

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS

Code **BEDH** Issued **5/18**

Appearance of Individuals or Groups Before the Board

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for public participation in board meetings. The policy will not be used to circumvent the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The board values and encourages community involvement. Public participation at board meetings is one of many ways the community may ask questions. The board encourages the citizens of this community to appear and bring before the board any matter directed toward the improvement of the school system and the agenda of the board. This policy provides for any individual or group to be heard on a subject pertaining to the policies or administration of the school system.

Any individual desiring to speak is required to sign in. The board chair will recognize those who have signed in and wish to speak to an agenda topic, or non-agenda topic, during public participation. Each speaker will use the microphone provided and will begin their remarks by announcing their name and group, if any group is being represented.

The presentation should be as brief as possible, yet include all information considered important by the speaker. Unless the board chair allows additional time, each speaker will be limited to three minutes.

If one spokesperson has presented a matter, it is not necessary for others to repeat the same ideas, but anyone may speak who has comments to add that are pertinent.

Persons appearing before the board are reminded, as a point of information, that the members of the board are without the authority to act independently as individuals in official matters; thus, questions may be directed to the board, but answers must be deferred pending consideration by the entire board. At the discretion of the board chair, an individual board member may offer a clarifying statement. The clarifying statement is not to be considered the opinion or policy of the entire board. Any board member may request the administration provide an oral response to the questions asked, or statements made, during public participation at the next meeting of the board.

Questions asked during public participation will be given due consideration and care. Questions will be addressed as follows:

- Questions will be reviewed and answered in a timely manner following the FOIA time line.
- Questions requiring document research, document production, or the redaction of information will be considered a Freedom of Information Request and will be addressed through the district's FOIA process.
- Questions asked and answered in the last twelve months will not be answered again but will be directed to the district's website for previous answers.
- Questions deemed inappropriate will not be answered. Factors that would make a question inappropriate include but are not limited to:
 - Asking a staff member to interpret the "will" or "mind" of the board is considered inappropriate. Decisions of the board are made after thoughtful and careful consideration of the entire board and only the board may speak to those matters.

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- Asking questions that would inappropriately identify a student or family will not be addressed. Matters pertaining to protected personnel records will not be addressed.
- Asking questions that suggest illegal or unethical activity of a district employee or board member will not be addressed and will be considered inappropriate.

The privilege of addressing the board does not include the ability to make personal attacks on any board member, district employee, or other member of the public. The board chair or presiding officer is authorized to terminate the remarks of any person should the chair determine that the speaker's remarks violate the spirit or the letter of this policy. No political campaigning or commercial solicitations will be permitted during public participation.

Note: For hearing procedures before the board, see KN, Complaints.

Adopted 1973; Revised 11/16/81, 1/21/85, 10/11/04, 5/22/06, 5/21/18

Legal References:

A. S.C. Code, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 30-4-10, *et seq.* - South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.