

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TEAM MEETINGS PUBLIC COMMENTS PROCEDURES**

### **A. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TEAM EXPECTATION:**

Citizens of the community have the expressed right and are encouraged to attend meetings of the School Governance Team to listen to and observe the deliberations of its members. The following regulations are adopted to preserve the orderly pursuit of business of the School Governance Team and to provide proper opportunities for legitimate and objective discussion and analysis of the issues presented. School Governance Team meetings are public meetings and not meetings of the public; however, any citizen may request the opportunity to communicate with the School Governance Team and be recognized to speak regarding appropriate issues.

The School Governance Team will hear public commentary from any interested resident of Barrow County; Barrow County School System (BCSS) student or parent/guardian of a BCSS student; non-resident owner of property within the geographic boundaries of the BCSS; and/or employee of the BCSS pursuant to these outlined guidelines. Students under the age of 18 must be accompanied by the student's parent/guardian.

### **B. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TEAM PRACTICE:**

**1. Public Comment Session:** The School Governance Team provides an opportunity for public comment as needed at each School Governance Team meeting to allow individuals, as identified in Section A of this Policy, an opportunity to address the School Governance Team.

**2. Procedures for Speaking During the Public Comment Session:** Persons desiring to communicate with the School Governance Team shall submit a written request to the Principal stating their name, home address, the topic about which they wish to speak and the group they represent, if applicable, no later than 12 o'clock noon on the Friday prior to the scheduled School Governance Team meeting.

The School Governance Team vests the school principal or its chairperson or other presiding officer authority to determine whether it is in the interest of the School Governance Team to allow any individual or group to make an oral presentation before the School Governance Team. Persons who are granted the opportunity to speak will be recognized by the chairperson at the appropriate time during the meeting. Speakers will be limited to three (3) minutes. If there are numerous requests to address the School Governance Team, the chairperson may select representatives to speak on each side of the issue. The School Governance Team also vests in the school principal or its chairperson or other presiding officer authority to terminate the remarks of any individual who does not adhere to the guidelines established by the School Governance Team.

Personal complaints of school employees should follow the Complaints and Grievances procedures established by the Barrow County School System Board of Education. Individuals and/or groups who addressed the School Governance Team previously may be denied the opportunity to address the School Governance Team again on the same topic.

In accordance with its policy confirming the right and desirability of the public's expressing its point of view to the School Governance Team, delegations or individuals are welcome at all meetings, subject to the following regulations:

a. Before addressing the School Governance Team, individuals are urged to seek a solution to any specific concerns through the proper staff and administrative channels.

b. Individuals approved to appear before the School Governance Team must first complete a "Request to Appear" form and be present 15 minutes before the scheduled meeting. Speaker information must contain:

(1) Name;

(2) Telephone number or E-Mail address;

(3) Discussion topic and which, if any, School Governance Team agenda item is related to their topic;

(4) Whether they are a resident of Barrow County; Barrow County School System (BCSS) student or parent/guardian of a BCSS student; non-resident owner of property within the geographic boundaries of the BCSS; and/or employee of the BCSS;

(5) Whether or not they have materials to submit to the School Governance Team.

c. Speakers must present any materials brought for the School Governance Team, i.e., letters, photos, petitions, written comments or other documentation, etc., to the School Governance Team Chair when signing-in. Speakers are asked to provide a copy of these materials for each member of the School Governance Team.

d. Speakers will have an allotted amount of time, up to three (3) minutes to speak before the School Governance Team, with the time for speaker being determined by the Chair, depending on the number of speakers with a maximum of 15 speakers.

e. At the School Governance Team's discretion, the School Governance Team may make additional time, up to 15 minutes, available for public comment.

f. Speakers will be scheduled on a first come, first served basis. However, the Chair may give priority to those discussing School Governance Team agenda items being considered during the School Governance Team meeting.

g. Individuals will not be denied the opportunity to address the School Governance Team on the basis of their viewpoint. The School Governance Team requests that speakers maintain appropriate decorum and that comments remain focused and respectful. Speakers may comment on issues scheduled for consideration at the School Governance Team meeting or other concerns pertinent to the operation of a school or the District. In addition to the guidelines in this Policy, public commentary will not be permitted if:

- (1) The topic is excluded by the Open Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-1 et seq.); (This includes, but may not be limited to, certain land, legal or personnel items);
- (2) The speaker makes obscene, profane, vulgar, defamatory, slanderous, or threatening gestures/remarks during his/her public commentary;
- (3) The speaker discusses a student by name, or shares other information that could lead to the personal identification of a student (See, for example, Family and Educational Rights Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g);
- (4) The speaker makes untrue, slanderous or defamatory comments or other unsubstantiated claims about an identified or identifiable employee (While general comments are appropriate for the public comment session, concerns about specific individuals should be addressed privately with the appropriate school administrator.); or
- (5) The speaker disrupts or attempts to disrupt the School Governance Team meeting (See, for example, O.C.G.A. § 16-11-34).

h. Speakers may not gain an additional opportunity to speak by reserving or dividing their allotted time for another speaking occasion, and may not pass their allotted time to other speakers.

i. Speakers must:

- (1) State their name to the School Governance Team prior to beginning public commentary;
- (2) End their remarks when their allotted time expires;
- (3) Direct public commentary to the School Governance Team as a body and not to an individual School Governance Team Member.

j. Speakers should be aware that their public commentary may be recorded by the School Governance Team or other non-District media sources.

k. Any person who willfully violates these guidelines may forfeit the remainder of their speaking time and the School Governance Team may, prohibit the speaker from appearing before the School Governance Team.

l. School Governance Team Members and or the Principal may ask questions for clarification.

m. If requested during his/her remarks, a speaker will receive a written response from the appropriate School Governance Team Member within thirty (30) calendar days.