

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SECTION: Board

Procedures/Bylaws

TITLE: Board Norms and  
Organization

ADOPTED: August 16, 2018

REVISED: January 30, 2020

## 004. BOARD NORMS AND ORGANIZATION

### **Purpose**

The Board of Education (“Board”) believes that its collective authority in school governance is strengthened by the diversity of knowledge and skills demonstrated by each Board Member. This policy outlines the general norms and beliefs held by the Board in conducting its business and interacting with one another.

### **Authority**

As public officials and members of the Board, each Board member shall commit to following the norms and beliefs outlined in this policy in conducting Board business and leading the School District of Philadelphia (“District”).

In general, Board members shall commit to arriving prepared and promptly to all official business of the Board. Board meetings shall begin promptly at their advertised start time, with the exception of exigent circumstances.

### *Organization*

The Board must hold an annual organization meeting on the first Monday of December<sup>1</sup> and shall by majority vote of all its members elect a President and a Vice-President from among its members. [1][2]

The Board must hold public meetings each month during the school year. All meetings of the Board must be public except when meeting in Executive Session, in accordance with applicable law. [1]

The Board, Mayor, and City Council shall also meet publicly at least twice during the school year in City Council chambers to review and discuss the administration, management, operations, and finances of the School District in order to develop and adopt plans to coordinate their activities for the improvement and benefit of public education in Philadelphia. [1]

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of its first year of operation, at which time the Board must hold the Organization meeting prior to any other Board business and may identify a pro-tempore officer of the Board to facilitate the Organization meeting.

## *Officers*

President - Shall be elected from among members of the Board by majority vote. As the executive officer of the Board, the President shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The President shall execute any and all deeds, contracts, reports, and other documents pertaining to the business of the Board which require the signature of the President. In addition, the President shall perform any duties as assigned by the Board and those responsibilities specifically delineated in the relevant portions of statutory law. [1]

Vice President - Shall be elected from among members of the Board of Education by majority vote. The Vice President shall act in the absence of the President and as directed by the Board. In the absence of the chairman or vice-chairman of a standing committee, the Vice President shall serve as the chairman. [1]

Secretary and Treasurer - The Superintendent of Schools shall serve as Secretary and Treasurer of the Board. The Superintendent of Schools shall attend all meetings of the Board, and may attend all meetings of any Board committees, except those concerned with the Superintendent's own salary, benefits, or tenure. The Superintendent shall have the right to advise on any question or matter under consideration but shall have no right to vote. As Secretary and Treasurer of the Board, the Superintendent shall perform such duties pertaining to the business of the district as are required by law or as the Board may direct. [1]

## **Delegation of Responsibility**

### *School Board Committees*

Board Committees are an opportunity for Board Members to engage in public dialogue and establish, review, analyze, and discuss policy recommendations prior to consideration by the full Board.

The Board may establish Committees (standing or ad hoc) through a majority vote of the Board to assist in its governance of the School District and its charter authorizing business, in accordance with its own policy. [4]

### *Expenses*

While Board Members serve without compensation, district funds may be used to reimburse them for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

The Board President must authorize the Board business before a Board Member incurs any expenses. Reimbursements shall be approved for necessary expenses incurred for Board business.

Travel expenses of spouses or other persons who have no responsibilities or duties to perform of the Board when they accompany Board Members during their Board-related activities shall not be reimbursed.

The District may issue to Board Members resources, including but not limited to transportation,

necessary to review their documents and perform their duties.

The Board President shall execute this policy in adherence to Board Operating Guidelines adopted by the Board.

### *Communications*

It is the intent of the Board to engage in effective communication and public engagement by establishing a timely and organized system for delivery of information about new initiatives, emergency communications, changes to Board policies, and statements on behalf of the Board. The Board shall adopt a policy that delegates responsibility to the Office of the Board of Education to manage and support effective communication between the Board and constituents.

### *School Visits*

Board members recognize that school visits are a fundamental component of their work. Board members commit to prioritizing regular school visits organized include to a diverse range of schools. Board members shall conduct school visits to inform official business of the Board and shall follow protocols to respect the day-to-day operations of schools.

### *Orientation*

The Board believes that the preparation of each Board Member for the performance of duties is essential to the effectiveness of the Board's functioning. In order to contribute to productive and thoughtful governing, Board Members are expected to:

1. Understand state and federal mandates that guide policymaking;
2. Familiarize themselves with the language and implications of the District's collective bargaining agreements;
3. Familiarize themselves with Board policies;
4. Understand revenue streams, current budget allocations, and key District-wide investments; and
5. Understand the Board's role as authorizer of charter schools in Philadelphia.

All newly appointed Board Members are required to complete, during the first year of service, a training program consisting of five (5) hours of training including:

1. Instruction and academic programs, one (1) hour of which must be on best practices related to trauma-informed approaches;
2. Personnel;
3. Fiscal Management;
4. Board Goals and priorities;
5. Operations;
6. Governance; and
7. Ethics and Open Meetings.

All reappointed Board Members must complete three (3) hours of instruction, within one (1) year after re-election or re-appointment, including:

1. Relevant changes to federal and state public school law and regulations;

2. Fiscal Management;
3. Trauma-informed approaches; and
4. Other information deemed necessary by the Pennsylvania Department of Education

The Office of the Board of Education shall establish and implement a program to execute and manage necessary trainings and orientations for Board members.

**Legal References:**

1. [Home Rule Charter](#) – 12-1208, 12-1209
2. [Public School Code](#) – 24 P.S. Secs. 401, 403, 421, 422, 423
3. [Pa Sunshine Act](#) – 65 Pa.C.S. Secs. 701-716
4. Board Policy 004.1