



Book	Pinellas County Schools Bylaws and Policies
Section	Chapter 0000 - Bylaws
Title	Meetings - Public Participation at Board Meetings
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The School Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves by addressing the Board on school matters of community interest.

The presiding officer of each Board meeting before which public comment is permitted shall administer the rules of the Board for its conduct.

Members of the audience are invited to speak to the Board in accordance with this policy. Because these speaking opportunities exist to address the Board, speakers must direct their comments to the Board.

A. Public Comment

1. Following adjournment of regular meetings only, the Board will hear comment from members of the District community on matters not covered by items on the agenda (excluding employee discipline), but which pertain to the general business or operations of the Board or District. Speakers under this paragraph will be allotted three (3) minutes to make their comments unless granted a longer time by the Chairperson, whose decision may be overruled by a majority of the Board. Speakers may sign up to speak at any time during the regular meeting or until the last registered speaker has finished, whichever is later. No speaker may yield their time to any other person.
2. Any member of the District community may request to speak by completing and submitting the Speaker's Request Form indicating the name of the person to speak and the subject matter to be addressed. Speakers will present to the Board in the order in which they are announced by the Board's Administrative Assistant.

B. Numbered Agenda Items

1. In addition, during regular meetings and special meetings, members of the audience shall be permitted to speak to any one or more action items, including consent or nonconsent agenda items, prior to Board discussion except items pertaining to employee and student discipline and any other matter listed in s. 286.0114(3), F.S. Each speaker addressing an item must submit the appropriate Speaker's Request Form and, regardless of the number of items, shall be allotted one (1) three (3) minute period to speak unless granted a longer time by the Chairperson, whose decision may be overruled by a majority of the Board.
2. Early in the meeting, the Chairperson (or designee) shall announce that members of the audience wishing to speak to one or more action items may do so by submitting an appropriate Speaker's Request Form to the Superintendent's designee. The form shall indicate the action item number, the subject, the name of the person, and the party or parties represented by the person. All forms shall be submitted to the Superintendent's designee prior to the conclusion of the last registered speaker.

3. Each person submitting the signed Speaker's Request Form may address the Board, but no such person may yield their time to any other person. Each speaker shall be recognized to speak to any one or more action items and will present to the Board in the order in which they are announced by the Board's Administrative Assistant.

C. Public Hearings

In addition to other opportunities for public comment, members of the public will be given the opportunity to address the Board at public hearings before the Board, excluding those involving employee or student discipline. Each speaker will be given three (3) minutes to speak unless granted a longer time by the Chairperson, whose decision may be overruled by a majority of the Board. The same procedures and restrictions that apply to public comment at regular and special meetings shall apply to public comment at public hearings, including signing up to speak and yielding of time to others.

D. Other Rules Applicable to All Speaking Opportunities

1. To avoid repetition, speakers supporting the same issue are encouraged to designate a spokesperson and have the spokesperson request the members of the audience supporting the position to stand during the spokesperson's comments.
2. If a speaker wants to supplement their three (3) minute presentation, the speaker should provide the Board office with written materials prior to the meeting. Board members will make every effort to review these materials. Board members may not be able to review materials received less than two (2) business days prior to the Board meeting.
3. The Board will not act on any matter raised by a speaker prior to the next regular meeting. If a majority of the Board desires to further consider a matter raised by a speaker, they will request the Superintendent to bring a recommendation at a future workshop or meeting or otherwise address the issue. It is generally the Board's practice not to respond to the issues brought forward by speakers except to correct inaccuracies or clarify issues.
4. Speakers may not use any of the speaking opportunities to advertise or otherwise promote the interests of any commercial or other non-school organizations, except when recognizing school or district partners or when one of the exceptions in Policy 9700.01 applies. Further, no speaker may advertise or otherwise promote a political candidate, question, or party.

E. Recordings are permitted under the following conditions:

1. No obstructions are created between the Board and the audience.
2. No interviews are conducted in the meeting room while the Board is in session.
3. No commentary, adjustment of equipment, or positioning of operators is made that would distract either the Board or members of the audience while the Board is in session.

F. Regulation of Disruptive Speech:

The Board recognizes that Board meetings are a limited open forum for First Amendment purposes, and the public's exercise of their First Amendment right of free speech in that context will be recognized and protected in accordance with current caselaw, subject to reasonable restrictions as to time, place, and manner as described herein. Applause shall be permitted only when awards are granted.

The Chairperson may:

1. Interrupt or terminate a speaker when their speech is not relevant, exceeds the time allotted, or is abusive, threatening, harassing, defamatory, obscene, profane, loud, interruptive, or otherwise interferes with the expeditious or orderly process of the meeting, as stated in s. 1001.372(3), Florida Statutes, all as determined by the Chairperson in consultation with the Board Attorney;
2. Order the removal, from a public meeting held by the Board, of any person interfering with the expeditious or orderly process of the meeting, provided the Chairperson has first issued a warning that continued interference with the orderly processes of the meeting will result in removal.

Nothing herein is intended, nor shall anything be construed, to limit or restrain negative, positive, or neutral comments about the manner in which Board employees, agents, the Superintendent, and Board members carry out their duties in public employment or office.

F.S. 1001.372
F.S. 286.0114