction of reprimand to be imposed upon Respondent. *Initial Decision* at 3-4. The terms of the parties' agreement, as stated on the record, are as follows:

1. Respondent Ayres admits to a violation of the School Ethics Act, as to his actions in Counts F, G, and J.[1]
2. Respondent Ayres may submit a written or verbal justification which would explain what he was thinking at the time of those actions of Counts F, G, and J.
3. Respondent Ayres has voluntarily agreed with Complainants that he will not serve and/or fill a seat on the Board of Education of Monroe Township for two years from the date of the entry of the Commissioner's Final Agency Decision in this case.
4. Respondent Ayres is permitted to continue to volunteer for the school district in any other capacity.
5. Respondent Ayres has agreed to submit a personal letter of apology directly to Complainant DeFelice and L.D., within thirty days.
6. The parties agree to the sanction of reprimand for Respondent Ayres.

Id. at 12.

The ALJ found that all other Counts of the consolidated complaints, digested as Counts A, B, C, D, E, H, and I, have been voluntarily withdrawn by Petitioners and are dismissed. *Id.* at 13.

After reviewing the terms of the parties' settlement agreement, the ALJ found that the settlement is voluntary, consistent with the law, and fully disposes of all issues in controversy between the parties. *Ibid.* Having concluded that the parties' settlement agreement met the requirements of *N.J.A.C.* 1:1-19.1 and should be approved, the ALJ incorporated the terms of the settlement into the Initial Decision. *Ibid.*

IV. Decision

Following its review, the Commission does not find a reason why it should not defer to the parties' mutual decision to amicably resolve their dispute. The Commission adopts the *Initial Decision* as its Final Decision, but does not take a position on the enforceability of the parties' settlement agreement. Accordingly, consistent with the terms of the settlement agreement, the Commission recommends that the Commissioner impose a penalty of reprimand.

Pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-29(c), this decision shall be forwarded to the Commissioner for review of the Commission's recommended penalty.

Dennis M. Roberts, Chairperson

Mailing Date: July 28, 2026

[1] Those counts state that Respondent's actions were in violation of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24.1(a), (e), (f), (g), and (h).

Resolution Adopting Decision in Connection with C75-20, C76-20, C77-20 and C79-20 (Consolidated)

Whereas, at its meeting on January 26, 2021, the School Ethics Commission (Commission) voted to transmit the above-captioned matters to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for a hearing; and

Whereas, while at the OAL, the parties agreed to a settlement on the record; and

Whereas, the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) issued an Initial Decision on December 22, 2025, which concluded that the parties shall be bound to the terms of their settlement as placed on the record, and ordered that the conditions imposed on Respondent in the settlement "constitute the penalty and imposition of reprimand or censure"; and

Whereas, at its meeting on February 24, 2026, the Commission voted to reject the Initial Decision and to remand the matter to the OAL for further review and consideration.

Whereas, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision on May 22, 2026, which approved the terms of the settlement and recommended a penalty of reprimand; and

Whereas, at its meeting on June 23, 2026, the Commission considered the Initial Decision and discussed adopting the Initial Decision as its Final Decision, but not taking a position on the enforceability of the parties' written settlement agreement; and

Whereas, at its meeting on June 23, 2026, the Commission discussed recommending a penalty of reprimand, consistent with the terms of the settlement agreement; and

Whereas, at its meeting on July 28, 2026, the Commission reviewed and voted to approve the within decision as accurately memorializing its actions/findings from its meeting on June 23, 2026; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, the Commission hereby adopts the within decision as its Final Decision, and directs its staff to notify all parties to this action of its decision herein.

_____
Dennis M. Roberts, Chairperson

I hereby certify that this Resolution was duly adopted by the School Ethics Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on July 28, 2026.

_____
Brigid C. Martens, Director
School Ethics Commission