



School Board Guidelines for Public Comment During School Board Meetings and Public 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. If follow-up is required due to the nature of the comments, the Superintendent will work with School Board Clerk to respond accordingly after the Board meeting.

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

Time – The Board generally allows one hour at the beginning of each meeting for Public Comment on all agenda topics. If circumstances warrant, the Board may adjust the time allocated for public comment or make other adjustments to the speaker process to better manage speakers.

Each speaker may speak up to two minutes. The clerk will start the timer when the speaker begins and speakers should conclude their remarks when the buzzer sounds.

Topics – Speakers may address the Board on an agenda item or a topic not on the agenda; however, all comments should address a matter related to Arlington Public Schools. The School Board requests that comments on 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 appreciates hearing from all points of view. The School Board expects that each speaker will be courteous, modeling for our students how one can respectfully disagree with others' views. Speakers shall maintain civility, decorum, and respect at all times. The Chair will warn a speaker of breaches to the School Board Guidelines for Public Comment prior to terminating speaking privileges or taking other action to preserve the orderly conduct of the meeting. 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. Speakers will be treated with respect and be allowed to comment without interruption. Inappropriately loud conversations or outbursts from those in attendance will not be tolerated and security staff will be asked to restore order.

Accommodations – To ensure the Board receives comments from all speakers regardless of language or other differences, the Board has established the following guidelines:

- Any person with a disability who needs accommodations to provide public comment must 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 must contact the School Board office at 703-228-6015 at least 5 business days in advance of a meeting. The Board will make every effort to provide interpretation. If an interpreter is not available, comments will be translated after the Board meeting and the Board will be provided with a translated transcript.



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Accommodations (Continued) –

- If a speaker addresses the Board in a language other than English and has an interpreter, the speaker will have 2 minutes to speak and the interpreter will have up to 2 additional minutes to translate the comments for the Board.

Speaking at a Board Meeting – Speakers may sign up using the online speaker form which is posted 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 at the beginning of the meeting. *Detailed information about the speaker process is posted on the School Board ‘Sign Up to Speak’ webpage.*

Written Comments – The School Board encourages speakers to provide written comments in addition to their spoken comments. Please email public comments to School.Board@apsva.us. If you wish to submit a paper copy of comments to the Board, one copy may be given to the School Board clerk to be shared with all Board members. Written comments provided in a language other than English will be translated by APS staff and the translation will be provided to the Board members.

School Board members are available to meet with members of the public during “Open Office Hours,” 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.