

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

- I. A School Board meeting is a business meeting of the Board and is to be conducted in an orderly, efficient, and dignified manner. The Board recognizes the value of school governance through public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest. Public comments related to education and the District are welcome and encouraged.
- II. Members of the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard before an Agenda Item is voted on and for general comments about the district. Public Comment time during a meeting is a time for the public to be heard and is not intended to be an open discussion with the board members. However, follow-up action may be taken in response to public comments. If you want a response from a board member, you should email them individually.
- III. A public comment opportunity is not an open forum to discuss matters unrelated to education, to support or oppose candidates for public office, or to engage in commercial speech attempting to sell a service or product to the Board or public. The rules of public comment apply to Board business meetings. If the Board participates in joint meetings, the public comment rules are deferred to the host district.
- IV. Public comment is not a forum to engage in personal attacks against school district employees or, due to privacy concerns, to air issues about a particular student. These issues should be taken up with the appropriate administration and/or the superintendent to address.
- V. For the purposes of public participation:
 - A. A member of the public may email comments about an agenda item to PublicComments@SarasotaCountySchools.net. The email address will be open to receive public comment when the agenda is posted. All emails received up to (2) hours before the start of the meeting will be provided to Board members in advance of the meeting and will be posted on the School Board's website along with the minutes of the Board Meeting.
 - B. A member of the public can send an email to the entire school board at schoolboardmembers@sarasotacountyschools.net. These emails are public record, but do not become a part of the official minutes of the meeting.
 - C. A member of the public may speak on one (1) or more specific agenda items on the agenda. For purposes of the policy, an agenda item is an action item taken before the Board for a vote except as noted below. If an item is added to the agenda during a meeting, the public shall be given an opportunity to speak to it.

- D. A member of the public may speak during a General Public Comment section for items not on the agenda but related to the school district operations or education.
- VI. Members of the public will be given up to 3 minutes to speak on an Agenda Item or during General Comments subject to the following:
- A. Citizens who desire to speak before the Board must complete a “public comment card” prior to the start of the Board meeting and indicate which Agenda Item(s) they wish to speak to or for General Comment and turn it into the Board assistant. Also provide the assistant any handouts you wish to share with the board.
 - B. Persons will be recognized in the order in which the requests were received, sorted by agenda item. When called, come to the speaker’s podium and clearly state your full name and any organization you are representing.
 - C. You have up to three (3) minutes to speak. The green light changes to yellow when you have one minute left. Please complete your comments and stop speaking when the light turns red and the bell rings.
 - D. Florida Law requires all citizens to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion at public meetings. Any individual who interferes with the expeditious or orderly process of a Board meeting pursuant to F.S. 1001.372(3) may be removed at the discretion of the Chair or law enforcement. Orderly fashion is deemed as, at a minimum; (1) no profanity, (2) no vulgar language or gestures, (3) no discourteous, disrespectful, or disparaging conduct.
- VII. To maintain order the Chair may:
- A. Move a speaker from Agenda Item Comment to General Comment if the speaker’s comments are not directed to a specific agenda item.
 - B. Warn and/or terminate a participant’s comments when they go beyond the allotted time or are deemed disorderly and at a minimum may contain (1) profanity, (2) vulgar language or (3) are discourteous, disrespectful, or disparaging.
 - C. Request any individual to leave the meeting if the person disrupts the orderly process of the meeting. This includes, but it not limited to shouting, jeering, interrupting a speaker, using profane or discriminatory language, making vulgar gestures.
 - D. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person’s conduct interferes with the orderly

progress of the meeting. However, law enforcement may act without direction from the Chair if a person appears to be taking aggressive action.

- E. Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time or place when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action.

VIII. The requirement for public comment on action items does not apply when:

- A. an official act must be taken to deal with an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare, or safety, if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Board to act;
- B. an official act involving no more than a clerical action, including, but not limited to, approval of minutes and ceremonial proclamations;
- C. a meeting that is exempt from F.S. 286.011 (the Public Meetings Law), such as litigation assessment meetings and collective bargaining strategy sessions; or
- D. a meeting at which the Board is sitting in its quasi-judicial capacity.
- E. These exceptions do not affect the right of a person to be heard as otherwise required by law or Board policy.

IX. This policy does not prohibit the Board from maintaining orderly conduct or proper decorum in a public meeting, according to F.S. 286.0114.