

Good evening, Chair/Madam Chair and Members of the Board,

Introduction: Who you are and your role in the community. This is important to board members as it sets the stage for why you are at the board meeting. Oftentimes they will also ask for your address or town.

Example:

My name is _____ and I am a (community member, business owner, parent of ___ children in the district).

The Why

Why are you at the meeting? State your concerns with a short back story but be prepared to phrase it in a way that proposes a partnership or a positive spin. Remember that there are laws regarding what can be mentioned at a board meeting. Mentioning teachers by name if you are complaining violates data privacy issues. You are, however, able to compliment someone.

Example:

Tonight, I want to discuss the reading difficulties faced by students across our state and district with you. As a parent of a (or put the number of dyslexic students you have) struggling reader(s) with dyslexia I am aware of the daily struggle these students and families face. I am not here to talk about just my child(ren) or dyslexic children. I am here to address concerns about the 41% of students not reading at grade level in Minnesota as well as the approximately 10-20% of students in every school that are dyslexic. As a parent, I want to be able to work with the district to make sure our students are successful.

The Solution

What is the solution? This part of your message needs to give direction and have a positive spin but be honest about where you are and where you should be. This is not a blame situation; this is about how the district moves forward.

Example:

As many of you know, the READ Act was passed in 2023 and made professional development requirements for all schools. As a parent, I want to ensure that the board understands the importance of the READ Act, takes that training seriously, and then implements what is taught in our classrooms. The crisis we have is not a teacher problem. It is not a student problem. It is a problem created by not giving teachers the tools to teach every student in their classroom when they were learning how to teach reading to our young learners. We recognize that teachers care and want what is best for our students. We also know this training is extensive and requires a lot of our teachers. I ask that you as a board member, superintendent, and any teachers and administrators present keep yourself focused on the goal of the READ Act and what the possibilities are. The potential of our students is endless. Our teachers will be trained to tap into that potential in ways that were never possible with the training they received in school.

How the District Moves Forward/Conclusion

This is where your big “ask” exists. You are telling the district how you expect them to move forward and asking for action. Depending on where your district is at, this could be a large or small ask. It is not a time to throw everything at the wall and see what sticks. It is a time to stand firm in what needs to be done and make it obvious to everyone in the room that there is one solution that makes sense, and that solution is the one you are presenting.

Example:

As board members you may be asking what you can do to help? My "ask" is that you use your governance role to ensure that your Superintendent takes the Read Act seriously. You direct your Superintendent to oversee all buildings and ensure that the READ Act training is implemented in a timing manner and ensures that teachers use what they learn with fidelity. Teachers cannot choose what parts of the science of reading they believe in and then return to the old ways of balanced literacy. Our students will not learn efficiently with balanced literacy and will continue to do what we have seen year after year. Stalled progress, students failing, and frustrated staff and families. When we know how to do things in a better way, we are obligated to do so. The laws are in place requiring us to act. Let us not waste this opportunity. We have staff that are fully capable of learning this material and implementing it effectively. All they need is your continued support, direction, and guidance; we will see results in our struggling students.

Thank you.

Please note: The school board's role is not management. They cannot direct a teacher or staff member to do anything. They have one employee that they oversee, and that employee is the superintendent. The board provides governance. The board has an obligation to ensure that money is spent appropriately and that schools are run effectively. They do this through their one employee. So, your "ask" should be to direct the Superintendent to act in a specific way. Anything else is beyond their role.