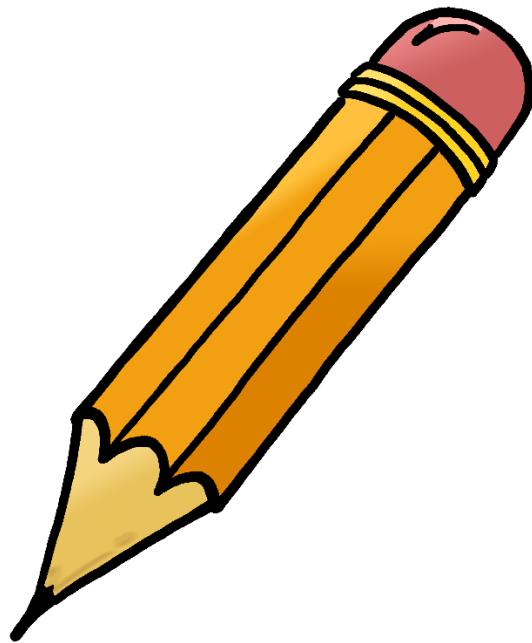


CCPS Public Comment and Testimony Guide for Students



**Created by Grace Minakowski
2024-2025 Student Member of the Board**

Introduction

Hello! My name is Grace Minakowski, and I am the CCPS Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB). As SMOB, my job is to represent all 15,000+ CCPS students and help bring their voices to the Board of Education. The Board creates and revises policy (rules) that govern how our school system operates. Therefore, if you are experiencing an issue in your school that is systemic or deeply affecting you, sharing it with the Board is extremely important for improving the student experience.

In this guide, you will find simple, easy-to-follow steps to write public comment or deliver testimony before the Board. Public comment is read/heard by all Board members and is helps shape policy decisions/issue considerations. The guide also includes a template by which you can begin either your written or verbal comment (optional to use). You can read more about public comment guidelines at the link below or on the following page:

[Public Comment and Testimony Guidelines - Calvert County Public School District \(calvertnet.k12.md.us\)](https://calvertnet.k12.md.us)

Public Comment (Verbal) vs Written Comment (Mailed or Emailed)

The Board of Education accepts public feedback in two ways: verbal public comment and written comment. View the following chart to understand the difference between the two!

Verbal Public Comment	Written Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spoken and recorded as part of the Board Meeting live stream - Delivered IN PERSON and must be given at one of the monthly board meetings (meeting dates and location are all found on the CCPS website) - Speakers are limited to 3 minutes each - Board members cannot respond to your comments during the meeting but will have your contact info when you sign in - You can provide physical copies or handouts for board members (print 9 copies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sent as an email or physical letter to all board members - Written comments can be submitted at any time - Please email your comments to BOEMeetingFacilitator@calvertnet.k12.md.us or mail to: Calvert County Public Schools, 1305 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678, ATTN: Board of Education) - Written comments are included as part of the public agenda for meetings but not read out loud during meetings - Submitting written testimony does NOT oblige you to attend a board meeting

Note: You can write confidentially to the Board of Education at any time! If you have something to share with one or all of the board members but do not wish for it to be shared publicly, you can email it directly to members. Their email addresses can be found on the CCPS website under ["Board of Education."](#)

Step One: Identify Your Issue

Some issues are not directly related to or addressed by the Board of Education. The following would NOT be appropriate subjects to write in your public comment:

- **Specifics about another student, teacher, staff member, or community member (ie. do not use names or personal information that violate individual confidentiality)**
- **Experiences not relevant to CCPS or your experience as a student**
- **Graphic, vulgar, or other inappropriate information**
- **ANYTHING you do not wish for the Board of Education or the public to hear**

Public comment is designed to inform the decisions made by the Board of Education. Public comments relate to/conform by standards of the following:

- **Issues related to your challenges/experiences as a student in CCPS, whether academic or social**
- **Issues that arise with peers or staff within the school setting (including class time, lunch, or extracurricular activities)**
- **Challenges or hardships induced by school or school-related conditions (such as transportation, communication, scheduling, etc.)**
- **Barriers or flaws in our school system such as guidance, nutrition, or administration**
- **Positive experiences you've witnessed/had in school that would be valuable for the board to hear**
- **Proposed solutions for issues faced in school**
- **Responses or comments related to current CCPS policy and/or proposed policy changes**
- **Comments are civil, non-discriminatory, and do not explicitly target an individual or group**

Step Two: Testimony Writing and Template

As you begin to write your comment, utilize the following steps to ensure your comment is accurate and reflective of your experience:

1. **Research:** If you are writing about a specific CCPS policy or system, you want to ensure that your statements are accurate. If you are writing about a systemic issue in your school, you'll want to understand the policy that dictates CCPS practices (CCPS policies can all be found [here](#), and most student issues are related to the Code of Conduct). Similarly, if you are writing about a personal experience you had at school, make sure all details are accurate and free of individual names/personal information.
2. **Write:** To make writing easier, you may consider writing out bullet points/a graphic organizer so you don't forget to include any key points in your final draft. Write your testimony in a Word/Google Doc so your progress is saved. For verbal public comment, remember you are limited to 3 minutes and will want to rehearse your comment prior to the meeting to ensure you meet these constraints.
3. **Edit:** Take some time to proofread your comment and ensure that you are comfortable taking ownership of *everything* included in your message.
4. **Submit or deliver:** For written testimony, email or mail your comment to the addresses detailed in the chart on page 3. For verbal comment, mark your calendar for the next board meeting and arrive on time. There will be a sign-up sheet at the door when you enter the Board of Education building where you will write your name/contact information. You do not have to sign up in advance for public comment, but each meeting is limited to 20 total speakers. You will take a seat in the meeting room to the left of the entrance, and your name will be called when it is your turn to speak. You will utilize the provided microphone for your comment. You are free to leave the meeting after delivering your testimony.

Need some help start your comment? Use the following draft template to get started:

Public Comment Template

Greetings, President White, Dr. Townsel, and members of the Board of Education,

My name is [insert name here] and I am in [insert grade here] at [insert school here]. I am [writing/speaking] to you today to share my perspectives regarding [insert topic of issue or experience here].

[In the body of your comment, you can structure it however you like. Some things you'll want to consider adding:

- Relevant background information related to you, your situation, or the issue at your school
- How the issue or experience affects you/other students
- How the issue has already been addressed/failed to be addressed at the school level
- Proposed solutions or calls to actions that you'd like to Board of education to hear

Remember that your comment can be personal, and you are welcome to share both positive & negative experiences]

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your service to our school system and hope we continue to improve CCPS for all Calvert County students, staff, and families.

Sincerely,

[Insert name here]