

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

BYLAWS

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Board Member Use of Electronic Mail/Internet

0169 BOARD MEMBER USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL/INTERNET

The Board of Education is a public body as defined in the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., and the Board and its members are required to comply with the provisions of this Act. It is the right of the public to be present at meetings of public bodies and to witness in full all phases of the deliberations, policy formulation, and decision-making. Board members acknowledge certain discussions between Board members, other than during a Board meeting, may be subject to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act.

The Board of Education is also subject to the Open Public Records Act, N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. The Open Public Records Act requires public agencies/School Boards to make certain governmental records subject to public access. Board members may, by written and/or electronic mail (e-mail or text), communicate with each other and with certain school staff regarding the school district's public business. "Public business" means and includes all matters that relate in any way, directly or indirectly, to the performance of the public body's functions or the conduct of its business, regardless of whether the matter is confidential or known to the public. Board members acknowledge these written communications may be classified as a governmental record and may be subject to public access pursuant to the Open Public Records Act.

In order to ensure the Board and/or individual Board members comply with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and the Open Public Records Act, the following guidance is provided regarding certain discussions and written communications regarding the public business:

1. Written letters, reports, e-mails, supporting documents, texts, and social media discussions regarding school district matters written by Board members to other Board members or written by Board members to school staff written by, or school staff to Board members, unless the subject matter is specifically exempt under the Open Public Records Law, are governmental records and are subject to public access. Based on the potential for improper/inappropriate disclosure and/or breach of confidentiality that may compromise the Board or Board member, these communications should not involve confidential matters, especially any matter the Board may discuss in executive/private session outside the presence of the public pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act.
2. Written letters, internet (chat) discussions, e-mails, text messages, and supporting documents regarding the school district's public business written by Board members to other Board members shall not replace deliberations that would prevent the public from witnessing in full detail all phases of the Board's deliberations, policy formulation, and decision-making process in accordance with the intent of the Open Public Meetings Act.

3. Internet (chat) discussions and text messages between Board members regarding the school district's public business shall not include multiple Board members with the potential that a quorum of the Board may be involved, or become involved, in such discussion.
4. All emails regarding Board business shall be conducted using Board member's school district email accounts.

In the event a Board member(s) fails to comply with the guidance of this Policy, the matter shall be referred to the Board Attorney, who will meet and/or discuss the matter and this Policy with the Board member(s).

N.J.S.A. 10:6-4 et seq.
N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.

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