

Board Policy BCBI: Public Participation in Board Meetings

Status: DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: 04/01/2003 | **Last Revised Date:** 05/06/2013 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 05/06/2013

The DeKalb County Board of Education encourages the public to be involved in public education. To facilitate public input, it is the intent of this policy that the Board shall conduct a monthly Community Meeting in accordance with the procedures below. The Community Meeting is intended to allow speakers to address issues before the Board or other subjects pertinent to the Board or the DeKalb County School District.

In order to assure that persons who wish to appear before the Board may be heard and, at the same time, allow the Board to conduct its meetings in an orderly and efficient manner, the Board adopts the following guidelines for the public comment portion of its meetings:

- The opportunity to provide public comment is limited to District parents, students, residents, employees, businesses, and organizations.
- Before addressing the Board, individuals are urged to seek a satisfactory solution to their concerns by following the proper staff and administrative channels.
- Individuals wishing to speak may submit a request in writing to the Board Office via letter, fax, or e-mail no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the Community Meeting. Such request shall include the individual's name, address, topic to be addressed, previous steps taken to resolve the concern, and the group (if any) that the individual is representing. If an individual is unable to attend the meeting after signing up in advance, he/she may appoint a substitute speaker by calling the Board Office by noon of the meeting day.
- In addition, speakers may complete a Request to Comment card in person between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Cards must be completely filled out, providing the information listed in the preceding paragraph.
- An organization may sign up to speak by designating a duly authorized spokesperson and one alternate, who may speak only if the primary spokesperson is unable to attend. By signing up and addressing the Board on behalf of an organization, the speaker is representing that he or she has been duly authorized by that organization to make the comments presented.
- Speakers shall have a maximum of three (3) minutes each and must stop speaking promptly when their time is up.
- To allow time for the Board's other business, the public comment period will be a maximum of one (1) hour or 20 speakers. At the Board's discretion, the comment period may be extended for a specified amount of time or a specific number of additional speakers.
- To allow the Board to receive input from as many stakeholders as possible, individuals who speak during a Community Meeting one month may only speak at the next month's meeting if there are spaces remaining after all non-repeating speakers have signed up.
- Speakers should be courteous and professional. Speakers may offer objective criticisms of school operations and programs, but the Board will not hear complaints about specific personnel or individuals connected with the District in a public session. Other channels provide a more appropriate forum for consideration and resolution of legitimate complaints involving individuals.
- Individuals will not be denied the opportunity to address the Board on the basis of their viewpoint. However, the Board will not allow abusive language, threats, comments, jeers, applause, or shouts from the floor. Disruptive persons will be asked to leave the meeting room. The presiding officer may terminate public comments that are profane, vulgar, defamatory, or disruptive.
- Speakers may not address confidential student or personnel matters, but may submit such concerns to the Superintendent in writing.
- Speakers are encouraged to provide the Board with a written copy of their comments and other appropriate supporting documentation.

- The Community Meeting is designed to gain input from the public and not for immediate responses by the Board. While the Board cannot assure each speaker of a specific or individualized response, the Board will consider the public comments and any supporting materials provided by speakers.
 - In its discretion and as deemed appropriate, the Board may allow for public comment during Committee of the Whole meetings and, in such case, shall establish procedures for public participation. In addition to any applicable guidelines above, comments of speakers must be germane to the topic and issues before the Committee of the Whole.
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