

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

No. 006.1

SECTION: Board Bylaws

TITLE: Attendance at Public
Meetings via Electronic
Communications

ADOPTED: August 16, 2018¹

REVISED: October 19, 2023

006.1 ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC MEETINGS VIA ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Purpose

Members of the Board of Education (“Board”) are expected to attend each public meeting in person. However, the Board recognizes that factors such as illness, travel, schedule conflicts and weather conditions can make impossible the physical presence of a Board Member at a Board meeting, and that electronic communications can enable a Board Member to participate in a meeting from a remote location. This policy sets forth the parameters for Board Member attendance at public meetings via electronic communications.

Authority

The Public School Code and Philadelphia Home Rule Charter permit the Board to adopt and enforce such reasonable rules and regulations as it may deem necessary and proper for its governance as well as the management of the affairs of The School District of Philadelphia (“District”) and its operations. [1][2][3][4][5]

Core Requirements

A Board Member shall be able to attend a meeting, and participate in Board deliberations and voting, through electronic communications, but only under limited circumstances. The Board President may also permit other necessary participants to participate in meetings via electronic communications as the Board President deems appropriate.

A Board Member who attends a meeting through electronic communications shall be considered present only if the Board Member’s electronic access allows them to hear the meeting and allows those in attendance to hear the Board Member.

If the Board President determines either condition is not occurring, they may terminate the Board Member’s attendance through electronic communications.

To attend a Board meeting through electronic communications, a Board Member shall comply

¹ This policy was originally adopted as Policy 005.1: Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications

with the following:

1. Where practical, submit a written request to the Board President or designee at least three (3) days prior to the meeting. The Board President or designee may excuse this requirement in the event of exigent circumstances. The Board President or designee may also receive, review, and approve a request for attendance at all meetings for a set duration of time via electronic communications.
2. Participate in the entire Board meeting.
3. For meetings held via video conferencing software, the Board Member must be visible on the screen.
 - Board Members who need to step away from the camera momentarily should notify the Board's Chief of Staff or their designee.
4. Participate in the meeting effectively, including:
 - Be aware of what is in the background while on a video conference.
 - Use a laptop with stable wired or wireless internet connection.
 - Participating in public meetings from the car or a distracting environment is not appropriate.
 - Mute the microphone when not speaking (and remember to un-mute when starting to speak).
 - Ensure no visually or audibly disruptive activities are occurring in the background or foreground of video that reduce overall meeting or participant productivity.

If the Board President deems a Board Member violates this policy, they shall consider the Board Member not present and the Board Member will not be able to participate in the meeting.

The Board Vice-President shall review and approve requests for the Board President to participate in a meeting/s virtually.

The Board authorizes the administration to provide the equipment and facilities required to implement this policy.

Emergency Conditions

In the event that City, county, state, federal public health officials or authorities, the Governor, or any similar authority with appropriate jurisdiction declares an emergency condition that prevents or discourages public gatherings due to a public health or safety concern, the Board shall be authorized to conduct meetings primarily or entirely via electronic communications to enable all Board Members and other necessary participants to fully participate in the conduct of official public Board business through electronic communications.

Meetings held primarily or entirely via electronic communications shall be conducted in a manner that assures compliance with the public access and public comment requirements of the Sunshine Act. All rules normally applicable to in-person meetings of the Board, as well as the rules for Board Member participation in this policy, shall be observed in meetings held primarily or entirely via electronic means to the extent practicable and appropriate to the nature and features of the technology used. [6]

The requirement for Board Members to submit a request to participate in meetings through electronic communications shall be waived during such emergency conditions.

The Board authorizes the administration to utilize available technical resources to permit the public to attend and submit public comment during open meetings via electronic communications, in accordance with law and Board procedures and policy. [6][7]

Legal References:

1. [Public School Code](#) – 24 P.S. §4-407
2. [Home Rule Charter](#) – §12-209
3. [Home Rule Charter](#) - §12-200
4. [Home Rule Charter](#) - §12-300
5. [Public School Code](#) - 24 P.S. §5-510
6. [Sunshine Act](#) - 65 Pa. C.S. §701 et seq.
7. [Policy 006](#) - Meetings

Related Information:

1. [006.1](#) Attendance at Public Meetings via Electronic Communications Board Operating Guidelines