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## **Speak Up and Be Heard!**

Did you know that anyone who lives within a school district's borders may address the elected school board members and voice their concerns?

School boards are required to hold meetings that are open to the public. While some business may be discussed in a private session, proposals before the Board and all education issues are open for comment whether or not people have children attending the public schools.

There will be a time limit for each speaker, usually two minutes but sometimes more. These comments are entered into the public record.

### **Why It Matters**

Advocacy is the key to holding on to the progress that's been made in securing support for arts funding in block grants, and to building a foundation of support for the future. Despite what happens in Sacramento, decisions about how these funds will be spent in each district is a local decision. This means that your local school board is your target for advocacy.

### **Tips for Making a Great Presentation**

The best presentations showcase the unique perspective, passion and commitment of the speaker. Everyone is different and so every presentation will be, too. What's most important is to try to clearly express your concerns in simple, emotional language and to offer personal connections to the cause. If you teach in the district, if your children attend school there, if you are a businessperson who relies on creative problem-solving employees, or if you are a graduate of the schools, say so!

Here are a few quick tips to help you prepare your statement:

- Find out the time limit allowed and stick to it. Practice aloud.
- Include your name and address in your introduction, if required.

- Provide a printed version of your remarks for the public record.
- Begin by politely acknowledging the Board and other VIPs if they are there. Thank them for the opportunity to address them. If they have been supporters in the past, let them know you appreciate their leadership. If you can bring support and resources then offer them. Show that you want to be about the solution and that you are tough but fair.
- Tap into your passion. Speakers who show their commitment to the cause move hearts and minds more than data alone ever will.
- Personalize your statement. Storytelling is powerful. Tell a personal story to illustrate your case and remember that this is ultimately about people and the quality of our children's education, not line items in budgets.

### **Here's an Example**

Our [online toolkit](#) includes a video of a sample presentation. Feel free to use any or all of the language for your own purposes. We've also provided lots of different resources to help you strengthen your comments. Remember, the most important thing is to tell your story and let your passion shine through!

### **Final Words**

In any advocacy effort, you will increase your success if multiple voices from different perspectives are making the same case. Invite your friends and neighbors to join you in this effort. Make sure that there are different advocates stepping up to make the case at every opportunity possible.

Many people will be speaking out for other programs or issues at these meetings. It's up to you to keep up the fight for sustained arts funding in our public school budgets.

**Good luck, and thank you for being an arts education advocate!**