

0167 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS

Section: Bylaws

Date Created: June 2022

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The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest.

When a group, organization, or individual wishes to make a formal presentation to the Board, they may request time on the agenda by contacting the Board Secretary in writing, stating the purpose of the presentation and the approximate amount of time needed for the presentation. A spokesman will then be appointed by the group or organization, and the Board will recognize the designated spokesman. All presentations must conform to this paragraph.

In order to permit the fair and orderly expression of such comment, the Board shall set aside a portion of every Board meeting, the length of the portion to be determined by the Board, for public comment on any school or school district issue that a member of the public feels may be of concern to the residents of the school district.

Public participation shall be governed by the following rules:

1. A participant must sign in and be recognized by the presiding officer. Participants must preface comments by identifying themselves by full name, address, municipality of residence, and organization/affiliation if applicable. If any individual does not disclose their address and organization/affiliation the Board will NOT recognize the individual and continue with the meeting.
2. Public comments will only be permitted during those portions of the meeting designated for the hearing of the public. The portions of the meetings during which the participation of the public is invited shall be limited to 30 minutes unless extended by a majority vote of the board members present.
3. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes' duration. Timing will be monitored by a volunteer Board Member or Board Secretary.
4. No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard;
5. All statements, questions, or inquiries shall be directed to the presiding officer and any questions or inquiries directed by a participant to another Board member shall be redirected to the presiding officer who shall determine if such statement, question, or inquiry shall be addressed by the presiding officer on behalf of the Board or by the individual Board member; No participant may address or question Board members or administration individually.

6. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of school operations and programs as concern them. However, in public sessions the Board will not hear personal complaints about school personnel nor against any person connected with the school system. Other channels provide for Board consideration and disposition of legitimate complaints involving individuals. The Board vests in its President or other presiding officer authority to terminate the remarks of any individual when they do not adhere to the rules established above.

7. The presiding officer may:

- a. Interrupt, warn, and/or terminate a participant's statement, question, or inquiry when it is too lengthy;
- b. Interrupt and/or warn a participant when the statement, question, or inquiry is abusive, obscene, or may be defamatory;
- c. Request any person to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;
- d. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person prevents or disrupts a meeting with an act that obstructs or interferes with a meeting;
- e. Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting; and
- f. Waive these rules when necessary for the protection of privacy or to maintain an orderly operation of the Board meeting.

8. Complaints or suggestions directed to the Board will be referred to the appropriate staff member or Board Committee for study or suggestion.

9. If a citizen has proceeded through the appropriate administrative chain without satisfaction, he or she will be requested to put the complaint in writing so that it may be placed on the agenda for a future Board meeting.

All time limits contained in this policy may be adjusted by the Board President or by a majority vote of the Board members present when conditions warrant.

N.J.S.A. 2C:33-8

N.J.S.A. 10:4-12

Adopted: 07 June 2022