

Policy Manual

Section	1000 Community
Title	Public Participation in Board Meetings
Code	1001.1
Status	Active
Adopted	June 27, 1990
Last Revised	January 21, 2025

Purpose

The Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in Board meetings.[\[1\]](#)

Authority

In order to permit fair and orderly expression of such public comment, the Board will provide a period for public participation and will formulate rules to govern such public participation in Board meetings.

Delegation of Responsibility

The presiding officer at each public Board meeting shall follow Board policy for the conduct of public meetings. Where his/her ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those Board members present and voting.

Guidelines

In order to ensure the orderly conduct of public business, as well as freedom of access by the public to the Board, the following general guidelines shall apply:[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)

1. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Board, sitting as a deliberative public body, shall be strictly confined to the business at hand and without participation of the public other than as spectators, unless invited in advance to participate by the Board.
2. As is customary in the operation of governmental bodies, hearings and presentations by citizens or employees will be accommodated separately from regularly scheduled business meetings of the Board.

3. Demonstrations or demonstration devices, including but is not limited to signs, posters, banners, placards, carpet squares or any similar item, will not be permitted at Board or committee meetings or hearings, nor will such demonstrations or demonstration devices be permitted within the buildings of the School District.
4. In addition to hearings before committees of the Board, the Board shall periodically conduct open hearings at which the public may make brief presentations on questions of general educational concern. Such meetings shall be publicized in advance and their agenda shall first include persons who request in advance in writing to be heard.

The Board welcomes communications from the general public; upon request, the Board will arrange at convenient times for appearances before the Board, sitting as a committee of the whole or represented by appropriate subcommittees, the meetings to be public or private as may be suited to the subject at hand.

The Board also welcomes communications from employees relative to improving the educational process and to matters of employment. While the normal channel of communication is through the Office of the Superintendent and Board Secretary for prompt staff and employee committee consideration and recommendation, the Board may schedule individual testimony at public hearings, sitting as a committee of the whole or represented by appropriate subcommittees.

Whenever issues identified by the participant are subject to remediation under policies and procedures of the Board, they shall be dealt with in accordance with those policies and procedures and the organizational structure of the District.

Public Hearings

A public hearing is held each month (from July through June) at which individuals or spokespersons may give testimony regarding upcoming agenda items for Board action, or for matters about which they have a concern.

Requirements for Participation in Public Hearing Meetings:

1. The Board requires that public participants be residents or taxpayers of this district or:

- a. Anyone having registered a legitimate interest in a contemplated action of the Board.
- b. Anyone representing a group in the community or School District
- c. Any representative of a firm eligible to bid on materials or services solicited by the Board
- d. Any District employee
- e. Any District student.

2. All individuals wishing to participate in a public Board meeting shall register their intent with the Board Secretary in advance of the meeting, shall include the name of the participant, the topic to be addressed, and group affiliation if applicable. The participant shall also indicate if they will testify “in person” or “virtually”. Instructions to register shall be provided in the accompanying Administrative Regulation to this Policy.

3. Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface their comments by an announcement of their name, and group affiliation if applicable.

4. No participant may speak more than once.

5. All participants will be limited to three (3) minutes of testimony, and no participant is allowed to relinquish any remaining time to another speaker.

6. Participants may choose to speak “in person” at the meeting, or “virtually”, via Zoom, or any other online program that the District chooses to use. Instructions for how to participate virtually will be available on the District’s website, and registration information will be available in the accompanying Administrative Regulation. Participants may not change their method of testimony after registration.

7. Participants may also submit written testimony to the Board for consideration, in addition to their oral testimony or as their entire testimony. 8. All statements shall be directed toward the presiding officer.

9. Order of Speakers:

- a. The Board Secretary shall determine the order of speakers.
 - a. All persons speaking **in person** shall give their testimony first. Within this group, the participants shall speak in the following order:
 - i. Those who requested to address a topic stated the next Legislative agenda
 - ii. Those who requested to address a topic *NOT* stated on the Legislative agenda
 - iii. Those who did not list a topic in their request to speak.

- b. All persons speaking **virtually** shall give their testimony after the in-person testimony is complete. Within this group, the participants shall speak in the following order:
 - i. Those who requested to address a topic stated the next Legislative agenda
 - ii. Those who requested to address a topic *NOT* stated on the Legislative agenda
 - iii. Those who did not list a topic in their request to speak.

10. The Board recognizes that all speakers, regardless of their viewpoint(s), are entitled to the courtesy of speaking without interruption, either through expressions of support or disagreement. The Board also recognizes that this is a public meeting, and any conduct that clearly violates the law or board policy shall not be permitted. Participants are required to refrain from obscene or threatening language toward members of the Board or the public, and to also refrain from interrupting any speaker by way of cheers, boos, clapping of hands or any other audible means of communication.

a. The presiding officer may:

- i. Interrupt or terminate a speaker when circumstances warrant, such as when a speaker goes beyond the District's time limit, attempts to speak on issues outside of the time frame set by Paragraph 8 of this policy, engages in conduct that is in violation of board policy or is interfering with the orderly progress of the meeting.
- ii. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum
- iii. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers to remove a disorderly person when his/her conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.
- iv. Call a recess or adjourn to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.

11. Electronic recording devices and cameras, in addition to those used as official recording devices, shall be permitted at public meetings under guidelines which may be established by the Board.

12. No placards or banners will be permitted within the meeting room or building. This includes but is not limited to signs, posters, banners, placards, carpet squares or any other item used for demonstration purposes.

13. The meeting agenda and all pertinent documents shall be available to the press and public at the meetings.

14. The meetings shall be recorded, and the recordings will be made available to the public within a reasonable timeframe after the conclusion of the public hearing.

Legal

[1. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 701 et seq](#)

[2. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710](#)

[3. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1](#)

[1001.1-AR-1 of 1 Procedures for Testifying at Public Hearings.pdf \(82 KB\)](#)

Last Modified by Elizabeth Sattler on January 21, 2025