

## **Tips for Effective Testimony** **Before the Board of Education**

- Your written testimony may be any length. Prepare an oral summary of the testimony for delivery within the 5 minutes time limit. The oral summary should emphasize key points or highlight what you want. Do not simply read your testimony. Reading your testimony encourages the Board to skip ahead in your written document and you lose their focus. You want the Board to be watching you.
- If you are asking for a change in the Recommendation, be clear and be specific. What do you want the Board to do?
- Check your facts and then double check your facts. If you are complaining about HVAC issues or roof leaks, for example, make sure the school has submitted a work order for the item. If portables are unsafe, document the conditions. If you are seeking construction to support a program, get enrollment numbers or comparisons to similar programs at other schools.
- Especially if you have an addition or modernization project, tie the need for the project to student achievement and student learning. Our number one priority is to provide each student with a safe, secure and modern facility that is conducive to learning. Overcrowded classrooms and inadequate facilities hinder student achievement.
- The Board will sometimes ask Facilities Management to respond to specific questions. Questions from the Board are a good thing. If you are asking for a change in the Recommendation, think carefully about what would be a “good” question to have the Board ask. Draft your testimony in a way that suggests that question. If the Board does ask a question, follow up on the answer after the hearing. Keep the CIP Chair informed of any developments.
- Practice your oral presentation before you give it. Make sure you can deliver it in 5 minutes (or less). Practice the appropriate pacing and emphasis. As a general rule, it takes most people a minute and a half to read a single page of double spaced text.
- Especially if you want a change in the Recommendation, get your community organized. A recognizable show of support in the audience goes a long way. Also, don't be afraid to use a prop or humor to emphasize your point.

### **General Reminders**

- Arrive early. Presentations may run shorter than the allotted time, and the BOE will skip ahead if someone is not present. Therefore, arrive at least a half hour prior to your scheduled time.
- Your supporters should arrive early, too. They should be visible (with T-shirts, small signs, etc) but respectful. A packed room for your testimony demonstrates the importance of the issues in your community. Encourage people to stand for your testimony; it is an effective way to show support.