

How to Get Your Voice Heard on the School Board

A Practical Guide by Matt Wansley

1. Email Board members at SchoolBoardMembers@fcps.edu. Most Board members read their email frequently and try to respond to constituents who write to them. State your name, school, grade, and district (if you know it); use concrete examples; and be concise. Knowing who your representative is can help your case substantially. Seniors, emphasize that you will be voting in the fall for the next School Board and that you will remember the vote on this issue.

2. Come to the Regular Meeting of the School Board at Luther Jackson Middle School on March 13 at 7:30 PM. The School Board has to look at the audience all meeting, and it is hard to disagree with someone who is staring straight at you. Bring your friends along. Our case will be more powerful if more students attend the meeting. Making posters and banners can actually be quite effective if the message on them is written in large letters and/or has powerful emotional content.

3. Get your Student Government to pass a resolution opposing the 30-minute extension. It is difficult for a Board member to vote against the clearly articulated opinion of students at a high school in his/her district. Resolutions should state the specific reasons why the 30-minute extension would cause problems for your school and urge the School Board to support the interests of the students.

4. Consider speaking at the School Board meeting. Ten speakers are given the opportunity to address the Board for three minutes each. If this interests you, you can call the School Board Office at 703-246-3646 at 9AM on Monday morning to obtain a slot. Try to get a pass to get out of class for a few minutes to call. The slots are often full by 9:15. Speakers that are clear, concise, and sometimes dramatic have the greatest impact.

If you have any questions or ideas, please do not hesitate to email me at mwansley@hotmail.com.