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**1. Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to provide trustees an opportunity to participate electronically (i.e. via audio conference call or video conference call) when unable to physically attend meetings.

**2. Policy**

It is the policy of the Simcoe County District School Board that electronic means may be used to facilitate trustee participation at Board and Special Board meetings, including Closed Sessions and Committee meetings.

**3. Guidelines**

- 3.1 “Electronic attendance” is defined as participation in the meeting via audio conference call or video conference call.
- 3.2 Electronic means of attendance will be provided for trustees who are unable to physically attend Board and Special Board meetings, including Closed Sessions and Committee meetings.
- 3.3 Meetings in which trustees participate electronically will be held in conformity with the provisions of the *Education Act* and Regulations, and the applicable By-laws of the Board. A member of a Board who participates in a meeting through electronic means in accordance with the Regulations shall be deemed to be present at the meeting.
- 3.4 The following persons shall be physically present in the Board meeting room for any meeting of the Board or Committee of the Whole:
  - 3.4.1 the Chair of the Board or their designate;
  - 3.4.2 at least one additional member of the Board; and,
  - 3.4.3 the Director of Education, or their designate.
- 3.5 The following persons shall be physically present in a Committee meeting room for any meetings of the Board’s Committee’s (except for Committee of the Whole):
  - 3.5.1 the Chair of the Committee or their designate;
  - 3.5.2 if the Chair of the Committee, or their designate participates in a meeting by electronic means, at least one additional member of the Committee; and,
  - 3.5.3 the Director of Education, or their designate.

Page 2

- 3.6 A member of a Board shall be physically present in the meeting room for at least three regular meetings of the Board for any 12-month period beginning November 15.
- 3.7 The Chair of the Board or the Chair of a Committee of the Board, or their designate, must be physically present in the meeting room for at least half of the meetings of the Board for any 12-month period beginning November 15.
- 3.8 Sections 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 do not apply for the 12-month period if all schools in the board are closed for a total of two or more months during that period, pursuant to a school closure order in emergency circumstances.
- 3.9 For clarity, the *Education Act*, Part VII section 219 to 228 still applies regarding trustee attendance.
- 3.10 Trustees participating electronically in closed sessions must ensure confidentiality is not compromised by the proximity of others to the audio and video conference conversations. Board issued electronic devices prevent unauthorized listening. Trustees are to use their board issued electronic devices for closed sessions.
- 3.11 Trustees **must contact the Executive Assistant – Board, no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on the day of the meeting to indicate that they will be participating electronically.** The Director's Office will provide trustees with instructions for participating electronically.
- 3.12 Trustees who Chair a Board or Standing Committee Meeting, and are participating electronically, will defer their role as Chair to the Vice-chair for the meeting. A Vice-chair will then be selected by a simple motion for the meeting. Trustees who Vice-chair a Board or Standing Committee Meeting, and are participating electronically, will defer their role as Vice-chair to another trustee who is physically present in the meeting room, and who is selected by a simple motion for the meeting. The deferral of the role as Chair or Vice-chair does not apply when a Board or Standing Committee Meeting is being held exclusively on a electronic or virtual platform.
- 3.13 Trustees participating electronically will inform the Chair of their departure from a meeting, whether it is temporary or permanent, to ensure a quorum is maintained at all times.
- 3.14 The Chair will conduct voting by asking trustees to indicate those in favour by stating their name, followed by those opposed. For ballot votes (conducted for the purpose of electing new trustees or of electing trustees to the positions of Chairperson or Vice-chairperson), trustees participating electronically have two options (listed below). **Trustees participating electronically must advise the Director of their voting preference when they give notice that they will be participating electronically:**

<b>BOARD ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>2100</b>
<b>ELECTRONIC MEETINGS</b>	<b>2140</b>

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Page 3

- 3.14.1 after the motion has been read, the trustee may choose to email their ballot to the Director's email account. The Director, or designate, will print a copy of the email and add it to the collected ballots; or,
- 3.14.2 the trustee may choose to provide the Director's Office with sealed, numbered envelopes in advance. Each envelope shall contain a piece of paper indicating the name of a candidate. After the motion has been read, the trustee will indicate which numbered envelope the Director is to open. The Director, or designate, will open the corresponding envelope and add the slip of paper to the collected ballots.

#### **4. Administrative Procedures**

The Director of Education is authorized to provide the administrative procedures necessary to implement this policy.

**ADOPTED JULY 19, 2000  
REVISED FEBRUARY 22, 2006  
REVISED DECEMBER 21, 2011  
REVISED FEBRUARY 25, 2015  
REVISED NOVEMBER 28, 2018  
REVISED MAY 25, 2022**