

Board Meeting Decorum



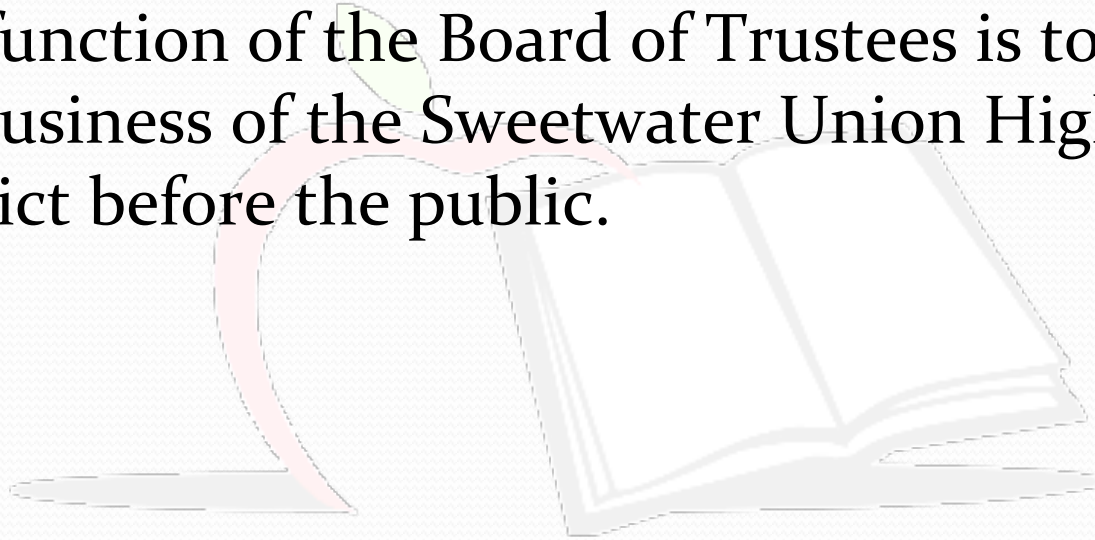
Sweetwater Union High School District

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The Function of the Board

- The function of the Board of Trustees is to conduct the business of the Sweetwater Union High School District before the public.



Each person, without exception, is critical to the dialogue.

- “If there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the process of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence.” (Justice Louis D. Brandeis, *Whitney v. California* (1927) 274 U.S. 357, 377.)
- To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.” (Frederick Douglass)

This Presentation's Goals

This Presentation is an attempt :

- To convince ourselves and each other to respect each other's viewpoint;
- To help reduce time spent unproductively arguing, without stifling debate;
- To ensure that all voices are heard; and
- To convince us all that what we say publicly is heard privately in the ears of our young students.

The District's Duties to its Students and Staff

- The California Constitution, indeed, cements the school district's obligation to keep students safe: “[T]he People find and declare that the right to public safety extends to public and private primary, elementary, junior high, and senior high school, and community college, California State University, University of California, and private college and university campuses, where students and staff have the right to be safe and secure in their persons.” (Cal. Const., art. 1, § 28, subd. (a)(7).)

The District's Duties to its Staff

- A hostile work environment occurs when there is a discriminatory conduct or behavior in the place of work that is unwelcome and offensive to an employee or group of employees based on a protected class status. (See among others Gov. Code, § 12900 et seq.)
- The District's legal obligation extends to ensuring that its employees feel safe and are not subjected to a hostile work environment. We should all be stewards of each other's mental and physical well-being.

Our District

- Founded in 1920, the District has grown to more than 41,000 students in grades 7 through 12 and more than 24, 000 adult learners. The District's 32 campuses are located in the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and San Diego.
- California's richness in cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity is reflected in Sweetwater's population, which includes Hispanic, Filipino, African-American, Asian, and other ethnicities. Approximately half of District students speak a language other than English at home.

The Numbers

- Staff: 3,780
- Full-Time Teachers: 1,857
- Teacher Assistants (Instructional aides): 616
- Instructional Coordinators: 16
- Middle-School Teachers: 608
- High-School Teachers: 1,249

The District's Mission

- The mission of Sweetwater Union High School District, an international educational community that embraces the strength of its diversity, is to ensure all students possess an invincible sense of promise through a system distinguished by:
- A variety of learning experiences that provoke exploration, creativity and inquiry.
- A comprehensive network of student support systems.
- Development of the skills necessary to succeed in higher education and the world of work.
- Community involvement through a variety of partnerships.
- A culture of integrity, respect and trust.
- A learning environment that ensures the well-being of each student.
- The celebration of individual achievement.

What is a Board Meeting?

