



To: Wake County Board of Education  
From: Tim Simmons, Chief of Communications  
Date: Sept. 29, 2020  
Re: Practices and procedures for in-person meetings during COVID-19

In conjunction with guidance received by the Board of Education on Sept. 21, 2020 from legal counsel at Tharrington Smith, this document outlines new practices and procedures for the safe and legal operation of in-person meetings consistent with Board Policy 2320 (Compliance with the Open Meetings Law), Executive Order 163, and the NC Department of Health and Human Services guidelines currently in effect.

Health experts providing guidance to the school system have repeatedly stressed that the single most critical factor in a successful return to in-person instruction during the pandemic is the development and strict implementation of safety protocols. This guidance is also being applied to in-person meetings.

This plan will be included in all applicable meeting notices to assure the public is fully informed of meeting requirements.

## **1. Room Layout**

Consistent with guidance from counsel for the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and to align with Executive Order 163 that limits the size of indoor gatherings, the boardroom capacity has been capped at 25 people. Seats have been assigned to board members and a very limited number of staff to allow for attendance by the public. The assignment of those seats are as follows:

1. Board Member 1
2. Board Member 2
3. Board Member 3
4. Board Member 4
5. Board Member 5
6. Board Member 6
7. Board Member 7
8. Board Member 8
9. Board Member 9
10. Board Attorney
11. Staff - Superintendent

12. Staff - Chief of Staff or other leadership designee
13. Staff - Senior Director of Security
14. Staff - Board Administrator
15. Staff/public - Staff Presenter/Any public speaker who is not attending
16. Media - N+O
17. Media - WRAL
18. Media - WNCN
19. Media - ABC11
20. Public 1 - Randomly selected
21. Public 2 - Randomly selected
22. Public 3 - Randomly selected
23. Public 4 - Randomly selected
24. Public 5 - Randomly selected
25. Public 6 - Randomly selected

Due to the limited capacity for members of the public, all meetings will still need to be streamed. (See staffing section below.)

## **2. Entrances and arrival**

Given the number of people needed to conduct a public meeting, all meetings of any type must be held in the formal Board of Education room in order to meet health guidelines.

To decrease the risk of COVID-19 spread among participants and create the most manageable routine for the public, separate entrances will be used by staff and the public when entering the meeting area.

The public will use the main entrance to the district offices at 5625 Dillard Drive, entering via the main lobby and foyer area.

Board members and staff will use the entrance immediately adjacent to the board conference room on the southwest side of the building.

## **3. Seating**

Board members, the superintendent and the school board attorney will have assigned seating. To accommodate the requirements of social distancing, six board members will be seated at separate tables immediately across from the main boardroom table. The board chair, the board vice chair, a board member, the superintendent and the board attorney will be seated at the main table. (See photo 1)

The board administrator will sit to the side of the main board table similar to her current location. Designated staff, with the exception of security, will sit on the west side of the room nearest the entrance used for board members and staff.

Members of the public will sit in designated seats on the east side of the room nearest the windows.

Up to four members of the media will sit in the area currently used for media in designated spots that are appropriately distanced.

#### **4. Locations for speakers**

Members of the public will address the board from a microphone stand that has been placed on the east side of the room. This is immediately adjacent to where members of the public will enter the room and adjacent to where they will sit. (see photos 2 and 3)

Staff will present from a podium that has been relocated from its usual location to a spot on the west side of the room. This location is near the location typically used for student recognition events. (see photo 4)

Placing the microphones in these locations allows the speakers to see all board members while speaking and allows board members to see the speakers. This layout will require one or two board members to pivot their chairs depending on who is speaking.

#### **5. Allocating seats to members of the public**

Consistent with the guidance from Tharrington Smith, members of the public will have an opportunity to register online if they wish to attend the meeting in person. The registration period will open 48 hours before the meeting begins and close at 5 pm the day prior to the meeting.

Six people will be selected randomly from the registration list using a Google application. Those six people will be notified by email on the evening prior to the board meeting. Two alternates will also be selected and notified in the same manner.

The first six people who are randomly selected will be asked to confirm their attendance. If no confirmation is received within two hours of the meeting, the alternate members of the public will be offered the opportunity to attend.

#### **6. Public Comment at Regular Board Meetings**

Members of the public may also register in advance to speak directly to the board during the public comment period at regular board meetings, even if they are not one of the six individuals

randomly selected to attend the meeting in person as described above. They will need to indicate this preference during the registration window described above. The six individuals selected to attend the meeting in-person may also offer public comment.

Consistent with Policy 2310 (Public Participation at Board Meetings) Section 1, time will be set aside for up to 10 additional speakers wishing to offer public comment in person without attending the remainder of the meeting.

Any member of the public who is not randomly selected to speak will still be able to provide written comments or videos to board members as currently offered for remote board meetings. Those comments and videos will be posted to the public comment portion of the board agenda.

Members of the public who have registered in advance to offer public comment will be given an approximate time for the public comment portion of the meeting. They will be asked to remain in their car if they are not among the six attendees from the public registration list. They will receive notification on their cell phone to enter the building. At that time, they will participate in the health screening, described below, and be guided to the lobby area.

Three members of the public will be allowed to wait in the lobby area at any given time. As each is called to speak, the next will be notified that it is time for them to leave their car and enter the building where they will undergo the health screening.

Speakers will leave via the same location as they entered to limit the areas of the building occupied.

## **7. Health screening**

Every participating member of the public, school board and staff must undergo a health screening before entering the room.

For staff and board members, this will consist of a temperature check and a brief health survey. The requirements of the survey can also be met by filling out an employee health attestation form that will be available on WakeConnect..

Members of the public will also be screened using a temperature check and a brief health survey.

## **8. Face coverings**

Properly wearing a face covering is a critical safety measure to protect against the spread of COVID-19. All meeting attendees must wear a face covering while on Board property, including while waiting outside to enter the building, and at all times while indoors, even when 6 feet or more apart from other individuals. **The individual's face covering should fit properly and**

**must be secured safely over the nose, mouth, and under the chin, [per CDC guidelines](#).**  
For more information on how to properly wear a face covering, [see this guidance document](#).

Should a participant remove his or her mask once inside the meeting and refuse to put it back on, the person will be asked to leave the meeting and the meeting will be recessed if necessary.

## **9. Staffing**

In-person meetings as described above will require significantly more staffing than meetings prior to the pandemic. Without regard for the number of staff located inside the boardroom, health screenings, assistance in the lobby and foyer, management of the public speaker lists and technical support will require as many as 10 additional staff members.

While staff can accommodate the technical requirements of the audio/video control room on the current full board schedule, the addition of in-person committee meetings will require hiring and training a temporary contracted employee from school board funds.

This is necessary given the guidance from the September 21, 2020 memo from Tharrington Smith that recommends the board livestream all in-person meetings due to room capacity limits. We are not staffed to livestream committee meetings. Additional staff support aside from the control room has yet to be determined, but likely will be distributed among departments if possible.

## **10. Revisions**

This document is subject to revisions as determined by the school district, including but not limited to changes in guidance from health officials.



Photo 1

View from board chair seat showing seats for six board member locations immediately adjacent to the main board table. This allows all members to see each other at all times.



Photo 2  
Location of microphone stand for public speakers



Photo 3

Entry from main lobby via the foyer to the microphone stand for public speakers



Photo 4  
Location of presentation podium for staff