



BOARD OF EDUCATION  
**POLICY 2040**  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS**  
**OF THE BOARD**

Effective: July 1, 2007

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**I. Policy Statement**

Recognizing the importance of public comments and suggestions on matters of educational interest, the Board confirms its commitment to community participation by scheduling public hearings and public forums during regular meetings. It is the intent of the Board of Education to provide opportunities for individuals and groups to express their views as well as to provide opportunities for individuals to hear the views of others.

**II. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to preserve the orderly transaction of business of the Board and to provide guidelines for effective, efficient, and responsible community input on educational issues during regular meetings of the Board of Education.

**III. Definitions**

None

**IV. Standards**

**A. Public Attendance**

1. The Board will comply with the Open Meetings Act of Maryland.
2. At any open session of the Board, including work sessions, the general public is invited to attend and observe.
3. Every effort will be made to provide interpreters for meetings of the Board on request for those who are hearing impaired or speakers of languages other than English. Two weeks advance notice is preferred.
4. Except in instances when the presiding officer expressly invites public testimony, questions, comments, or other forms of public participation, or when public participation is otherwise authorized by law, no member of the public attending an open session may participate in the session.

B. Public Hearings

1. The Board shall schedule public hearings in accordance with Board policy and may schedule additional public hearings on issues of concern and interest.
2. In general, public hearings will be held approximately thirty (30) days after the meeting at which an issue is initially introduced.
3. The subject and date of public hearings will be publicized through customary communications channels and be released to the news media.
4. Community members may pre-register to speak at a public hearing by contacting the Board of Education Office by telephone or in person. Persons may pre-register during business hours during the three weeks prior to the hearing up to the close of business on the last working day before the hearing. Speakers will be asked to provide their name, address, phone number, and e-mail address if available.
5. A registration sign-up sheet will be available at the public hearings for individuals who do not pre-register but wish to provide testimony. Individuals who register at the time of the public hearing will testify in order of their signatures after those who pre-registered have testified.
6. Individuals may only register themselves to speak. An officer of an organization may register up to five (5) individuals to provide testimony on behalf of the organization. Substitute speakers are not permitted except with the expressed permission of the presiding officer.
7. Speakers at a hearing will testify in the order in which they registered, except that students will be permitted to testify at the beginning of the hearing, and elected officials will be given the courtesy of being placed at the time of their choice on the agenda.
8. Testimony during public hearings is limited to the issue under consideration.
9. Testimony at the hearing, including any visual or audio presentations, will be limited to three minutes.
10. Speakers are requested to provide 15 copies of their statements for distribution to Board members and staff. Staff members may share these copies with the press on request.

11. All registered speakers will be given an opportunity to be heard by the Board. An additional hearing may be scheduled if necessary.
12. Community members may provide written testimony in addition to, or in lieu of, public testimony. Equal consideration will be given to written and oral testimony. Written testimony may be submitted via letter or e-mail and should be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the meeting at which the Board is scheduled to take action.

C. Public Forums

1. Time is set aside at the beginning of each session of regular meetings for up to five (5) community members to provide public comment.
2. Registration for the Public Forum will be carried out using the same schedule and times described for Public Hearings in Standards IV.B.4 and IV.B.5.
3. Testimony during Public Forums, including any visual or audio presentations, will be limited to three minutes.
4. The Public Forum may not be used to address negative personnel issues or topics for which the Board holds formal public hearings.
5. Board members usually do not respond to comments during the Public Forum. Board members may take follow-up action within the scope of the Board's authority and jurisdiction and/or may make referrals to appropriate staff.

D. Rules for Public Conduct at Public Meetings

1. A person attending an open session of the Board may not engage in any conduct, including visual demonstrations such as the waving of placards, signs, or banners, that disrupts the session or that interferes with the right of members of the public to attend and observe the session.
2. Persons are expected to exhibit civil behavior in accordance with Policy 1000, Civility.
3. The presiding officer may order any person who persists in conduct prohibited under D.1 or who violates any other regulation concerning the conduct of the open session to be removed from the session and may request police assistance to restore order. The presiding officer may recess the session while order is restored.

**V. Compliance**

- A. The Chairman presides at all meetings and hearings and officially convenes and closes the public hearing and public forum portions of the meetings.
- B. The Executive Assistant to the Board is responsible for pre-registering speakers for public hearings and public forums.
- C. The Superintendent will ensure that an environment is available to provide efficient and fair public participation at all public hearings and meetings.

**VI. Delegation of Authority**

The Chairman may exercise judgment in altering the public hearing and public forum procedures for special circumstances.

**VII. References**

- A. Legal  
The Americans with Disabilities Act  
The Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article, Sections 10-501, 502, 505, 507 (Open Meetings Act)
- B. Other Board Policies
  - Policy 1000 Civility
  - Policy 2020 Policy Development and Adoption
  - Policy 6010 School Attendance Areas
  - Policy 6070 Closing of Schools
  - Policy 10000 Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

ADOPTED: January 25, 1990

AMENDED: February 8, 2007

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2007