The Board of Education is the governing, policy-making body of the Sweetwater Union High School District. Members of the Board make decisions on matters relating to public education for Sweetwater Union High School District. Decisions are made at Board Meetings.

Board meetings are open to the public, except those noticed in advance as Closed Session. Public input is invaluable.

The Law on Board Meetings

- Penal Code section 71: “Every person who, with intent to cause, attempts to cause, or causes, any officer or employee of any public or private educational institution or any public officer or employee to do, or refrain from doing, any act in the performance of his duties, by means of a threat, directly communicated to such person, to inflict an unlawful injury upon any person or property, and it reasonably appears to the recipient of the threat that such threat could be carried out, is guilty of a public offense . . .”

The Law on Board Meetings (cont.)

- Penal Code section 403: “Every person who, without authority of law, willfully disturbs or breaks up any assembly or meeting that is not unlawful in its character, other than an assembly or meeting referred to in Section 302 of the Penal Code or Section 18340 of the Elections Code, is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

The Role of the Board

- Responsibilities:
 - The Board acts as a quasi-legislative agency to set the policy for the School District.
 - Establish an effective and efficient structure
 - Provide support
 - Ensure accountability
 - Provide community leadership, advocating for children

1) Set a Good Direction for Schools

The District must be able to work toward executing and ensuring:

- A long term vision . . .
 - That reflects the views of all stakeholders- community, including parents, students, and other local organizations, the Board, and staff.

2) Establish a Workable Structure

The Sweetwater Union High School District Board of Trustees has several tasks to do in establishing a working and workable structure, including:

- Employing policy setting personnel
- Setting a direction and adopt curriculum
- Establishing budget priorities and adopt the budget

3) Create a Supportive Environment

- Support the staff
- Uphold Board-approved policies
- Ensure a positive employment environment
- Be knowledgeable about District efforts, and explain them to the public

4) Ensure Public Accountability

- Evaluate Superintendent
- Monitor, review, and revise policies
- Serve as the judicial and appeals body
- Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness
- Monitor District finances
- Monitor the Collective Bargaining process

5) Demonstrate Community Leadership

- Speak on behalf of the children that they have been elected to represent
- Advocate for students, educational programs, and public education
- Ensure District youngsters get the education they deserve



**How can Board Members best
possibly achieve those goals?**



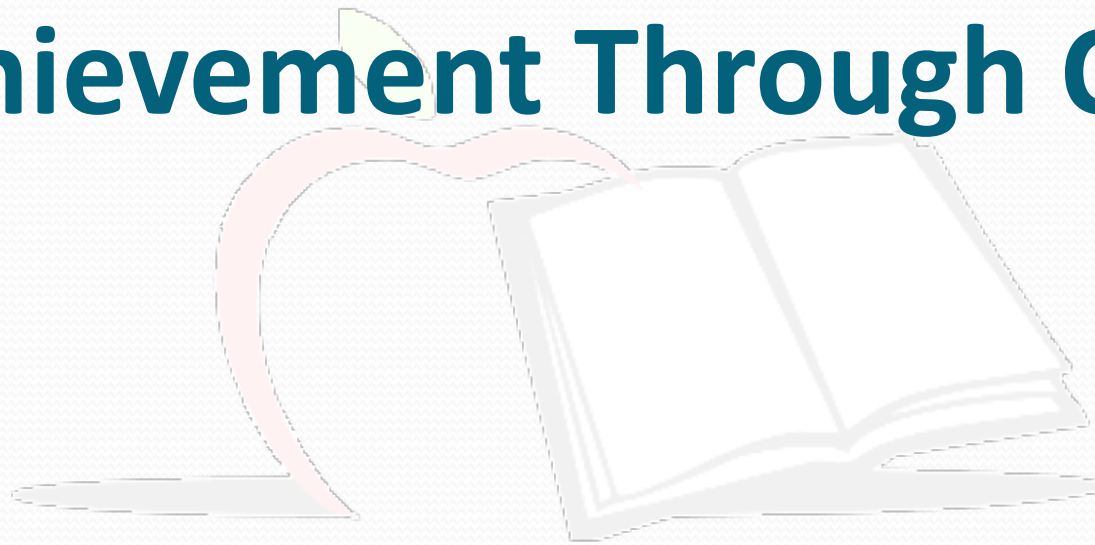
Creating Effective Relationships

- Keep learning and achievement for students as a primary focus
- Support and value public education
- Recognize differences of perspective and style among the community
- Participate in professional development
- Understand authority is with the Board, not any individual
- Act with dignity

Board as a Governance Team

- Keep District focused on learning for students
- Create and communicate the common vision
- Operate openly
- Govern professionally and with dignity
- Take collective responsibility
- Evaluate the Board effectiveness
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of community views to be heard

