

BOARD MEMBER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

(Email, Text, Messaging Apps, Social Media, and Other Electronic Platforms)

In order to promote transparent governance, comply with Wisconsin law, and reduce confusion and risk associated with informal communications, the Board of Education enacts the following policy governing electronic communications by Board members regarding District business.

1 Purpose and scope

- This policy applies to all Board members and covers District-related communications using email, text/SMS, group messaging, direct messages, social media posts/comments, collaboration tools, and similar platforms.
- Electronic communications about District business may constitute public records and may be subject to retention and disclosure requirements.

2 Guiding legal principles

- Open Meetings: Board business must be conducted in compliance with Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law. Serial or electronic communications among enough members to determine the outcome of Board action (a 'walking quorum') may violate the law.
- Public Records: Most records created or kept in connection with official District business are subject to Wisconsin's Public Records Law, unless an exception applies.
- Records Retention: Public records must be preserved and disposed of only in accordance with applicable records retention requirements and schedules.

3 Permitted uses of electronic communications

- Scheduling and logistics (meeting times, calendars, availability, travel coordination).
- One-way distribution of information (board packets, links, reports, and similar materials), provided it does not become an interactive discussion among members.
- Requests for information from District administration or legal counsel on behalf of the Board, consistent with Board procedures.

4 Uses that are prohibited or strongly discouraged

- Interactive discussion, debate, or polling of Board members about matters that may come before the Board.
- Using email/text/groups to build consensus, line up votes, or otherwise determine the outcome of Board action outside of a properly noticed meeting.
- Engaging in back-and-forth messaging that substitutes for Board deliberation in public session.
- Forwarding or posting confidential information (student information, personnel matters, legal advice, and closed session content) except as specifically authorized and secured.

5 District email/accounts and capture of records

- Board members are strongly encouraged to use District-issued email accounts for District business.
- If a Board member uses a personal email account, phone, or third-party application to

conduct District business, the member must ensure those communications are captured and preserved in a retrievable format consistent with District retention practices (for example, by forwarding an unmodified copy to the District email system or other designated repository).

- Board members shall not delete District-business messages in a manner inconsistent with records retention requirements.

6 Social media and public engagement

- Board members may communicate with the public, but should avoid commenting in ways that create the appearance of Board deliberation or consensus outside of meetings.
- Board members should not use District resources or District accounts for political campaign activity.
- If a Board member uses social media to discuss District business, the content may be a public record. Board members must preserve relevant content when required.

7 Closed session and confidentiality

- Closed session matters, attorney-client privileged advice, and confidential student/personnel information shall be handled through secure channels and shared only with those authorized.
- Board members shall not electronically distribute closed-session materials beyond what is necessary for Board duties and shall follow District procedures for secure access and retention.

8 Public records requests and cooperation

- The District Administrator (or designee) coordinates responses to public records requests. If a request may include a Board member's communications, the member shall promptly cooperate in identifying and preserving responsive records.
- Board members shall not independently produce records to requesters unless directed by the District's records custodian or legal counsel.

9 Violations and corrective steps

- If this policy is violated, the Board President and/or District Administrator may direct corrective steps, including additional training, changes to distribution lists, or other measures consistent with Board authority and law.
- Nothing in this policy limits any remedies or obligations imposed by Wisconsin law.

Examples (for clarity)

The examples below are included to reduce confusion and promote consistency. They illustrate common situations addressed in Wisconsin school board electronic communication policies.

Allowed (generally low risk):

- Member A emails all Board members: 'Reminder - Committee meeting is 6:00 p.m. Tuesday.' No replies (or only brief acknowledgments).
- Administration sends a report to all Board members; members read it and save questions for the next meeting.

- Member A asks the District Administrator for a data point needed to understand an agenda item.

Not allowed / strongly discouraged (higher risk):

- Several members reply-all to debate a budget issue, propose amendments, or argue for/against action.
- Member A texts Members B and C separately to 'see where everyone is at' and effectively lines up votes.
- Two members post comments on social media that tag other Board members and continue a discussion that resembles Board deliberation.

Borderline (use caution):

- A member forwards an email thread to another member with commentary about how to vote.
- A group text includes 'just informational' content but then turns into a discussion.

Adopted on March 11, 2026