



# Board of Education Policy Manual

2000 Series: School Board Governance & Operations

## Policy 2710

### USE OF EMAIL BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Board recognizes the use of e-mail as an effective vehicle for communication between Board members and administration. However, the use of e-mail by Board members needs to be consistent with the spirit and intent of New York State open meeting or “Sunshine” laws. This policy has been developed to provide a set of guidelines for Board members to follow to ensure compliance with these laws.

The Open Meetings Law requires that whenever a public body gathers to conduct business, the meeting must be open to the public. If Board members engage in a series of e-mail communications resulting in a vote or a collective decision, they would be deemed to have convened and conducted public business in violation of the Open Meetings Law.

Board members are not prohibited from conferring individually, conducting informal communications, or making recommendations that are pre-decisional in nature.

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW WHEN USING EMAIL

1. Limit email communications among Board members to informal suggestions, ideas and proposals.
2. E-mail may be used to distribute agendas, reports or communications such as PTA minutes, NYSSBA and NYSCOSS communications and comments on these materials.
3. Do not negotiate over email or engage in discussions that could be construed as an online “meeting.”
4. Avoid information of a personal nature that would constitute an invasion of privacy if exposed.
5. Extreme caution should be used when forwarding emails regarding board business to avoid disclosure of sensitive information.
6. Board members must use their district-issued email account at all times when conducting board business.
7. Emails sent to the board of education will typically be responded to by the board president on behalf of the full board and the response will be copied to the full board. If individual board

members would like to respond in specific circumstances, they should respond in consultation with the board president. The board president may delegate the responsibility of responding to the superintendent when the matter includes issues related to the administration of the district.

The Board should review this policy at its yearly board retreat.

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