

WALLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WALLINGTON, NJ

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

In general, regular and special meetings of the board of education are open to the public and representatives of the media. Three categories of meetings may be distinguished: regular work sessions, regular public meetings, and special meetings. The public is welcome to attend regular work sessions, during which it may observe the board but may not participate. A time for public discussion of agenda items is included in the order of business for the regular public meeting each month. Some special meetings will be public meetings, at which the public is entitled to observe and to participate upon invitation. Others are open meetings, at which the public may observe the board but not participate. By resolution, the board shall exclude the public from those parts of a meeting which deal with matters held confidential in accordance with law.

The board welcomes participation of interested organizations and individuals and will schedule time as appropriate for the public to speak. The length of time scheduled for public discussion shall be limited. The board may establish a time limit for individual speakers at the time of a meeting.

Comments and questions at the end of the regular meetings may deal with any topic related to the board's conduct of the schools. Comments at special meetings must be related to the call of the meeting. Advance announcement of all regular, scheduled special, and specially called meetings of the board is made through newspapers.

The board will not permit unnecessary or undesirable identification of district pupils at public or board of education meetings, particularly when the pupil is subject to disciplinary action, or is educationally handicapped.

The board of education, whenever possible, shall use board of education meetings throughout the year to present information and invite public discussion. The items to be presented at such meetings must include:

1. Discussion of State rules and local procedures for implementation of district goals, objectives and standards.
2. Presentation of audit report.
3. Presentation of budget.
4. Report on student progress
5. Annual plans for special education, bilingual/ESL and basic skills programs.
6. Any other items required by State or local mandates.

Voting: All resolutions will be voted on with a verbal vote upon the call of the board secretary. Abstentions will be considered a "non-vote."

All meetings of the board of education shall be open to the public with the exception of meetings to discuss:

- A. Any matter which by express provision of state or federal law or rule of court shall be rendered confidential;
- B. Any matter in which the release of information would impair a right to receive federal funds;
- C. Any material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy, unless the individual (or all the individuals) concerned shall request in writing that the same be disclosed publicly. This includes information contained in pupil records, and any reports or recommendations concerning a specific individual (see 1120 for "needless public labeling");
- D. Any collective bargaining agreement or the terms and conditions which are proposed for inclusion in any collective bargaining agreement, including the actual negotiating sessions with representatives of employee groups;
- E. Any matter involving the purchase, lease or acquisition of real property (land or buildings) with public funds, where it could adversely affect the public interest if discussion of such matters were disclosed;
- F. The tactics and techniques used in protecting the safety and property of the public, provided that their disclosure could impair such protection;
- G. Any investigations of violations or possible violations of law;
- H. Any pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiations other than collective bargaining, and any matters falling within the attorney-client privilege, to the extent that confidentiality is required in order for the attorney to exercise his/her ethical duties as a lawyer;
- I. Any matter involving employment, appointment, termination, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation, promotion or disciplining of any prospective or current public employee or officer unless all the individual employees whose rights could be adversely affected request in writing that the matter be discussed at a public meeting;
- J. Any deliberations occurring after a public hearing that may result in the imposition of a specified civil penalty or loss of license to an individual.

Such sessions shall be closed to the public and press, and shall be declared so by a formal motion at a public meeting. Minutes taken at such meetings shall remain confidential only so long as their publication would defeat the purpose of the executive session. That such a meeting will be or was held shall be recorded in the minutes of the preceding or subsequent regular meeting. Board members and other persons attending the session shall not disclose the topic or details of discussion at executive session.

The board may invite staff members or others to attend executive sessions at its discretion.

No official action shall be taken at executive sessions, except such as may be sanctioned by law. To take final action on any other matter discussed, the board shall convene or reconvene in open session.

### **Public Participation**

Meetings of the board are open to the public and all members of the community should feel free to attend. A time for public discussion of agenda items shall be included in the order of business at an appropriate time.

Brief comments on any matter of interest to the district should be reserved for the time provided in the order of business.

Provision may be made for the introduction by a member of the public of business not on the agenda when the matter is of such urgency or wide interest that delaying consideration of it to the next meeting would not be in the public interest.

Grievances or complaints that have not previously been considered through administrative channels shall not be considered by the board.

### **Electronic Communication Among Board Members**

The board of education believes that electronic communication among its members and the administration is an efficient and convenient way to exchange information, but must not be misused to deliberate issues that are appropriately discussed only in a public meeting. Therefore, board members and administrators shall exercise caution when communicating between and among themselves via electronic messaging services including but not limited to email, internet web forums and internet chat rooms. They should understand at all times that these communications represent permanent school district records that can be subject to public disclosure. Electronic messaging communication shall conform to the same standards of judgment, propriety and ethics as other forms of board-related communication (committee meetings, telephone calls, etc.). Board members shall adhere to the following guidelines when communicating electronically:

- A. Board members shall not use email or any other electronic messaging service as a substitute for deliberations at board meetings. The Open Public Meetings Act defines a "meeting" as any gathering attended by or open to all of the members of a public body, held with the intent to discuss or act as a unit upon the specific public business of that body.
- B. Board members shall be aware that email and email attachments received or prepared for use in board business are likely to be regarded as public records that may be inspected by any person upon request, unless otherwise made confidential by law.
- C. Board members shall avoid reference to confidential information about employees, students or others in email communications because of the risk of improper disclosure.
- D. Board members shall adhere to the district "acceptable use" policy in all email communications and shall refrain from sending inappropriate, profane, harassing or abusive emails. (See file code 6142.10 *Technology*).
- E. Board members shall not reveal their passwords to others in the network or to anyone outside of it, except to the system administrator. If any board member has reason to believe a password has been lost or stolen, or that email is being accessed by someone without authorization, he/she shall notify the chief school administrator immediately.

**Legal References:** N.J.S.A. 2C:33-8            Disrupting meetings and processions

N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.            Open Public Meetings Act

N.J.S.A. 18A:10-6            Board meetings public; frequency; hours of commencement; adjournment, etc., for lack of quorum

N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1            General mandatory powers and duties

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq.            School Ethics Act

N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20            Powers of board (county vocational schools)

N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.            Examination and copies of public records (“Open Public Records Act”)

N.J.A.C. 6:8-2.1            Quality assurance annual report

Rice v. Union City Board of Education, 143 N.J. Super 64 (1978)

5 U.S.C. Section 552  
as amended by Public Law  
No. 104-231, 110 Stat. 3048    Freedom of Information Act

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