

BCBI Public Participation in Board Meetings

2/15/18

A. BOARD EXPECTATION

The Cobb County Board of Education (Board) will hear public commentary from any interested resident of Cobb County outside the City of Marietta; Cobb 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. Students under the age of 18 must be accompanied by the student's parent/guardian.

B. BOARD PRACTICE

1. **Public Comment Session:** The Board provides a 30 minute public comment session at each Board work session and regular Board meeting to allow individuals, as identified in Section A of this Policy, an opportunity to address the Board. This public comment session shall be held:
 - a. Immediately following the Board Recognitions portion of the agenda; or
 - b. Prior to the beginning of the meeting when no recognitions are scheduled.
2. **Procedures for Speaking During the Public Comment Session:**
 - a. Before addressing the Board, individuals are urged to seek a solution to their concerns through the proper staff and administrative channels.
 - b. Individuals desiring to appear before the Board must first complete a sign-in sheet which should be available 30 minutes prior to the convening of the Board meeting or the public presentation session, whichever occurs first. Speaker information must contain:
 - (1) Name;
 - (2) Full physical address and no Post Office boxes. Cobb County property owners not residing in Cobb County must provide both their Cobb County property address as well as their mailing address;
 - (3) Telephone number;
 - (4) E-Mail address;
 - (5) Discussion topic and which, if any, Board agenda item is related to their topic;
 - (6) Whether they are a resident of Cobb County outside the City of Marietta; a District student or parent/guardian of a District student; a non-resident owner of property within the geographic boundaries of the District; and/or an employee of the District;
 - (7) Whether or not they have materials to submit to the Board.
 - c. Speakers must present any materials brought for the Board, i.e., letters, photos, petitions, written comments or other documentation, etc., to the District representative at the sign-in table when signing-in. Speakers are asked to provide 10 copies of these materials. The District representative shall provide a copy of these materials to each of the following:
 - (1) Each Board Member;
 - (2) Superintendent;
 - (3) Board attorney; and
 - (4) The District's records representative.If 10 copies are not available, the District representative shall deliver the material to the Board Chair for distribution.
 - d. Speakers will have an allotted amount of time, with a minimum of two minutes up to a maximum of five minutes to speak before the Board, with the time for speaker being determined by the Chair, depending on the number of speakers, with a maximum of 15 speakers.

- e. Speakers will be scheduled on a first come, first served basis. However, the Chair may give priority to those discussing Board agenda items being considered during the Board meeting.
- f. Individuals will not be denied the opportunity to address the Board on the basis of their viewpoint. The Board requests that speakers maintain appropriate decorum and that comments remain focused and respectful. Speakers may comment on issues scheduled for consideration at the Board meeting or other concerns pertinent to the operation of a school or the District. In addition to the guidelines in this Policy, public commentary will not be permitted if:
 - (1) The topic is 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 makes obscene, profane, vulgar, defamatory, slanderous, or threatening gestures/remarks during his/her public commentary;
 - (3) The speaker discusses a student by name, or shares 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 makes 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.); or
 - (5) The speaker disrupts or attempts to disrupt the Board meeting (See, for example, O.C.G.A. § 16-11-34).
- g. Speakers may not gain an additional opportunity to speak by reserving or dividing their allotted time for another speaking occasion, and may not pass their allotted time to other speakers.
- h. **Speakers must:**
 - (1) State their name to the Board prior to beginning public commentary;
 - (2) End their remarks when their allotted time expires;
 - (3) Direct public commentary to the Board as a body and not to an individual Board Member.
- i. 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. The District may rebroadcast public commentary on COBB edTV or on the District or school Web sites. Any portion of the public commentary that is not in compliance with this Policy (such as prohibited in Section B.2.g. above) and/or applicable broadcast authority may be edited prior to broadcast.
- j. 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.
- k. Board Members and/or the Superintendent may ask questions for clarification.
- l. If requested during his/her remarks, a speaker will receive a written response from the appropriate Administrator within thirty (30) calendar days.

Approved: 10/11/78

Revised: 1/26/84; 8/8/84; 1/24/85; 4/28/88; 7/12/89; 7/8/92; 2/25/93; 9/13/95; 05/23/96; 8/22/96; 11/12/03

Re-Adopted: 4/11/07

Confirmed: 5/9/07

Revised: 7/23/09

Revised and Re-coded: 5/17/12 (previously coded as Board Policy BEDH)

Revised: 2/15/18

Legal Reference

O.C.G.A. 16-11-0034	Preventing or disrupting a meeting of General Assembly or other meetings of members
O.C.G.A. 16-11-0035	Removal from campus or facility of unit of university system or school; failure to leave
O.C.G.A. 50-14-0001	Open Meetings Law