

# Tips for Advocating to Your Local School Board

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Local school boards are often the most influential decision-making bodies affecting your child's education. They decide everything from what food is served at school lunch to curriculum and graduation requirements to the location of the new elementary school. Although every school district and state is different, if you want to get a policy changed, your best bet is to begin with the local school board. Use the following tips when working to influence the school board.

## **Remember That School Board Members Are Volunteers**

Most school board members are elected, but they are not paid for their services to the community. They have families and jobs, and choose to volunteer their time serving on the school board because they care about education. In all your interactions with board members, be sure to be respectful and polite even when you disagree with a decision they have made.

## **Know Your Facts**

Think of yourself as a resource to board members—you want to give them the knowledge they need to know to make the right decisions. If you are trying to get the school board to change the time your child's high school begins, prepare a fact sheet laying out your arguments using relevant research and statistics, and be sure to address the arguments against your position. Board members will appreciate that you have taken the time to fully think out your request and have provided them with additional information. Not knowing your facts or being misinformed about an issue may greatly hurt your argument.

## **Build Support**

Nothing will make a stronger impact on a school board than a room full of people supporting your cause. To build support, start by talking to fellow PTA members about your issue, or hold an organizing meeting with a small group of people who care deeply about your issue. Determine who will speak to board members and who will testify at the school board meetings, keeping in mind that only a few people should testify; the rest of the supporters are there to be a visible reinforcement.

## **Be Persistent**

The old saying, “The squeaky wheel gets the grease,” is very true when it comes to school boards. If your school board does not seem to be addressing your issue, continue to press the board in a variety of ways. Start by gathering a group of people to show up at every school board meeting until the board takes up your issue. If this tactic does not seem to work, inform the public about the situation, either with a letter-to-the-editor campaign or by contacting board members individually. When taking a more aggressive approach, remember that it is still very important to keep a respectful and positive tone; never attack or call out an individual board member.