

# POLICY

## SOMERSET COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Public Participation

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July 1, 1999, March 21, 2006  
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### 1. **PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines for individuals or groups to provide input on educational issues to the Somerset County Board of Education.

### 2. **POLICY**

Realizing the importance of public comments and suggestions, the Board of Education of Somerset County confirms its commitment to public input by establishing a process where all proper concerns and comments can be presented in written and/or oral format to the members of the Board.

### 3. **GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS**

A. The Board of Education is open to receive written public comments at any time. Letters and emails must be sent to the Board Office in Westover, Maryland. All communications will be conveyed to all Board Members for consideration and follow up communication as necessary.

B. Letters may be mailed to: Somerset County Board of Education  
7982A Tawes Campus Drive  
Westover, MD 21871

Emails may be sent to: [boardmeeting@somerset.k12.md.us](mailto:boardmeeting@somerset.k12.md.us)

#### **4. GUIDELINES FOR ORAL COMMENTS**

- A. At each of the Board's monthly meetings time will be set aside for Public Comment and the first ten (10) individuals who have signed up and are present will be allowed to speak. Each speaker shall be limited to no more than three (3) minutes.
- B. Between monthly Board meetings, the Board of Education shall maintain a sign-up sheet for individuals seeking to speak at the next Board meeting. Individuals may request that their name be added to the sign-up sheet by calling the Board's secretary before the next meeting. Individuals who do not pre-register by telephone may sign-up in person on the day of the Board's monthly meeting, until the time that the meeting commences. Sign-up is on a first come-first served basis. Individuals will speak in the order in which they registered provided the maximum number of ten (10) speakers has not been met.
- C. Matters of administrative procedure or comments about the actions or statements of individual staff members other than the Superintendent are not appropriate subjects for speakers. Efforts toward solution of any matter of concern should first be made at the individual school or at the appropriate staff level, and then to the Superintendent.
- D. Speakers shall not include comments about the following:
  - I. Individual personnel issues;
  - II. Complaints identifying individual students,
  - III. Matters that are on appeal to the Board,
  - IV. Topics for which the Board schedules formal public hearings, or
  - V. Advertising or solicitation for products and/or services.
- E. The Board expects all speakers to exhibit civil behavior, which includes, but is not limited to, the following types of behavior:
  - Respect and courtesy in language, demeanor, and actions;
  - Respectful and appropriate tone and volume of voice;
  - Respectful acknowledgment of individual differences of opinion;
  - Respectful acknowledgement of diversity; and
  - Respect for the personal, civil, and property rights of others.
- F. Persons providing oral comments to 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.
- G. Board members may ask clarifying questions about an oral presentation, but they shall not engage the speaker in any discussion concerning the speaker's oral comments. It is the prerogative of the Board to determine whether actions will be taken by the Board on items brought up during the meeting. 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, such as the Superintendent of Schools, to address appropriate factual questions raised in the presentation.

- H. The presiding officer may order any person who persists in conduct prohibited under this section of the Policy to cease their oral presentation, to be removed from the session, request police assistance to restore order, and recess the session as appropriate. Police assistance under this provision will be limited to extreme circumstances in which the Board cannot restore order by itself.

## **5. GUIDELINES FOR BEING ADDED TO BOARD AGENDA**

Any person who wishes to be added to the Board of Education's monthly meeting agenda must submit in writing on the form provided, at least eight calendar days before the scheduled meeting, the reasons for their requested appearance on the agenda and the topic(s) to be discussed.

- A. If the Board receives sufficient background information and believes it is appropriate, it may add an individual's or group's proposed topic to the Board's meeting agenda in advance of the next monthly meeting.
- B. The Board will add proposed presentations to the monthly meeting on a first-come first-served basis, and no more than three (3) presentations may be added. Each presentation to the Board will be limited to ten (10) minutes in length.
- C. Individuals will be permitted to speak on the agenda topic for up to ten (10) minutes.
- D. For the official record, all presenters must provide the Board with a legible copy of their comments or remarks before the beginning of their presentation.
- E. Subsections 4(C) through 4(H) of this Policy also apply to any speaker that presents to the Board in accordance with Section 5.