

Parliamentary Procedure

**District Clerk Workshop
November 2025**

Why use parliamentary procedure?



- It is not legally required that school boards use parliamentary procedure, HOWEVER most boards do have a policy that says the board will operate under some form of parliamentary procedure – most often Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.
- Parliamentary procedures provide rules for conducting or running an **orderly** meeting within **time constraints** where everyone gets to **voice their opinion**.
- The rules help ensure that a meeting is well-organized (only one topic is dealt with at a time), opportunities to speak are provided for all participants, there is effective debate, and everyone can vote.

The Basics

QUORUM = The minimum number of members that must be present at a meeting for legal business to be transacted

- $\frac{1}{2}$ the members of the Board plus 1

MAJORITY = The minimum number of members that must vote in favor for a resolution to be passed

- New York State law defines a majority as $\frac{1}{2}$ the members of the entire body plus 1 (unlike Robert's Rules of Order)

DEBATE = Arguing for or against a motion

VOTE = Members can vote in favor of a resolution, opposed, or decline to vote (abstain)

- As NYS law requires a resolution to gain a majority vote of the entire board in favor, a vote to abstain or non-presence at the meeting is effectively a vote in opposition.

Getting Business Done

School boards get business done through the process of making **MOTIONS**, debating the pros and cons of the resolution that has been moved, and then voting.

It is expected that board members will participate in **DEBATE** and **VOTE** on each item brought before the board.

VOTING may be done by show of hands, roll call or voice.

WPSBA

QUICK MOTION GUIDE

Motion on Resolution

- Mover & Second
- Is Debatable
- Majority Vote

Amend a Resolution

- Mover & Second
- Is Debatable
- Must be voted on before main motion
- Majority Vote

Table a Resolution

- Mover & Second
- Make with or without date/time to bring back to table
- NOT Debatable & CANNOT be amended
- Majority Vote

Withdraw a Motion

- Mover of the main motion must request withdrawal
- If there's an objection, must be seconded and voted on

Close Debate

- Requires a mover who awaits recognition from the Chair after at least one board member has spoken
- Second
- Is NOT debatable
- Requires a 2/3 vote

Point of Order

- May be made by any Board member or the Superintendent
- May interrupt a speaker or a Chair
- Stated to correct an error in application of the rules of order

Best Practices for Debate

- Discussion must be about the motion currently up for discussion.
- Comments should be directed at the Board President, not at another member of the Board.
- Members should use facts or new points to support their argument, not repeating others.
- The member who made the motion is permitted to speak first.
- Each member can speak twice on any debatable motion.
- The Board President should ensure that all members can speak once before any member is permitted to speak for a second time.
- Often, boards will have a time limit for speaking. Robert's Rules of Order limits each speaker to 10 minutes for each instance of speaking.
- Robert's Rules of Order does not permit "time" to be saved or transferred to another speaker.
- As noted in the motion guide, any motion to change the limits on debate (most often to "close the debate" or "move the question") must be approved by a 2/3 majority.

