

1 **REGULATIONS FOR PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD**
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3 Members of the community may present their views on issues of public concern which relate to
4 the operation of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), either by submitting written or electronic
5 comments to members of the Alexandria City School Board, or by addressing the Board during
6 the time periods designated for public comments at Board meetings or during public hearings.
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8 **Written Comments**

9 Comments may be presented to the Board at any time by emailing such material to:
10 boardclerk@acps.k12.va.us. Comments may also be addressed to the entire Board at
11 board@acps.k12.va.us, or to individual Board Members at their email addresses listed on the
12 ACPS website. If comments are provided in a language other than English, they will be translated
13 by ACPS and provided to the Board.
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15 **Public Comments at Board Meetings or Public Hearings**

16 The purpose of Board meetings is to allow the Board to conduct public business in an orderly and
17 constructive manner. With the exception of certain public hearings, the Board is not required to
18 provide public comment time but does so in order to receive the viewpoints of the community on
19 general issues of public concern related to the operation of the school division.
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21 Individuals may speak at regular board meetings on agenda items or non-agenda subjects which
22 relate to the operation of the school division. Comments during public hearings must be confined
23 to the subject of the hearing. Public comments are typically not accepted at work sessions.
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25 Generally, Board members do not respond to public comment during a meeting or hearing. If
26 follow-up is required due to the nature of the comments, the Chair of the Board (Chair) will work
27 with the Superintendent and School Board Clerk (Clerk) to respond accordingly following the
28 Board meeting.
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30 The following rules are intended to minimize or avoid disruption, confine speakers to topics related
31 to the operation of the school division, and to balance the Board’s informational needs with limited
32 time and available resources.
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34 **Advance Request Procedures**

35 Members of the public who wish to address the Board at a Board Meeting or Public Hearing may
36 sign up in one of two ways:

- 37 • Those wishing to address the Board virtually should notify the Clerk by 12:00 noon on the
38 day before the meeting. The clerk’s contact information is available on the ACPS website
39 and in the Contact Information section of this regulation.
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- 41 • Those wishing to address the Board in person may notify the Clerk by 12:00 noon on the
42 day before the meeting or may sign up in person between 5:45 and 6:15 PM on the day of
43 the meeting. The in-person sign up will be in the Board room. A minimum of five speaking
44 slots will be reserved for in person sign up on the day of the meeting.
45

46 Only individuals who have signed up will be permitted to speak. The Chair may make exceptions

47 for individuals who have a valid reason for not being able to meet the established deadlines.
48 Requests for an exception should be provided to the Clerk.

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50 All speakers must provide the Clerk with their name, available contact information including
51 (email address, home address and phone number), any required accommodations, and the agenda
52 item or other issue of public concern about which they will be speaking.

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54 Speakers who require accommodations such as translation services are requested to notify the
55 Clerk 48 hours prior to the meeting so ACPS can arrange for a translator. Speakers may instead
56 bring a translator or provide the comments in writing. Comments provided in English will be read
57 by the Clerk or their designee during the public comment period. Comments provided in a language
58 other than English will be translated by ACPS and provided to the Board after the meeting.

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60 The Board encourages speakers to provide a written copy of their comments and supporting
61 documentation. Speakers may email such material to the Clerk at boardclerk@acps.k12.va.us. If
62 comments are provided in a language other than English, they will be translated by ACPS and
63 provided to the Board.

64 65 **Order of Speakers**

66 All persons who have signed up to speak with the Clerk according to the established deadlines,
67 and have been approved to speak, are permitted to speak during the Board meeting in the regular
68 period designated for Communications and Addresses to the Board, or during the public comment
69 portion of a public hearing.

70
71 Students are generally placed at the beginning of the speaker queue. Other speakers are placed on
72 a list in the order in which they notify the Clerk or at the discretion of the Chair.

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74 While the Board will do its best to accommodate all speakers who sign up, there is no guarantee
75 that all such individuals will be able to speak at any given meeting. If the number of speakers is
76 too large to be reasonably accommodated, the Chair may ask speakers to voluntarily combine their
77 comments or submit them in writing to the School Board. Speakers are limited to one presentation
78 per meeting.

79 80 **Time Limitations**

81 The Board allocates up to one hour for speakers at regular board meetings. The overall time
82 allocation for Public Hearings is determined by the expected number of speakers and may be
83 adjusted to ensure all speakers who sign up have the opportunity to be heard by the Board.

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85 Speakers are typically allocated three minutes each to deliver their remarks. Speakers requiring
86 accommodations including but not limited to, interpreters, speech & language difficulties, etc.
87 where an interpreter is needed, will be allocated additional time necessary to support the
88 accommodations. The Chair may adjust individual speaker time depending on how many
89 individuals have signed up to speak at a particular meeting.

