

FACILITATING PRESENTATIONS

THERE IS PROBABLY no more inspiring element in this entire project than the organization presentations to the Board. There's nothing quite like seeing an adult with a title like Chairperson or Director of Development make a respectful and intelligent presentation requesting the financial support and investment of a roomful of thirteen-year-olds. It turns the traditional child-adult relationship on its head in a profound and wonderful way. Instead of adults telling children what to do and children using petty exercises of power to bewilder adults, the normal power relationship is reversed. The result is a mechanism for positive change instead of a tool of rebellion for the sake of rebellion. The impact of this reversal is remarkable, both for the students and for the adults who stand before them.

The keys to a successful presentation day are good planning and good organization. Make sure students bring their packets (even consider having them leave them at school during the class session before) so they'll be able to take notes directly on each proposal. Fifteen minute presentations, including Q&A, seem to be a good baseline. If you are scheduling several presentations on the same day be sure to schedule time for a break in the middle so students will stay fresh through the whole session.

Make sure that the presenters know where to go and at what time they will present, and ask them to come fifteen minutes early. It's probably not a good idea to have them sit in on each other's presentations — the

temptation to compare/contrast with a previous presenter can be extreme. Also make sure that you have ready any A/V equipment (overhead projector and screen, TV/VCR, etc.), that they've requested.

MAKING THE DECISIONS

THE DECISION-MAKING mechanism you implement will depend greatly on the number of proposals you receive and the number and amount of the grants you are able to fund. First of all, if there are more than ten proposals on the table, it's going to be helpful to do a first-cut vote to narrow the options down to ten at the most. Discussing and voting on more than ten proposals is unwieldy at best. The class should obviously be given an opportunity to consider all of the proposals before any voting takes place, but this initial discussion and vote should happen fairly quickly so more time can be given to in-depth deliberation on the most serious proposals. Reviewing the grant guidelines before this process begins will help students use concrete criteria in these deliberations.

After the list is narrowed down to a more manageable number, significant time should be dedicated to the discussion and evaluation of proposals. You may choose to consider each in turn and allow Board members to advocate or critique proposals one at a time, or you may simply open the floor for general discussion.

Before proceeding to a vote, it's important that you clarify what decision-