



School Board Guidelines for Public Comment During School Board Meetings and Hearings

The Arlington School Board welcomes public comment during most regular meetings and at public hearings. Generally, School Board members do not respond to public comment during a meeting or hearing, however there are times when follow-up is required, due to the nature of the comments. Where follow-up is needed, the Superintendent will work with School Board Clerk to respond accordingly after the Board meeting.

Below are the School Board's speaker guidelines. Please note, the Board may adjust or waive the speaker guidelines as needed in response to unusual circumstances.

Time – Each speaker may speak up to two minutes. Our clerk will start the timer when the speaker begins and speakers should conclude their remarks when the buzzer sounds. The Board generally allows up to 30 minutes for Citizen Comment on Non-Agenda Items at the beginning of meetings. If a large number of speakers are expected on a particular topic, the Board may limit the total time for comment and/or may reduce the time allotted for each speaker and will announce this change in advance. Speakers are encouraged to prepare their remarks to fit within the 2-minute limit.

Topics – Speakers may address an item on a Board Meeting agenda when that item is heard, or may address an item not on the agenda during Citizen Comment on Non-Agenda Items. All comments should address a matter related to Arlington Public Schools. The School Board requests that comments related to an individual student-related matter be directed to the appropriate staff, and not shared at a public meeting where the disclosure could violate applicable confidentiality requirements.

Decorum – Speakers will present their comments from the podium. The School Board expects that each speaker will be courteous, modeling for our students how one can respectfully disagree with others' views. Speakers will address their comments to the entire School Board and not to one individual Board member, the Superintendent, a staff member, or the audience.

Accommodations - To ensure all citizens have an opportunity to speak, the Board has established the following guidelines:

- Any person with a disability who needs accommodation to provide public comment is requested to contact the School Board office at 703-228-6015 at least 3 business days in advance of a meeting to request assistance.
- Any person who would like the Board to provide an interpreter to assist them in providing public comment is requested to contact the School Board office at 703-228-6015 at least five business days in advance of a meeting to request assistance. The Board will make every effort to provide interpretation.
- If a speaker addresses the Board in a language other than English and has an interpreter, speaker will have 2 minutes to speak and the interpreter will have up to 2 additional minutes to translate the comments for the Board.



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Signing up to Speak:

Electronic Board Public School Board Meetings: When meetings are held virtually, an outside contractor will be engaged to manage phone-in public comment. To minimize the costs of this service, the following speaker guidelines will apply:

- A maximum of one hour will be reserved for speaker comment at each meeting.
- Speakers must sign up electronically. The Speaker forms may be submitted after the meeting agenda has been posted publicly and up until 4 PM **two** business days prior to the Board meeting.
- Speakers on all topics will be taken at the beginning of the meeting, rather than at the time the topic they wish to address is presented.
- Speakers will be announced in the order their calls are received, however, if students sign up to speak, they will be called first.
- Speakers may only speak once at each Board meeting.
- All other guidelines outlined in this document apply.

In Person Public School Board Meetings: When conditions allow the Board to hold public meetings that include in person attendance, the following speaker guidelines will apply:

- Electronic speaker forms may be submitted after the meeting agenda has been posted publicly, and up until 4:00 p.m. the last business day before the meeting. Speaker forms can be found at <https://www.apsva.us/school-board-meetings/sign-up-to-speak/>
- Speakers may also sign up in person at School Board meetings or Public Hearings by submitting a speaker slip to the Clerk *before* the agenda item is called.
- Speakers are called in the order in which they sign up, however, if students sign up to speak, they will be called first.
- Speakers may not speak more than once on a specific topic.
- Speakers who wish to comment on more than one topic must submit a separate request for each item.

Written Comments – The School Board encourages speakers to provide written comments in addition to their spoken comments. If a speaker would like to present their written comments to the School Board, **one** copy may be provided to the School Board clerk and will be shared with all Board members. Written comments provided in a language other than English will be translated by APS staff and provided to the Board members.

School Board members are also available to meet with members of the public during “Open Office Hours,” which are held weekly when school is in session, or by appointment. The schedule for Open Office Hours can be found on the APS Website at <https://www.apsva.us/contact-the-school-board/open-office-hours/> In addition, the Board regularly reviews all letters and emails received.