Achievement Through Civility



Civility

- Respect others
 - Stems from self-awareness
- Stay present, even in the face of deep-seeded disagreements
- Seek common ground as a beginning point for dialogue
- Recognize differences are enriching
- Recognize that our children are modeling our behavior

The Golden Rule

- Buddhism: Hurt not other in ways that you yourself would find harmful. (*Udanavarga* 5:18)
- Christianity: All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets. (*Matthew* 7:12)
- Classic Greek Philosophy: Do not to others that which angers you when done to you. (*Isocrates, Nicocles* 61)
- Confucianism: Fidelity to one's self and the corresponding reciprocity are not far from the path. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others. (*Li Ki or Book of Rites*, 28, 1, 132)
- Hinduism: Do not do to another what is disagreeable to yourself: this is the summary Law; the other proceeds from desire. (*Mahabharata* 5(51) 39:57)

The Golden Rule

- Islam: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (*Sunna, by tradition*)
- Jainism: Indifferent to worldly objects, a man should wander about treating all creatures in the world as he himself would be treated. (*Sutrakrtanga 1, 11*)
- Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law: all the rest is commentary. (*Talmud, Shabbath 3, 1a*)
- Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss. (*T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien 3*)
- Zoroastrianism: That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self. (*Dadistan-I Dinik 94, 5*)

Civility in History

- “When once the forms of civility are violated, there remains little hope of return to kindness or decency.” (Samuel Johnson)
- “Civility costs nothing, and buys everything.” (Mary Wortley Montagu, English aristocrat and writer)
- “I know no religion that destroys courtesy, civility, and kindness.” (William Penn)
- “Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.” (George Washington)
- “It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.” (Albert Einstein)

Civility in History

- “We hear a great deal about the rudeness of the rising generation. I am an oldster myself and might be expected to take the oldsters’ side, but in fact I have been far more impressed by the bad manners of parents to children than by those of children to parents.” (C.S. Lewis, novelist)
- “Teaching civility is an obligation of the family.” (Stephen Carter, American law professor, columnist and novelist)
- “There can be no high civility without a deep morality.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Civility in History

- “All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression.” (Thomas Jefferson)

Achieving Board Goals

- Civility will help create the positive environment the Board desires, allowing the discussed goals to be met
- It will reduce time spent unproductively arguing, without stifling debate
- It will allow the focus to be on accomplishing goals for students
- It will help create long-term working relationships

SUHSD Vision

- The Sweetwater Union High School District will fulfill the promise of 100% student success.
- We must be committed to doing it together

Diversity, Creativity, and Respect

- “If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.” (John F. Kennedy, *Address at American University, Washington, D.C.* (June 10, 1963.))
- “Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of inquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model.” (Abdul Kalam)
- “Nothing is more despicable than respect based on fear.” (Albert Camus)

Our Community

- “In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it.” (Marianne Williamson)
- “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” (Mother Teresa)
- “The team exists to accomplish a result. The community exists to support its members while they fulfill their purpose. When partnerships, management teams, and organizations build communities, they tap into a greater and deeper reservoir of courage, wisdom, and productivity.” (Peter Gibb)

Our Community (cont.)

- “Some people think they are in community, but they are only in proximity. True community requires commitment and openness. It is a willingness to extend yourself to encounter and know the other.” (David Spangler)
- “Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community.” (Anthony Burgess)

What happens when we can't work together

- Sequestration occurs when government is paralyzed.
- We become challenged to retain the best and the brightest staff. If we cannot respect employee accomplishments despite all that needs to be done, we provide no incentive for exceptional talent to stay.
- The Sweetwater Union High School District is not the buildings, the walls, or the empty parking spaces. The District is the People, including the students who strive to improve and the employees who have, day after day, worked to provide education for our youngsters. It is also the parents, who through struggle and sacrifice give their youngsters a chance at more. And in all our collective effort, we bring honor not only to ourselves, but we also bring honor to our community that continues to develop, evolve, and grow with each achievement.

Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder

- PTSD is an anxiety disorder triggered by traumatic experiences. The District has learned that staff members are fearful about upcoming board meetings, which, for many, have become traumatic experiences. People are becoming sick at the idea of attending meetings.
- What is the cumulative effect on the person who suffers this trauma? It diminishes you as a human being and negatively affects your professional life and private life.

Expectations and Resolution

- The Sweetwater Union High School District is not perfect. During the course of discharging the Board's policies and decisions, human error can occur. Simply put, mistakes can be, and are sometimes, made.
- What should we do? We should continue to advance the objectives of the Board and, at the same time, recognize those that help that process. We must, individually and collectively, move forward. We can pursue excellence without acrimony.

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