

0167 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS

The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest.

In order to permit the fair and orderly expression of such comment, the Board shall set aside a portion of every Board meeting, the length of the portion to be determined by the Board, for public comment on any school or school district issue that a member of the public feels may be of concern to the residents of the school district.

In public session, the Board will not hear complaints about specific individual by name connected with the school system.

All matters concerning an individual school should go through the proper chain of command (i.e. teacher, supervisor, building principal). If the problem cannot be resolved at the school level, it should be brought to the attention of the Superintendent who may refer the matter to his/her designee. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, the board will only act on complaints in the event of a failure of an administration solution.

Individuals who wish additional information shall make a written request to the Superintendent.

All public participation shall be governed by Board Policy 9131 Civility.

Public participation shall be governed by the following rules:

1. A participant must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface comments by an announcement of his/her name, place of residence, and group affiliation, if appropriate;
2. With the exception of items discussed under rule number 5 listed below, each participant shall be limited to five minutes' duration. A speaker who has not finished within the allotted five minutes will be politely asked by the presiding officer to summarize and relinquish the floor within 30 seconds.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS

3. No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard;
4. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually;
5. The presiding officer may:
 - a. Interrupt, warn, or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant;
 - b. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;
 - c. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting;
 - d. Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action; and
 - e. Waive these rules when necessary for the protection of privacy or the efficient administration of the Board's business.
6. A response to public participation will be provided by the presiding officer and may include:
 - a. A polite acknowledgement of a comment or concern;
 - b. Correction of an obvious misstatement of fact;
 - c. The identification and location of public documents that may contain the answer;
 - d. An answer from the presiding officer;
 - e. A referral to a person who is expected to have an answer and who may respond to the member of the public subsequent to the meeting; or if necessary,



POLICY

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

BYLAWS

0167/Page 3 of 3

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS

- f. A referral to a specific board committee for further review and recommendation with a response provided subsequent to the committee meeting.

N.J.S.A. 2C:33-8

N.J.S.A. 10:4-12

Adopted: July 1999

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