Book	Policies
Section	1000 Community Relations
Title	Public Comment at Board Meetings
Code	1230
Status	Active

PUBLIC COMMENT AT BOARD MEETINGS

The Board of Education encourages public comment on school related matters at Board meetings, as outlined in this policy. To allow members of the public to address the Board, a period not to exceed 30 minutes, will be set aside during the first part of each Board meeting for public comment, with priority given to comments on items on the meeting's agenda. This period may be extended by a majority vote of the Board.

Persons wishing to address the Board will advise the **Board President or the Superintendent** within a reasonable time prior to the start of the public comment period of the meeting. The request will be made in writing on a form or sign in sheet provided by the district. To maintain a first come, first served process, the district will: request the name of the speaker, utilize a number system, or request that speakers form a line. For purposes of following up with speakers later, the district may request the speaker's preferred contact information such as home address, telephone number, or email address, or speak with them in person. To limit comments to matters which may be properly discussed in public session, the board may request a brief description of the topic to be addressed. Any group or organization wishing to address the Board must identify a single spokesperson. The Board President may limit the number of repetitive comments to keep within time limit for the public comment period.

Presentation should be as brief as possible. No speaker will be permitted to speak for longer than **5** minutes. Speakers may not give unused time to other speakers. Speakers may comment on any matter related to district business; any agenda item; or matters related to agenda items specifically or district matters generally, depending on the public comment section.

The Board will **NOT** permit in public session discussion involving individual district personnel or students. Persons wishing to discuss matters involving individual district personnel or students should present their comments and/or concerns to the Superintendent during regular business hours.

All speakers and observers are to conduct themselves in a civil manner. Obscene language, defamatory statements, threats of violence, statements advocating racial, religious, or other forms of prejudice will not be tolerated.

Persons making presentations at a Board meeting will address remarks to the President and may direct questions or comments to Board members or other district officials only upon the approval of the President. Board members and the Superintendent have the privilege of asking questions of any person who addresses the Board during a presentation to the Board, but commenters should not expect to engage in discussion with the Board. However, the Board president may correct comments that are not accurate, and may refer to an existing policy when it answers a question.

Questions and comments from the public concerning matters which are not on the agenda will be taken under consideration and referred to the Superintendent for appropriate action. Persons wishing to have matters included on the agenda will contact the Superintendent in accordance with Policy 2342, Agenda Preparation and Dissemination.

The President will be responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting and will rule on such matters as the time to be allowed for public discussion and the appropriateness of the subject being presented, as outlined in this policy and applicable provisions of law and regulation, and subject to the Board's parliamentary procedure. If there is disagreement about whether a speaker's topic falls within the topics permitted for public comment, the whole board will vote on the issue.

The President will remind speakers whose presentations are inconsistent with this policy of the rules for public comment. For speakers that continue to violate this policy, the President may discontinue the presentation or call for a brief recess of the meeting. The President may order the removal of speakers from the speakers' area, or from the meeting in general, or may close the public comment period.

For members of the public who are unwilling or unable to speak during public comment periods, including when these periods are closed, they may submit comments to the Board in writing, to the Lansing School District Office. Complaints from the public are addressed in Board policy 1400.

All individuals at Board meetings are expected to abide by the rules for Public Conduct on School Property as set forth in the district's Code of Conduct. At board meetings, speakers and observers may not engage in behavior that disrupts the meeting, such as shouting, interrupting others, blocking the free movement of others, or obstructing the views of others. In the event of such disruption, the President will remind those in attendance of the rules under this policy. Any Board member may request a brief recess of the meeting. The President may order the removal of those who are a threat to the safety of others or who disrupt the orderly conduct of the meeting. If appropriate, law enforcement may be called to remove disruptive individuals.

Cross-ref: 1400, Complaints from the Public
2342, Agenda Preparation and Dissemination
5300, Code of Conduct

Ref: *Appeal of Kushner*, 49 EDR 263 (2010) (boards not required to allow the public to speak)
Matter of Martin, 32 EDR 381 (1992) (boards need not permit nonresidents to speak)
Appeal of Wittneben, 31 EDR 375 (1992) (boards encouraged to permit citizens to speak)
Matter of Kramer, 72 St. Dept. Rep. 114 (1951) (boards may put time limits on public speaking)
NYS Department of State, Committee on Open Government, Advisory Opinions OML-AO-#2696 (1/8/1997), OML-AO-#2717 (2/27/1997), OML-AO-#3295 (4/16/2001), OML-AO-#3518 (8/30/2002), OML-AO-#4024 (8/23/2005), OML-AO-#4044 (9/30/2005), OML-AO-#4141, (2/24/2006), OML-AO-#4292 (12/6/2006), OML-AO-#4573 (3/3/2008), OML-AO-#5296 (6/12/2012), OML-AO-#5607 (2/22/2019)