

Do I have an opportunity to speak at the board meeting?

State law requires a public comment period at board meetings. Boards are allowed to establish reasonable restrictions on the time, place and manner of public comment. For instance, school boards typically set guidelines on the length of an individual's comment (e.g., a certain amount of time per person), so no one person dominates the meeting. There is no required format for public comment; some boards have one public-comment period in the middle of the meeting, some have two public-comment sessions during a board meeting.

What is proper protocol for public participation?

Comments from citizens generally go through the chair at the board meeting, usually the board president. Boards use the public comment period as an opportunity to listen to citizen concerns, but not to debate issues or enter into a question-and-answer session or a "cross examination" between the public and individual members. Be aware that not all issues brought before a board meeting will be resolved that evening; boards may respond to public comment by seeking additional information or by delegating the authority to investigate the issue to the superintendent or his/her designee. While public education can be an emotional issue, and understandably so, the board will strive to maintain a certain level of decorum at the meeting. Many meetings are recorded or televised, and students often attend or participate in the meetings. As such, citizens are expected to maintain tone of courtesy and civility.