

THE SCHOOLS OF MCKEEL ACADEMY

POLICY MANUAL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Adopted May 19, 2025

Last Revised



The Schools of McKeel Academy Board of Trustees recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on matters before the Board and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest. All rules pertaining to public comment shall be reasonable and shall be applied consistently without favoring any viewpoint.

Members of the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before the Board. At all times the Board shall take steps necessary to maintain orderly conduct, proper decorum and run productive and efficient Board meetings.

For purposes of the policy, a proposition is an item before the Board for a vote, and includes, but is not necessarily limited to, all items on the agenda noted as unfinished business, consent, and nonconsent. A proposition may also include a vote on a motion to rescind or to amend action previously taken. The Board is not required to give members of the public a reasonable opportunity to be heard on the following matters:

- A. An official act that must be taken to deal with an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare, or safety, if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Board to act;
- B. An official act involving no more than a ministerial act, including, but not limited to, approval of minutes and ceremonial proclamations;
- C. A meeting that is exempt from Florida's Sunshine Law;
- D. A meeting during which the Board is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity.

The opportunity to be heard need not to occur at the same meeting at which the Board takes official action on the proposition if the opportunity occurs at a meeting that is during the decision-making process and is within reasonable proximity in time before the meeting at which the Board takes the official action.

The opportunity to be heard is subject to policies adopted by the Board as follows:

A. Guidelines regarding the amount of time an individual has to address the Board:

1. Each statement made by a member of the public shall be limited to three (3) minutes duration. Persons will be recognized in the order in which requests were received.
2. The time period may be extended by a vote of the Board. If there are a large number of public speakers, the time period granted to each person to speak may be reduced by a vote of the Board. No speaker may transfer their time to any other person.

B. Procedures for allowing representatives of groups or factions on a proposition to address the Board:

Rather than all members of groups or factions for or against a proposition addressing the Board at meetings in which a large number of individuals wish to be heard, the Board encourages representatives of such groups or factions to address the proposition in their representative capacity.

C. Procedures or forms for an individual to use to inform the Board of a desire to be heard:

Attendees must register their intention to participate in the public portion of the meeting through The Schools of McKeel Academy Director's office or upon their arrival at the meeting by completing a speaker's form provided by the Board secretary indicating his/her support, opposition, or neutrality on a proposition; and indicating his/her designation of a representative to speak for him/her or his/her group on a proposition if he/she so chooses.

D. Designated period of time for public comment:

Each Board agenda shall indicate a dedicated period of time for public comment. The period for public comment pertaining to agenda items shall be prior to any official action by the Board on those items. At the discretion of the Board, the Board may permit public comment on non-agenda items at the end of the Board meeting.

The presiding officer of each Board meeting at which public participation is permitted shall administer the rules of the Board for its conduct.

The presiding officer shall be guided by the following rules:

- A. Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and will be requested to preface their comments by an announcement of their name and group affiliation.
- B. All statements shall be directed to the Board. The Board and/or members of the school staff are not obligated to respond to public comments.
- C. Recordings are permitted under the following conditions:
 - 1. No obstructions are created between the Board and the audience.
 - 2. No interviews are conducted in the meeting room while the Board is in session.
 - 3. No commentary, adjustment of equipment, or positioning of operators is made that would disrupt either the Board or members of the audience while the Board is in session.
- D. The presiding officer may:
 - 1. interrupt, warn, or terminate a participant's statement when the speaker engages in obscene acts or speech, threats, disorderly conduct, or exceeds the amount of time permitted under this policy;
 - 2. order that disruptive individuals be removed from the meeting;
 - 3. request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly or disruptive person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting; or
 - 4. call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action.
- E. Speakers during public comment may use visual aids only with prior review and approval by the Board secretary or his/her designee.
- F. Definitions
 - 1. Disorderly conduct: Acts intended to corrupt public morals, outrage, public decency, or disrupt the meeting.
 - 2. Obscene: Material appealing to prurient interest, patently offensive, and lacking serious value.
 - 3. Threats: Communication of intent to inflict injury or violence or to instill a fear of violence; an indication or warning of probable trouble.
 - 4. Disruptive: To cause disorder or turmoil, to destroy the normal continuance or unity of or to interrupt or interfere.

Sensory or mobility-impaired persons seeking assistance for participation in any Board meeting shall contact the Director of Schools office prior to the meeting.