

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. All regular, special and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings as provided in this policy.

Although Board meetings are not public forums, the Board will provide appropriate opportunities for citizens to express opinions and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the Board. The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard and to provide adequate time for the Board to obtain information and opinion on subjects before it, while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

Public comment shall be limited to the item(s) on the agenda. In order that the Board may fairly and adequately discharge its overall responsibility, a member of the public wishing to address the Board on a specific topic not otherwise on the agenda must submit such a request in writing to the Superintendent at least ten (10) days in advance of the scheduled meeting. The Superintendent and/or Board Chair may add the item to the agenda at their discretion, or the Chair may waive this requirement.

Orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion; therefore, public participation in the RSU 68 Board of Directors' meetings may take one of two forms:

1. During a fifteen (15) minute public participation time provided on the Boards' agendas.
2. Specific presentations/participation on an agenda item scheduled at the request of identified individuals or groups.

The following guidelines shall apply to comments during the fifteen (15) minute public participation time at Board meetings. The Chair shall be responsible for maintaining proper order and compliance with these guidelines.

- A. Citizens and employees of the school unit are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Chair's discretion. Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which complaint or grievance procedures are provided.
- B. The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual speaks.
- C. In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in a fair and efficient manner.
- D. During the time set aside for public participation, the Chair will be responsible for recognizing all speakers, who must identify themselves as they begin talking.
- E. Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.

- F. All speakers are to address the Chair and direct questions or comments to particular Board members or the Superintendent only with approval of the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent to be addressed at a later time.
- G. Members of the Board and the Superintendent may ask questions of any person who addresses the Board but are expected to refrain from arguing or debating issues. Questions must be addressed through the Chair.
- H. No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by the school system or against particular students.

Personal matters or complaints concerning student or staff issues will not be considered in a public meeting but will be referred through established policies and procedures.

- I. In order to make efficient use of meeting time, the Board discourages duplication or repetition of comments to the Board. The Board requests that groups or organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.
- J. The Chair has the authority to stop any presentation that violates these guidelines or the privacy rights of others.
- K. Persons who disrupt the meeting may be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance as necessary to restore order.

The public participation areas set forth in this policy are not intended for the registering or resolution of complaints. Complaints should be addressed through the mechanisms set forth in the RSU 68 Public Concerns and Complaints policy (KL).

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with Board policy. Copies will be posted and/or available prior to regular meetings, at the Superintendent's Office, SeDoMoCha Elementary School, SeDoMoCha Middle School and www.sad68.org (the District's website). Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

Legal Reference: 1 MRSA § 401 et seq.

Cross Reference: BEC – Executive Session
 BEDA – Notification of School Board Meetings
 BEDB – Agenda
 BEDD – Rules of Order
 KL – Public Concerns and Complaints

First Reading: 11-9-2011
 Second Reading: 12-6-2011
 Implementation: 12-6-2011