

Section B: School Board Governance and Operations

BEDH Public Participation at Board Meetings

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school. All meetings of the Region 8 Board will be open to the public. The public is cordially invited to participate in Board meetings as set forth in this policy.

Although Board meetings are not public forums, the Board will provide appropriate opportunities at its meetings for members of the public to express opinions and concerns related to matters concerning education and Region 8. The intent is to allow fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

The Board will designate a portion of its agenda as an opportunity for public participation. During the time allotted for public participation, members of the public may speak on any subject directly related to the operations of the schools, except for personnel matters or complaints concerning specific employees or students, which will be addressed through established policies and procedures.

The Chair may also invite public comments just prior to Board discussion of individual agenda items requiring Board action.

The Board will give due attention and take under advisement all comments and contributions, but should not be expected nor are they required to respond or take immediate action.

Members of the public may address the Board within the following guidelines. The Chair will be responsible for maintaining proper order and compliance.

- A. Citizens and employees of the region with a legitimate interest in the Board's business are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Chair's discretion.
- B. The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual may speak.
- 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 should identify themselves by name and town of residence as they begin speaking.

- E. Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.
- F. All speakers are to address questions and comments to the Chair. Specific questions or comments to particular Board members or the Director will be made at the discretion of the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research will be referred to the Director to be addressed at a later time.
- G. All questions from members of the Board and the Director to any person who addresses the Board must be addressed through the Chair. There will be no debating or arguing of positions.
- H. No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by Region 8 or against particular students. Personnel 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. 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.

Opportunity for public participation at Board subcommittee meetings is not required but may be permitted at the discretion of the subcommittee chair.

Copies of this policy will be made available to the public at all Board meetings.

Legal Reference: 1 M.R.S. § 401 et seq.

Cross Reference: BEDB – Agenda Preparation and Dissemination
KEB – Complaints about School Personnel

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