

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for conducting business, receiving and/or discussing matters of concern, and providing an opportunity for citizens to voice opinions or identify problems in an orderly and efficient manner.

Definition:

N/A

Policy Statement:

The Board of Education of Allegany County, recognizing that the public schools belong to all the people, shall consider the wishes and opinions of the public within the authority and responsibilities mandated by the laws and bylaws governing public education in Maryland.

Types of Meetings

There are four (4) types of meetings:

1. **Open Regular Meetings**
Meetings held for the purpose of gaining information, taking action and/or discussing matters of concern to the Board. Informational presentations by members of the staff are scheduled during these sessions. These sessions are specifically designed for ease of citizen participation by providing an opportunity under "Hearing of Constituents" for persons to address the Board regarding educational matters.
2. **Open Special Meetings**
Special meetings of the Board shall be conducted as the duties and business of the Board require. Special Meetings shall be called by the president and the Superintendent or by the majority of the Board upon request to the Superintendent. No business will be transacted except that which is related to the subject for which the meeting was convened.
3. **Open Informal Sessions**
When the majority of board members agree, informal sessions open to the public can be scheduled for the purpose of enhancing communication between the Board, other elected officials or public agencies. The informal session may be requested by Board members, other elected officials, or representatives of public agencies.
4. **Closed Executive Sessions**
Subject to the provisions of relevant law, the members of the Board, counsel, and officers of the Board may conduct a closed session in order to discuss items as permitted by the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Hearings and appeals before the Board are held in closed session as provided by law. Minutes of the closed session will be reviewed and approved at the next appropriate closed session. Board members who have a conflict of interest concerning an item on the executive session agenda should not be present when that item is discussed. If a voluntary recusal by a Board member does not occur, the Board may determine the existence of a conflict by majority vote. If a conflict exists, the individual with the conflict shall be excluded from attendance during the discussion and action on that agenda item. Similarly, the Superintendent should not be present when an appeal of the decision of the Superintendent is considered by the Board or if the superintendent has a conflict of interest with an agenda item as determined by the majority of the Board.

Meeting Procedures

All business will be conducted in meetings open to the public except for matters that may be conducted in closed sessions in accordance with Maryland law. Meetings will be held at the Central Office of the Board of Education, located at 108 Washington Street, Cumberland, Maryland 21502, unless announced differently. Meetings may be held in other locations provided that they are handicapped accessible. Meetings of the Board are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the business of the schools, and therefore are not public meetings, but meetings held in public.

1. The Board of Education shall hold meetings on a regular basis upon due notice to the public.
2. Each meeting agenda and supporting documents shall be made available to members of the Board prior to the date of the meeting. All open session agendas are available to the public.
3. Agenda items may be suggested by Board members, administrators, or citizens of the county for inclusion on the agenda. Proposed agenda items suggested by citizens of the county shall be submitted in writing and received in the office of the Superintendent of Schools to be considered for placement on a future meeting agenda. The Board may agree to place additional items on the agenda at the request of the superintendent, the Board President, or a Board member prior to the meeting.

After receipt of a written request to place an item on the agenda, the superintendent shall consult with the President of the Board in order to consider its inclusion on an agenda. If accepted for inclusion on an agenda, the individual making the request shall be notified of the date, time and place of the meeting at which the item will be considered.

4. Only items on the agenda will be discussed at any meeting of the Board. If an opportunity may be lost or if timely action on an issue is required, items may be added to the agenda during a meeting upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and approval of the Board President or a majority of the Board.
5. The minutes of the previous meeting shall be forwarded to all Board members prior to a subsequent meeting in which they are to be approved.

Public Participation At Board Meetings

The Board recognizes its responsibility to conduct the business of the school district in an orderly and efficient manner and will therefore require reasonable controls to regulate public participation at Board meetings. Except for Closed Executive Sessions, all citizens are invited to attend meetings and will be given limited time to address the Board regarding educational matters. In order to provide appropriate time for each speaker to address the Board, no more than 5 minutes per speaker will be provided. When a large number of individuals wish to speak, the President may shorten the time available to each speaker or limit the number of speakers on each side of the issue.

An individual speaking to an item may exercise this privilege during the public comment portion of the meeting or at the time the item is considered by the Board if he or she has:

- a. Contacted the superintendent's office prior to the meeting and indicated an interest in speaking to a specific item on the agenda or an item of interest not on the agenda at the time, or
- b. Signed the speakers' list prior to the meeting indicating an interest in speaking to a specific item.

Persons who wish to speak to the Board shall first be recognized by the president, identify themselves by name and address and proceed with comments as briefly as the subject permits.

Response to Public Comment by Board Members and Superintendent

The individual Board members and the Superintendent will be offered the opportunity to respond to comments from the public in a separate section of the agenda. Any responses are the individual responses of the speaker and do not represent the Board's response. The time allocated for each Board member shall be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes. No discussion or action will be taken at this meeting but action may be taken at a future meeting.

Individual Board members are also bound by the terms of Respect and Responsibility in the Board Room in their comments.

Respect and Responsibility in the Board Room

The President is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting and shall rule on such matters as the time to be allowed for public discussion, the appropriateness of the subject being presented, and the suitability of the time for such a presentation. The Board as a whole shall have the final decision in determining the appropriateness of all such rulings.

Informed dialogue and civil discourse is essential to guiding decisions about education. In keeping with the school system's emphasis on respect and responsibility in the schools, those character traits will be the guidelines for behavior at school board meetings. Everyone in attendance will be asked to respect diverse opinions, and to assume responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere conducive to thoughtful decision-making. Listening respectfully and disagreeing courteously is the responsibility of everyone in attendance.

Interruption or other interferences with the orderly conduct of Board of Education business will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks, attacks on individuals in the form of accusations, allegations, and/or insinuations are always out of order.

At a public meeting of the Board, no person shall initiate charges or complaints against specific employees of the district. Complaints against specific employees should be made in accordance with Policy KE - Responding to Inquiries & Complaints from the Public.

At any Board meeting at which constituents are offered the opportunity to speak, the following statement shall be agreed to on the sign-up sheet prior to each meeting:

We ask that comments be limited to a maximum time of 5 minutes per individual, unless otherwise considered by the Board President. Rude, slanderous, defamatory, inflammatory, vulgar, or threatening remarks or other behavior that is disruptive or interferes with the order of the meeting is not permitted."

The presiding officer may terminate a speaker's privilege of addressing the Board if he/she persists in improper conduct or remarks.

Rules of Order

It shall be the responsibility of the Board president to preside over all meetings of the Board. The Board shall operate as a committee of the whole and business shall be conducted using *Robert's Rules of Order, New Revised Edition* as a guide. Actions are taken by voting members of the Board.

Legal Reference			
Policy History	Adopted	Reviewed	Revised Feb. 10, 2004, 1 st Reading March 9, 2004, 2 nd Reading May 10, 2011, 2 nd Reading April 9, 2013, 1 st Reading June 11, 2013, 2 nd Reading July 9, 2013, 1 st Reading Aug. 13, 2013, 2 nd Reading April 8, 2014, 1 st Reading May 13, 2014, 2 nd Reading March 6, 2018, 1 st Reading April 23, 2018, 1 st Reading May 21, 2018, 2 nd Reading