

Georgia Cyber Academy Governing Board

Public Comment Policy

Date of Approval: September 16, 2020

Purpose

The Georgia Cyber Academy Governing Board (Board) welcomes public comment at its meetings and is committed to providing meaningful opportunities for members of the public to participate. The purpose of this policy is to address how participation will be handled, both in person and from a remote location by telephone.

Policy

The Board encourages members of the public to offer comments and express opinions on both specific actions to be taken by the Board, as well as any other issue directly related to the operation of the School. In accordance with this policy, any individual may address the Board on agenda items during the public comment period as long as they meet any legal provisions governing participation at public meetings. Individuals may present either in-person or by telephone.

Procedure

Individuals are strongly encouraged to follow school grievance policies and discuss their comments and concerns with appropriate school staff members, administrators, and/or Board members before directing such comments to the entire Board during a meeting.

Each Board meeting agenda shall have a time designated for “public comment” as time permits. The total time for public comment shall not exceed twenty (20) minutes. Public comment after this time-frame is not permitted. The Board Chair or Board may, at its sole discretion, vote to have an extended public comment period or have more than one public comment period at any given board meeting.

Three (3) of the ten (10) two minute public comment speaking spots will be allocated to those attending the meeting in-person, when the total number of those wishing to comment exceeds ten individuals unless fewer than three (3) members of the public wish to speak in-person.

Directions to the Public Regarding Public Comment

Brief direction on Public Comment and public conduct should be written on the top of all Board agendas and on any electronic viewing. It should state the following:

“Reminder to parents and non-board members attending board meetings: The board meeting is structured for the board to conduct business in a timely manner. The Public Comment portion of the agenda allows an opportunity for members of the public to briefly express any comments. Anyone wishing to speak must sign in or contact the Head of School to sign up. Please refrain from entering into board business and discussion without being recognized to do so.

Public Comment is a period for the public to bring issues or concerns to the Board’s attention, however it is not a period for the Board to engage in a conversation or question and answer session with the public. Any concerns or issues brought forward will be investigated, directed to the appropriate committee for discussion, and/or handled by the Board Chair after the Board meeting.”

Also, prior to the Public Comment period of a board meeting, provided there is anyone wishing to speak, oral direction should be given to the public regarding their conduct and the purpose of the Public Comment period of the Board meeting.

In-person participants

All in-person individuals must sign up to speak during public comment. To be recognized by the Board Chair, an individual must provide their name and a short description of the agenda item they wish to comment on the sign in sheet, along with any materials they want to have distributed to Board members, before the scheduled start of the meeting. It is encouraged that those wishing to speak in person contact the Head of School prior to the board meeting, so that they can secure a one of the ten (10) spots available for public comment.

In-person participants should be aware that there is no established time when they may be called on to speak except that they will be called on after the scheduled start of the meeting. The total time for any individual to present, either in person or via telephone, shall not exceed two (2) minutes (depending upon the number of speakers), unless the Board Chair or Board grants additional time either formally or informally. Individuals will be called in the order that they either signed up or contacted the Head of School. Individuals who are attending the meeting in person may be given the first preference in speaking and for the duration requested.

The Board Chair will then announce the individual's name at the appropriate time during the meeting. Each individual will be granted two (2) minutes to make his or her presentation. If requested, the Board Chair or Board may grant additional time to individuals, circumstances permitting. After completion of any such presentation, the Board Chair shall ask whether there is any further public comment on the item at which time any member of the public present may come forward and make his or her presentation (which may be limited to two (2) minutes at the Board Chair's discretion).

Any individual may raise an issue during public comment and request that it be placed on a future agenda. No action can be taken by the Board until such item has been included on an agenda in accordance with Georgia's Open Meeting Laws.

Teleconference (or other communication device) participants

Individuals who wish to address the Board telephonically or through another form of communication should contact the Head of School by phone or by email at least twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled start of the Board meeting. The individual shall provide his/her name, a phone number where he/she may be reached during the meeting, and a short description of the topic he/she wishes to address. If the individual wants to provide any written materials to the Board, these should be emailed to the Head of School at least twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled start of the meeting. The Head of School will list these requests in the order in which they are received and provide them, along with copies of any materials submitted to the Board Chair before the start of the meeting. Individuals who wish to participate will be called on either from the open call-in line or at the number they provided in the order in which they contacted the school, and will be granted up to two (2) minutes to make the presentation, provided that the twenty (20) minute public time period has not been exceeded by those individuals that had previously signed up to speak. If requested, the Board Chair may grant additional time to individuals, circumstances permitting.

Telephonic participants should be aware that there is no established time when they may be contacted to speak except that they will be called on after the scheduled start of the meeting. The total time for any individual to present, either in person or via telephone, shall not exceed two (2) minutes (depending upon the number of speakers), unless the Board Chair or Board grants additional time. Individuals who are attending the meeting in person may be given the first preference in speaking and for the duration requested.

Any individual may raise an issue during public comment and request that it be placed on a future agenda.

Special Accommodations for Public Comment

Members of the public who require special accommodations to be able to attend the Board meeting should contact the Head of School or the specific contact person designated on the agenda for that meeting, at least Ninety Six (96) hours prior to the meeting to make appropriate arrangements for attending the meeting.

Other Public Engagement

In addition to the above, any Board member may ask a member of the public present to answer brief questions or make comments on an agenda item under discussion in order to gather information before deliberating on a decision.