



PARENT TOOLKIT

Advocating for Quality Curriculum

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

What are Local School Boards?

- School board members wield a great deal of power as elected officials. Local school district boards do not report to the state board of education. They only are accountable to the voters in their local jurisdiction—that means YOU!
- Local school boards establish and maintain a basic organizational structure for the local school system.
- There are roughly 14,000 school boards across the country and about 100,000 school board members and 95 percent of the school board members are elected to their positions ([What Every Parent Should Know about Their School Board | Parenting, n.d.](#)). They represent the largest group of elected officials in the country.
- School board members set a district's priorities for spending, resolve legal and disciplinary issues, acquire land, and even initiate eminent domain proceedings. They approve curricula meet federal and state mandates for public schools, appoint superintendents, adopt budgets, and help to maintain educational excellence ([Alexander, S. Kern and Alexander, David, 2001](#)).

What Happens at a School Board Meeting?

- Every board meeting is different, but listed below are the common components occurring in most meetings. Please review your school board's policies to ensure the exact procedures of your school board meeting.
- A local school board's parliamentary procedure is a matter of local policy. Most boards follow [Roberts Rules of Order](#), which describes how meetings are run, how motions and votes are taken, and other procedures. Usually, the superintendent or school board president gives a general update and announcements before any new business.
- The most effective way to get an item that requires board action onto the agenda is to contact the board president or superintendent before the meeting. Items can be added



to the agenda at the beginning of a meeting, but it is more difficult because there would need to be a motion made by a board member to amend the agenda to add an item and must be affirmed by a vote of the board members. To help board members be prepared for meetings, it is better to have a new agenda item added before the actual meeting.

- Board members follow a pre-approved agenda. ***There are two opportunities for public input at board meetings:***
 - During the time for public comment on agenda items at the beginning of the meeting.
 - During the time for public comment at the end of the meeting.
- Board members listen to public input and take it into account during discussion and deliberation. However, Board members have no direct interaction with the public during a regular school board meeting.
- The board president acknowledges and thanks members of the public for their input as appropriate. Once Board members make their comments, they will move to discussion on an agenda item. At this point, the audience (you) and staff no longer participate.

On the following page is a screenshot of a board meeting agenda from Virginia Beach City Public Schools. Thoroughly reading an agenda and supplemental materials is a great way to help identify policies that don't align with your values and can give you an avenue to advocate for the policies you would like to see. Good school board meeting agendas are detailed and include links to documents being discussed and note when updates are made to the agenda. By clicking on the photo at the top of the following page, you can see the entire detailed agenda. This includes discussions on religious exemptions, non-discrimination policies, the treatment of transgender students, employment actions, student suspension policies, and much more. This is an example of an informative school board agenda meeting materials.





VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHARTING THE COURSE

School Board Regular Meeting Proposed Agenda (continued)
Tuesday, August 24, 2021

- 7. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 8. Superintendent's Report**
- 9. Approval of Meeting Minutes:**
 - A. August 10, 2021 Regular School Board Meeting **Added 08/23/2021**
- 10. Hearing of Citizens and Delegations on Formal Agenda Items**

The School Board will hear public comment on Formal Agenda items at the August 24, 2021 School Board Meeting. Citizens may sign up to speak by completing the [online form here](#) or contacting the School Board Clerk at 263-1016 and shall be allocated 4 minutes each. Sign up for public speakers will close at noon on August 24, 2021. Speakers will be provided with further information concerning how they will be called to speak. In person speakers should be in the parking lot of the School Administration Building, 2512 George Mason Drive, Building 6, Municipal Center, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456 by 5:45 p.m. August 24, 2021. Speakers signed up to address the School Board through Zoom or by telephone should be signed into the School Board Meeting by 5:45 p.m. All public comments shall meet the [School Board Bylaw 1-48](#) requirements for Decorum and Order.
- 11. Consent Agenda**

All items under the Consent Agenda are enacted on by one motion. During item 7 – Adoption of the Agenda – School Board members may request any item on the Consent Agenda be moved to the Action portion of the regular agenda.

 - A. Religious Exemptions
- 12. Action**
 - A. Personnel Report / Administrative Appointment(s)
 - B. Unsolicited PPEA
 - C. Policy Review Committee Recommendations
 1. Policy 5-7 / Non-Discrimination/Non-Harassment of Students **Updated 08/23/2021**
- 13. Information**
 - A. Program Evaluation Schedule 2021-2022
 - B. Policy Review Committee Recommendations

How Can Parents Get Involved?

- Parents should search when and where the school board meetings take place. Usually they take place at least once a month. Information on school board meetings is on the school district website.
- **School board meetings are public meetings and are required to give public notice at least 5 days before the meeting date and time.** Attending local school board meetings helps parents stay vigilant and keeps them aware of what is being taught in the community.
- Parents can keep track of board activities by **reading the meeting minutes (notes of what happened)**, which must be posted on the school district website.
- Board meeting minutes will also include budget documents to observe spending on all activities, trainings, and any personnel changes.



- Reviewing the school board’s mission and vision statements posted on their websites will help you become familiar with their priorities as a board and their policies and procedures.
- Many school boards have committees and workgroups that give the school board advice or make recommendations about issues. For example, school boards are typically required by law to involve parents, teachers, students, and community members in developing and reviewing school policies. School board directors are often eager to hear from parents who volunteer their time. **Contact your school board members and offer to help with any workgroup.**
- Parents can set up a parent group on social media for families in the community so that parents can share information and PTA activities for more involvement opportunities.
- Parents can contact school board members directly. Usually, contact information for individual board members can be found on the school district’s website under “board members.” If it is not posted online, contact the number on the website and request this information.
- Parents have the right to ask school board members their position on various issues.

Sample Questions about Curriculum Adoption:

1. Has this district adopted a curriculum focused on “antiracism,” “dismantling White Supremacy or privilege,” “equity,” “social or racial justice,” or any content that suggests biological factors play a major role in societal opportunity?
 - a. If so, these are elements of CRT. How do you believe these to be elements of a high-quality curriculum? How do you believe these teach students to prioritize hard work, merit, and equal treatment of peers independent of biology?
2. Where can we find the approved academic standards for each grade level?
3. What is included in the school district’s diversity and inclusion plan?
4. How much money and time are you spending on race, gender, equity, diversity, and social justice programs?
5. What accountability measures do you have in place to ensure the supplemental materials used in classrooms are aligned with a high-quality curriculum?
 - a. What do you define as a high-quality curriculum?

