

Regulation

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Somerville 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 provide a period for public comment at every public meeting. Public participation shall be permitted at the discretion of the presiding officer.

Additionally, as a general statement of protocol, though the comments by members of the public to the board of Education are welcomed, individuals should attempt to resolve problems and/or complaints through initial contact with appropriate staff or administrators. Such matters should only be brought to the board after all avenues within a chain of command have been exhausted.

Public participation shall be governed by the following rules:

- A. 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;
- B. If in the determination of the president that the public comment portion of the meeting will exceed 30 minutes, each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three (3) minutes' duration;
- C. No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard;
- D. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually;
- E. The presiding officer may:
 - 1. Interrupt, warn, or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant;
 - 2. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;
 - 3. 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;
 - 4. 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
 - 5. Waive these rules when necessary for the protection of privacy or the efficient administration of the board's business.

Adopted:	August 20, 1996
Revised:	August 10, 2004, October 21, 2008
NJSBA Review/Update:	April 2017
Readopted:	August 22, 2017