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Communication Tips for School Board Members

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1

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Agenda

- Why is it important to communicate?
- Thinking Strategically
- The Interview
- How can I communicate as a board member?
- Helpful Hints and Tips
- Closing/Q&A

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2


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Why are Communications Methods Important?

- Educate your stakeholders (community, parents, staff, students)
- Allows you to tell your own story
- Far-reaching

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3


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Thinking Strategically...

- What is your board policy/protocol for dealing with the media?
- Which media outlets cover the division?
- How does the school division inform the media and stakeholders?
- What is the current relationship with the media?

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4

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Poll Question

- What is your school board protocol on handling media inquiries?
 - The School Board Chair is the Spokesperson for the Board
 - The Superintendent responds to ALL media requests
 - We do not have a protocol
 - I don't know

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5

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The Spokesperson

<p>Division Spokesperson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Works for the division in an official capacity <input type="checkbox"/> Speaks for the school system as a whole <input type="checkbox"/> Has credibility as an expert <input type="checkbox"/> Able to provide background and factual information 	<p>Board Spokesperson (Chair or Vice Chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speaks on behalf of the board <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminates confusion about the board's message <p>Speaking for Yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be clear you are not speaking on behalf of the board <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the impact your comments will have
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****It is always recommended to advise the superintendent and board members when you are going to or have had an interaction with the media**

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6




The Interview – Essential Skills

- School administrators are expected to be able to handle media inquiries.
- This point is especially acute for new administrators, who may be tested by the press to see if they will be:
 - responsive and a good resource
 - controversial
- Unprepared does not always mean bad. You can't be bad at something if you have never been shown how to do it properly.

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7




When the Reporter Calls...

- What is his/her name and specialty?
- Are they from print, TV, radio, or online media?
- What is the story about?
- Why did they call you? For a reaction, background, etc?
- Who else have they spoken with?
- Who else are they going to speak with?
- Will they need photos or video?
- What is their deadline?
- Don't talk yet!**

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8




Preparing for the Interview

- Brainstorm
- Target 3 Main Messages
 - 30-second Sound Bite
- Practice, Practice, Practice
- Conduct the Interview

You are PRE-EDITING the story!

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9




Conducting the Interview...

- Deliver all three messages repeatedly.
- No matter the question, answer it and "bridge" back to your main message points. Don't stray! Stick to the 3!
- Take your time. It is perfectly acceptable to ask for a minute or two to think about the question.
- If you don't know an answer, say "I don't know, but I will find out for you." Then, be sure to find out and let them know.
- You control what you say and how you say it.
- Don't be intimidated by long pauses.
- Reporters will ask questions they know you are not able to answer...**it's their job to ask the questions that community members want to ask.

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10




Poll Question

- Have you ever participated in an interview for something school board related?
 - Yes
 - No

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11



Crisis Situations

Remember:

- Follow the law/division policies (personnel, student privacy)
- Let the board spokesperson, division spokesperson or police speak to the specifics
- Convey that the division is in control
- Assure student safety and student support

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12



How Can I Communicate as a Board Member?

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13




Electronic Communication

- Leave discussion and deliberation of substantive matters for a public meeting.
- Never use comments/email/texts to express ideas, concerns, opinions, etc. on jurisdictional issues or matters.
- Whenever possible, the Superintendent or central office should be responsible for sending communications which are appropriate for the entire board.
- If you have something you want the Board to discuss, check your agenda protocol, and or communicate the issue to the Chair and/or the Superintendent.

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14




Electronic Communication

- Use a school division provided email address for all electronic communications including school business, such communications are subject to FOIA
- Don't use a division provided email address for communications unrelated to your school board business.
- Use caution with what you say in electronic communications both as to content and tone.
- Remember such communications are subject to the same public disclosure as a formal letter.

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15




Poll Question

Do you use a school board email address for school board communication?

- Yes
- No
- I do not have a school board email address

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16




Social Media Tips

- Know your school board policy/protocol on Social Media!
- Pay attention to what you say and do!
- If you choose to use social media, use it to share information, not engage in conversation or debate.
- Wait for your school division to issue an official statement prior to putting your own information on social media.
- Don't fall into the "Tagging" trap
- Direct any comments/complaints to your school board email address or phone
- For legal information on the use of social media, contact your school board attorney**

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17




Poll Question

Do you use social media in your role on the school board?

- Yes
- No
- I do not use social media at all.

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18

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Recent Headlines

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19

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LOCAL NEWS


Walter Williams, Reporter
Kylie Clarke, Web Producer
Published July 20, 2020, 11:15 pm
Updated July 21, 2020, 10:27 pm

Tag: Northville Public Schools, Northville, Oakland County, Wayne County, News, Local, Northville School Board, Northville Schools, Coronavirus, COVID-19

Petition demands Northville School Board president resign over social media post

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20

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TOPICAL

Union school board member faces public backlash after email rant to parent

By Kelly Schottbauer Tulsa World Aug 10, 2020

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21



Shawano School Board Asks Grams To Resign After Social Media Post
Shawano, WI, United States / TCHDailyNews
Brad Williams
Jul 12, 2020 5:56 PM

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22



Oregon school board member's social media posts draw ire
Anna Del Savio | Wednesday, June 17, 2020
Petition calls on Scappoose School Board member Tim Brooks to resign his seat over controversial Facebook posts

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23



Students Demand Resignation of Broward School Board Member After Facebook Post
ALEX DELUCA | JUNE 26, 2020 | 8:00AM

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24




Reminders

- The Newspaper Principle - never post anything online, in an email or in a text you wouldn't be comfortable seeing in the paper.
- Never share anything that is a topic of discussion in executive session.
- Some conversations are best suited for face-to-face...don't create a record.
- Don't post, email or text things in the heat of the moment.

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25




Important Takeaways

- No individual board member has the power or authority to speak on behalf of the board, without first having that authority approved by the board.
- Think before you post (or comment!)
- Get the official message of the school division FIRST before making posts or comments
- Keep in mind anything you write, say, or post will be viewed from your position as a school board member

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26




Communicating During a Pandemic

- Allow the division to make official statements first and then communicate through your own channels
- Request talking points from staff so you are prepared with facts
- Be prepared to listen!
- Do not make promises or use a conversation as a way to say you disagree with the division's process or decision
- Be prepared!

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27



Q & A

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