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91 The Chair, with the assistance of the Clerk, monitors and enforces the time limitation and in doing
92 so will promptly cut off speakers who have not concluded their remarks in the time allotted. A

93 speaker who does not need the full time allotted may not yield unused time to another speaker.

94

95 **Addressing the School Board**

96 Recognition is granted to one speaker at a time.

97

98 Speakers addressing the Board in person stand at a centrally located microphone and lectern and
99 precede their remarks with their name and the topic on which they will be speaking. Speakers
100 addressing the Board remotely via video conference use the “hand raise” function and wait to be
101 recognized. Once recognized, speakers will precede their remarks with their name and the topic
102 on which they will be speaking.

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104 Comments should be addressed to the entire Board and not to individual Board Members, the
105 Superintendent, or other members of the audience. Since cumulative comments tend to prevent
106 other topics from being heard in a timely manner, speakers are encouraged to limit their comments
107 when indicating support for or opposition to a previously stated position. The Chair may conclude
108 comments from any speaker if the Chair determines the comments are cumulative or are
109 concerning inappropriate topics.

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111 **Decorum**

112 Speakers, whether in person or via videoconference, are considered visitors and must follow ACPS
113 policy including Policy KK – School Visitors. As visitors, speakers are extended the courtesy of
114 the School Board and, in turn, speakers must respect the privilege extended by the Board by not
115 disrupting the orderly conduct of the Board Meeting and are requested to model the attributes of
116 high-quality civic discourse. Speakers must use commonly accepted rules of courtesy, respect,
117 decorum, dignity, and good taste. The use of obscenity, vulgarity, or patently offensive language
118 will be ruled out of order, as will words or statements which, from their usual construction and
119 common acceptance, incite violence or breach of the peace. Speakers who repeatedly fail to
120 comply with these standards of civic discourse may be required to provide their comments in
121 writing in lieu of the opportunity to present in person or via videoconference.

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123 **Inappropriate Topics**

124 Public comment time at regular Board Meetings and public hearings are intended to allow the
125 community to address the Board regarding topics or subjects which relate to the operation of the
126 school division and are of public concern to the school community. For these reasons, and to ensure
127 the privacy of individuals, during the period reserved for public participation at meetings, the
128 Board does not allow public comments or complaints regarding individual students, individual
129 student disciplinary matters that are the subject of due process proceedings, matters involving
130 pending employee grievance proceedings or administrative hearings, or matters involving pending
131 litigation. After litigation, public comments on the situation may be shared, however student
132 information should still be confidential. These prohibitions are intended to protect student and staff
133 privacy, however parents may reference their own ACPS student but they may not reference any
134 student that is not under their own legal care.

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137 **Contact Information**

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141 Alexandria, Virginia 22314
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147 **Meeting Types**

148 The Board conducts its work through several types of meetings.

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150 Meetings where public comment is taken:

- 151 • **Regular Board Meeting** – Meetings where the Board deliberates and makes decisions on
- 152 the operations of ACPS.
- 153 • **Public Hearings** – Meetings where the Board takes public comment on specific topics.

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155 Meetings open to the public where public comment is not taken:

- 156 • **Work Sessions** – Meetings where the Board deliberates but does not make decisions on
- 157 the operations of ACPS.
- 158 • **Subcommittee Meetings** – Meetings of an appointed subset of Board members for the
- 159 purposes of developing recommendations for Board deliberation.
- 160 • **Retreats** – Meetings where the Board participates in professional learning and
- 161 collaboration activities.

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163 Meetings not open to the public:

- 164 • **Closed Meetings** – Meetings where the Board deliberates and makes decisions on matters
- 165 that are protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act such as personnel actions
- 166 and contract related matters.

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168 Established: September 24, 2009

169 Revised: December 4, 2014

170 Revised: April 6, 2017

171 Revised: March 22, 2018

172 Revised: May 9, 2019

173 Revised: October 21, 2021

174 Amended: May 4, 2023

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176 Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:7.

177 2016 Op. Va. Att’y Gen. 15-020.

178 *Baca v. Moreno Valley Unified Sch. District*, 936 F. Supp. 719 (C.D. Cal. 1996).

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181 (E.D. Va. 2001).

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183	Cross Refs.:	BDDE	Rules of Order
184		BDDH	Public Participation at School Board Meetings
185		KK	School Visitor
186		KL	Public Complaints

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Commented [MS1]: Changed to a public meeting to reflect current practices.

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