

Board Policy BCBI: Public Participation in Board Meetings

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 08/24/2001 | **Last Revised Date:** 09/13/2022 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 09/13/2022

Meetings of the Board of Education (Board) are structured to allow the Board to conduct its public business. Meetings of the Board are open to the public and all participants and attendees are subject to the rules of conduct for Board meetings. Although open to the public, meetings are not to be confused with public forums. The Paulding County Board of Education shall offer the opportunity to address the Board in open session for any interested resident of Paulding County; Paulding County School District (District) student or parent/guardian of a District student; non-resident owner of property within the geographic boundaries of the District; and/or employee of the District pursuant to the guidelines outlined in this Policy. Any student under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

For Agenda Items: Individuals desiring to appear before the Board shall sign in prior to the beginning of the meeting containing the agenda item(s) of interest (Note: Individuals desiring to speak on published agenda items will be given priority)

For Non-Agenda Items: Individuals desiring to appear before the Board meeting regarding an item that is not on the agenda must notify the Superintendent, in writing no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

Procedures:

1. Before addressing the Board, individuals are urged to seek a solution to their concerns through the appropriate school or District staff.
2. Individuals desiring to appear before the Board must first complete a sign-in sheet which should be available thirty (30) minutes prior to the convening of the Board meeting. Speaker information must contain: Name; Full physical address; Telephone number; E-Mail address, if applicable; Discussion topic; Affirmation of their residency in Paulding or a non-resident who owns property within the geographic boundaries of Paulding; a District student or parent/guardian of a District student; and/or an employee of the District.
3. Any emergency or item deemed necessary may be added to the agenda by majority vote of the Board members present.
4. Each person whose name is placed on the agenda will be given up to five (5) minutes to make their comments. The Board, by majority vote, may extend or further limit the time allotted for a citizen to make a presentation by a majority vote of the Board members present. However, the total time for the Public Input Session shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes.
5. All comments and questions to the Board of Education should be addressed to the Board of Education as a whole and not to an individual Board member.
6. Where several citizens wish to address the same topic or issue, the Board reserves the right to limit further discussions should they become repetitive. The Board reserves the right to ask those wishing to address the same topic or issue to select a spokesperson to present their concerns to the Board.
7. While citizens may use their allotted time to take serious issue with Board decisions, the Board will not permit anyone to become personally abusive of individual Board members or system employees. Personnel complaints regarding District employees should follow the Complaints and Grievance procedures established by the Board.
8. Speakers should be aware that their public commentary may be broadcast live, filmed, photographed, or recorded by the District or other non-District media sources. (Note: Any portion of public commentary that is not in compliance with this policy may be edited prior to any re-broadcast.)
9. Any person who willfully violates these guidelines may forfeit the remainder of their speaking time and the Board may, in consultation with the Board Attorney, issue a written notice prohibiting the speaker from appearing before the Board for up to sixty (60) days.
10. When issues arise that stimulate high community interest, the Board may schedule special meetings specifically to invite public comment. In those circumstances, the Board will establish special guidelines for participation.

11. The Board will not respond to comments or questions posed by citizens in their presentations, but will take those comments and questions under advisement. However, Board members and/or the Superintendent may ask questions for clarification.

12. A citizen, unable to attend a Board of Education meeting, may submit written comments or remarks regarding agenda items or non-agenda items to the Superintendent and the Board.

Board Meeting Rules of Conduct

In furtherance of ensuring decorum, allowing the Board to efficiently conduct its business and setting a positive example for students attending or watching Board Meetings, the Board adopts the following Rules of Conduct for attendance and participation at Board Meetings:

1. Participants and attendees should refrain from any conduct which impedes the ability of the Board to conduct an orderly meeting. The Board finds that an "actual disruption" is any action by a participant or attendee which interrupts or impedes the Board in its conduct of business in an orderly manner, including but not limited to the failure to comply with any provision of these Rules of Conduct.

a. Any participant or attendee who causes an actual disruption shall be first given a warning by the Board Chairperson, Presiding Officer or Superintendent directing the attendee to cease the disruptive conduct. In the event the attendee fails to comply with the directive(s) of the Board Chairperson or Superintendent, then the attendee may be removed from the meeting.

b. In addition to removal from the meeting a participant/attendee may face additional consequences.

Rules of Conduct for Public Speakers

1. The speaker should refrain from speaking on topics excluded by the Open Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-1 et seq.); (This includes, but may not be limited to, certain land, legal or personnel items);

2. The speaker should refrain from making obscene, profane, vulgar, defamatory, slanderous, or threatening gestures/remarks during his/her public commentary;

3. The speaker should refrain from discussing a student by name, or sharing other information that could lead to the personal identification of a student (See, for example, Family and Educational Rights Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g);

4. The speaker should refrain from making untrue, slanderous or defamatory comments or other unsubstantiated claims about an identified or identifiable employee (While general comments are appropriate for the public comment session, concerns about specific individuals should be addressed privately with the appropriate District administrator.); and or

5. The speaker shall not disrupt or attempt to disrupt the Board meeting (See, for example, O.C.G.A. § 16- 11-34).

Rules of Conduct for Attendees

Attendees at meetings of the Board of Education should/shall:

1. Refrain from jeering, shouting, applause or making comments from the floor while the Board is conducting its business and while others are making public comments to the Board.

2. Refrain from any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor.

3. Refrain from making threats of violence.

4. Refrain from the use of profanity.

5. Not wear clothing which includes profanity, obscenity, or threats of violence.

6. Not display signs or placards which may disrupt the proceedings of the meeting.
 7. Adhere to all mandated health and safety requirements applicable to attendees.
 8. Not possess weapons in violation of O.C.G.A. § 16-11-127 or other applicable law.
 9. Refrain from any other conduct which impedes the ability of the Board to conduct an orderly meeting.
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