

Policy Code: 2126 School Board Member Use of Electronic Communication during School Board Meetings

PREAMBLE

The board is committed to conducting board business in compliance with North Carolina Open Meetings and Public Records Law. We must balance 1st Amendment freedom-of-speech rights and benefits of technology with appropriate board conduct. In our efforts to be transparent in conducting board business, this policy defines our agreement to limit the use of electronic communications during board meetings. The board also seeks to increase engagement of board members with each other and the business at hand instead of being distracted by electronic communications. In order for public participation in meetings to be fair and equally accessible to all [policy 2310], electronic communications during board meetings will be limited.

While we cannot prevent citizen electronic communication, we should make clear that receiving electronic communications from the public during the meeting presents special concerns. There is a public comment time established by law and it seems that allowing the public to comment during the meeting by email outside of that designated public comment time deprives other members of the public from "hearing" what the email commenter is saying. Thus, "the public" cannot agree/disagree or respond to the email commenter in live time. It also promotes the appearance of partiality on the part of the board to "some" speakers over others. Also, when the board deliberates, it should be the elected officials who deliberate, not the elected official simply reading the comments of an unknown "email commenter".

POLICY

Board members will not communicate electronically during meetings with members of the public, other board members, or school district staff regarding official school board business, agenda items, or other board matters that are properly discussed publicly during board meetings. Electronic communication means, but is not limited to, email, tweets, texts, phone calls, web posts, and other similar electronic communication.

This policy is not meant to prohibit board members from using computers or similar devices during a meeting provided such use is limited to the purposes of the meeting. These uses can include viewing of previous board materials, previous emails, and policies during any part of a meeting, or individual online research during work sessions. While not preferable, the board as a whole may need to conduct online research during the D&A portion of a meeting, in which case it will be shared with the entire group.

Adopted: Feb 6, 2014

Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools
