



**Wissahickon School District  
School Board Frequently Asked Questions  
(FAQ)**

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Please be advised that the FAQs are provided as a guide and may not cover every question or concern.

## About the Board

### What is the School Board?

The school board is a group of nine elected members who provide oversight and set policy for the school district. Board members serve two or four-year terms. They establish the vision, approve budgets, and set educational priorities, ensuring accountability rather than managing daily operations. The board's authority comes from the State Constitution and Pennsylvania School Code, and its primary responsibilities are outlined in the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) Principles for Governance and Leadership.

In addition to the nine elected directors, Pennsylvania school boards include the superintendent as a tenth member. Appointed by the board, the superintendent attends meetings, speaks on agenda items, and offers guidance and by law does not have voting rights. This structure ensures that while the superintendent is integrally involved in discussions and decision-making processes, final governance authority remains vested in the elected board members.

### Who can serve on the school board?

Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, currently lives in the district, and has lived in the district for at least one year can run for one of the nine elected seats on the school board.

### How do I run for the school board?

Candidates must file nomination petitions during the election cycle. Details are available through the county election office and the Pennsylvania Department of State.

### When are School Board Elections held?

School board elections are held during the regular election cycle. Pennsylvania school board races are nonpartisan, and voters elect members to four-year terms. Information about upcoming elections and candidate requirements is available through the county election office and the Pennsylvania Department of State.

## How are vacancies on the board filled?

Vacancies due to resignation, death, or relocation must be filled:

- Within 30 days
- By board appointment
- With public interviews and discussion per the Sunshine Act

## What training do Board Members Receive?

Board members complete mandatory training through the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) and participate in ongoing professional development. This ensures they stay informed about education law, governance best practices, and emerging issues.

## What are the Board Officer Roles?

The Board elects officers annually, including a President and Vice President. These roles help organize meetings, set agendas, and ensure smooth governance. Officer elections typically occur at the December reorganization meeting.

## Do school board members get paid?

No, school board members are volunteers who dedicate their time to ensure all students receive a good education.

## How much time do board members commit to their role?

Most board members spend approximately 10–20 hours per month on their duties, including attending meetings, reviewing board agendas, including executive content, and participating in district events.

## Does the school board run the schools day-to-day?

No, the day-to-day management and operations of the school district are the responsibility of the superintendent. The school board sets the policies, goals, and objectives for the district, and it holds the superintendent responsible for implementing the policies and achieving the goals.

## What is the role of the Superintendent?

The superintendent is the chief executive officer of the district, responsible for implementing board policies and managing daily operations.

## Does the School Board have student representation?

The Wissahickon School District School Board includes student representatives to provide a student voice in board discussions. These representatives do not vote but share valuable perspectives on issues affecting students.

What are the responsibilities of the School Board?

- Setting board goals that provide strategic direction and support for the district's leadership team.
- Selecting and evaluating the superintendent to ensure effective governance and leadership.
- Establishing and reviewing policies that set the overall direction and expectations for district operations.
- Approving a district budget that reflects community priorities and student needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility.
- Monitoring and assessing district performance to ensure equitable opportunities and strong student outcomes.
- Reviewing and approving curriculum frameworks that define the educational program for all students.

## What are limitations to the role of the school board?

School boards do not:

- Evaluate teachers, coaches, or other staff members.
- Direct or get involved in how curriculum is taught.
- Influence personnel recommendations or engage in nepotism.
- Conduct investigations or question students/staff about incidents.
- Get involved with student or staff discipline issues (except in board hearings).
- Allow concerns to bypass the chain of command. This [flowchart](#) on the district's website shows community members who to contact with a question or concern. Additionally, each school's website has a detailed school-specific flowchart to help families know where to start with a school-based question or concern.

## How are decisions made by the Board?

The Board makes decisions through a public voting process during regular meetings. A quorum—defined as a majority of board members—must be present for any official action. Most decisions require a simple majority vote, and all votes are recorded in the meeting minutes for transparency. No decisions are made in private sessions; all official actions occur in public meetings.

## How does the board monitor progress toward goals?

The superintendent, in collaboration with district leaders, develops detailed action plans with timelines, steps, and resources to achieve board goals. The superintendent provides regular presentations to the board with updates on progress toward each goal. These updates include data reports, and progress metrics aligned with the district's strategic plan. This process ensures accountability and continuous improvement. The board reviews these updates using data and stakeholder feedback, evaluates progress, and adjusts when necessary to ensure alignment with the district's vision and priorities.

## What is the Strategic Plan?

The Board's work is guided by the district's strategic plan, which sets long-term goals for student achievement, equity, and community engagement. The plan and progress updates are available on the district website.

## What are the board's responsibilities related to the district budget?

The Board is responsible for approving an annual budget that reflects community priorities and student needs. Budget discussions occur throughout the year, with a final vote typically in late spring. All budget documents are posted on BoardDocs for public review.

## Board Committees

### What are board committees and what do they do?

Committees are smaller groups of board members that focus on specific areas such as curriculum, facilities, finances, policy, and more. Their purpose is to work with district administration to share information about ongoing initiatives, gather feedback from board members, and provide opportunities for community input. Committees do not make final decisions; instead, they help keep the board and community informed and engaged in the district's work.

## What are the different Board committees?

WSD Board Committees include:

- Audit Committee
- Board Educational Equity Oversight Committee
- Communications
- Curriculum/Technology
- Finance
- Facilities and Transportation
- Health, Wellness, and Safety
- Policy

## School Board Meetings and Community Involvement

### How often does the School Board meet?

The Board holds two meetings each month, typically on the first and fourth Mondays, at 7 PM in the Wissahickon School District Administrative Central Office Board Room. The calendar is on the WSD website and BoardDocs.

- The fourth Monday meeting is a work session for discussion.

The first Monday meeting is a voting meeting. The voting meeting typically occurs one week after the work session. **What topics are discussed at meetings?**

Meetings include opening business, superintendent's report, committee reports, presentations, public comment, and action items. Topics range from curriculum and budget planning to facilities and policy updates.

### Where can I find meeting agendas?

Agendas and participation instructions are posted on BoardDocs before each meeting.

### What is BoardDocs?

[BoardDocs](#) is an online platform where the district posts meeting agendas, minutes, policies, and official documents.

### What is the policy review cycle?

Board policies are reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with state law and alignment with district goals. Community members may suggest policy changes by contacting the Policy Committee or submitting feedback through the district website.

## What is the process for adopting a new policy?

Proposed policies or revisions are first reviewed and refined by the Policy Committee, which makes recommendations to the School Board. The full Board then holds a First Reading for public comment and a Second Reading for discussion and final approval.

## Can community members attend school board meetings?

Yes! Community members may attend work sessions and regular meetings in person or join virtually via Zoom. Committee meetings are not recorded, but community members may attend in person.

## Are committee meetings in person or virtual?

Some committee meetings are in person and some are virtual. In-person meetings are held in the board room. Virtual meetings are held via Zoom but are not recorded.

## What happens if I cannot attend a meeting in person?

You can join virtually via Zoom or watch recorded meetings posted on the district YouTube channel.

## Can I speak at a school board meeting?

Yes! The Board values input from the community. Public comment opportunities depend on the type of meeting. There are three types of meetings: (1) Work Sessions, (2) Voting Sessions, and (3) Committee Meetings.

## Work and Voting Sessions

- There are **two public comment periods**:
  - **First:** Comments on agenda items only (at the beginning of the meeting).
  - **Second:** Comments on any topic (at the end of the meeting).
- Comments can be made **in person or online**.
- Those wishing to make a public comment **in-person** should complete a blue speaker's form and submit it to the presiding officer prior to addressing the Board. When the presiding officer announces your name, come to the podium and state your name and affiliation to the district (e.g., parent/family member, student, staff, community member).
- Those wishing to make a public comment **virtually** should use the 'raise hand' feature in the Zoom webinar. When the presiding officer announces your name, please unmute your microphone and state your name and affiliation with the district (e.g., parent/family member, student, staff, community member).
- Up to five speakers may address the same agenda item, and each comment is limited to three minutes. A total of fifteen minutes will be allocated to audience comments on any one agenda item.

## Committee Meetings

- Once the Committee is finished with an agenda item, members of the audience may share comments on that agenda item.
- A maximum of five speakers may be heard on the same topic, and speakers are asked to keep their comments to three minutes or less.
- A total of fifteen minutes will be allocated to audience comments on any one agenda topic.

### Will the Board answer my questions during the meeting?

No, to ensure fairness, the Board does not engage in dialogue during public comment. When appropriate, follow-up responses will be posted on BoardDocs.

### How can I stay informed about board decisions?

Meeting agendas, minutes, and recordings are posted on [BoardDocs](#). Summaries are shared in district newsletters and on the website.

### What if I have a specific concern about a student or school?

This [flowchart](#) on the district's website shows community members who to contact with a question or concern. Additionally, each school's website has a detailed school-specific flowchart to help families know where to start with a school-based question or concern.

### How can I contact the school board?

Email addresses for board members and a general board email are listed on the district website: <https://www.wsdweb.org/school-board/meet-the-school-board>

### Are there other ways to stay informed beyond meetings?

In addition to attending meetings, community members can stay informed through district newsletters, social media updates, and the WSD website. These channels share meeting summaries, important announcements, and opportunities for feedback.

## Transparency and Legal Requirements

### What is the Sunshine Act and how does it affect school boards?

The Sunshine Act requires most school board meetings to be open to the public. It mandates:

- Public notice of meetings
- Posting agendas at least 24 hours in advance
- Opportunity for public comment before official action
- Recording of votes and meeting minutes

Exceptions include executive sessions for personnel, litigation, real estate, and security matters.

### Can school boards meet in private?

Yes, but only under specific circumstances defined by the Sunshine Act:

- Executive sessions for personnel, legal, or security matters
- Conferences for training or information (no deliberation or action allowed)

All decisions must be made in public meetings.

### What is the school board's legal authority?

The Board's authority comes from the Pennsylvania School Code and the State Constitution. It governs policy, budget, and oversight, not daily operations. This structure ensures accountability while allowing professional educators to manage schools.

## Ethics and Accountability

Board members follow state ethics laws and district policies to maintain transparency and trust. They complete regular ethics training and disclose any potential conflicts of interest. Compliance with these standards ensures decisions are made in the best interest of students and the community.

### How does the board handle conflicts of interest?

Board members follow state ethics laws and district policy, which prohibit voting on matters where they have a personal or financial interest.

## Glossary of Terms

- **Work Session:** A meeting focused on discussion and planning; no official votes are taken.
- **Voting Session:** A regular meeting where the Board takes official action on agenda items.
- **Executive Session:** A private meeting permitted under the Sunshine Act for topics such as personnel, legal matters, or security. No decisions are made in executive sessions.
- **BoardDocs:** The district's online platform for agendas, minutes, policies, and official documents.
- **PSBA (Pennsylvania School Boards Association):** A nonprofit organization providing training, advocacy, and resources for school boards across Pennsylvania.