

Huntington Rapid Response Network Presents:
How to Speak Up at a School Board Meeting
Joan Skelly - Facilitator
Nov. 28, 2018
7:00 - 8:30 PM
South Huntington Public Library

How to Prepare

- Prepare your comments/questions in advance
- Write your essential points or questions on an index card.
- Print large enough for you to see easily
- Be sure you are within 3 minutes
- Do a read through in front of the mirror
- If you have the time, it may be a good experience to attend a BOE meeting as an observer before you choose to speak. Use the NYSSBA "Observation Sheet" to learn about the functioning of the Board.

Speaking Up

Simon Sinek, an ethnographer by training, is an adjunct of the RAND Corporation. He writes and comments regularly for major publications and teaches graduate-level strategic communications at Columbia University. He is one of the most watched TED Talks speakers.

So.....Simon says:

- Walk calmly up to the microphone or podium and take a deep breath, check your notes/card, wait a few seconds and begin. "I know it sounds long and tedious and it feels excruciatingly awkward when you do it," Sinek says, "but it shows the audience you're totally confident and in charge of the situation."
- Consciously slow your speech. When you get nervous, your words tend to speed up.
- Look directly at one person seated at the table. When you finish a sentence or a point, move on to another person and keep connecting with individual people until you're done speaking. Choose to make eye contact with a person who seems most positive.

"Focus only on the people who are visibly engaged."

Sinek always closes out his presentations with these two simple yet powerful words:

"Thank you."

Following Up

It is good practice to write your comments or questions in the form of a letter addressed to the BOE President and hand it to the Board Clerk after you speak. You can refer to the letter should you need to follow up at some time in the future. This is especially true if you have requested information.