How to Make the Right Calls with your School Board

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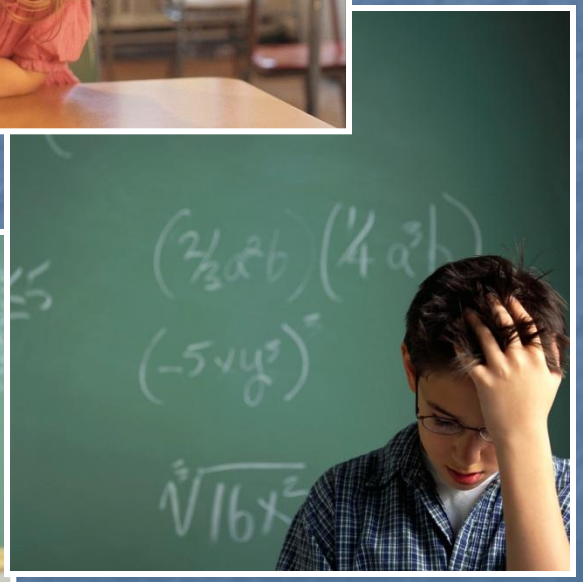
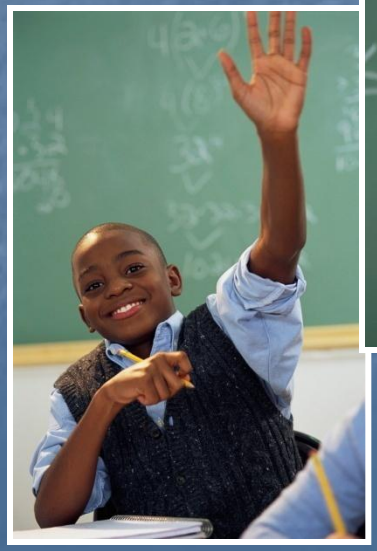
Building a supportive relationship with your local school board is critical to the important work of Wisconsin's athletic directors. Learn effective strategies that lead to improved communication between you and your school board. Nobody likes surprises, especially elected school board members. As cowboy humorist Will Rogers once said, "If you're going to ride out in front of the herd, you need to check every so often to be sure the herd is still behind you."

A Commitment To Educating All Children

- Learns best practices
- Understands the needs of the children they serve
- Spends time at board meetings on improving student achievement





Setting The Vision And Direction For The District

- Reflects the community's values
- Actively participates in setting goals and expectations
- Monitors the achievement of the mission of the district
- Be proactive vs. reactive

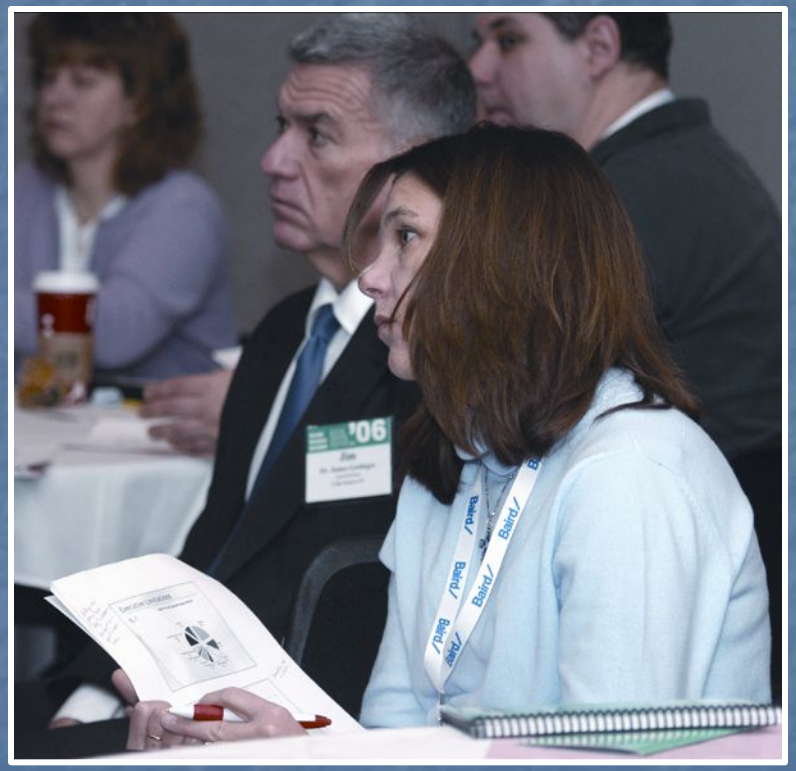
Working Together

- Brings diverse views together for the achievement of common goals
- Speaks with one voice
- Respects differences of opinion
- Listens

Providing Effective Communication

- Between the board, the administration, and the public
- Works cooperatively to explore roles and responsibilities

Maintaining Confidentiality



- The business that the board conducts appropriately in closed sessions remains the board's business
- No issues from executive session are shared

Understanding The Role Of The Board And Chain Of Command

- The superintendent is responsible for and held accountable for the operations of the district
- Complaints, requests, and questions are handled at the appropriate level

Know your Complaint Procedures

- Complaint procedures are policies specifying **how complaints by individuals are processed and resolved** and if necessary brought before the school board.
- Complainants are directed to go to the employee or immediate supervisor, then principal, then district administrator and only then to the board.
- When a complaint gets to the board, the district administrator has had opportunity to investigate matter and will have answers for the board's questions.

Chain of Command and Grievance Process

- Chain of command structures and grievance procedures tell employees how to communicate and process complaints to administration and board:
  - **A chain of command describes supervisory and subordinate structure of an organization**.
    - Employees take direction from and direct questions and concerns to an immediate supervisor.
    - Employees do not circumvent the chain of command except as allowed by board policy.

Chain of Command and Grievance Process

- **Advantages of the chain of command structure**:
  - Staff receives consistent direction from management, does not need to resolve conflicting directives from administration and/or board.
  - Trust is built between staff, immediate supervisors, district administrator and board.
- **The grievance process can provide an outlet for concerns**.
  - The statutory grievance process need cover only terminations, discipline and employee safety.
  - Board may by policy expand the grievance process to cover other employee concerns.

Chain of Command and Grievance Process

- **Enforcement of chain of command policies is limited by First Amendment rights of employees to speak as citizens:**
  - Employees may be required to address concerns about matters relating to the performance of their jobs or their responsibilities to their immediate supervisor.
  - Employee speech that is not part of their job duties and is done as a citizen on a matter of public concern remains protected under the First Amendment.

Builds Trust With The Community

- Maintains a level of confidence by employing sound, decision-making techniques, good human relations and a non-threatening method of conflict resolution
- Ensure the public's confidence in the district

Having The Courage To Make The Hard Decisions

- Base decisions on facts.
- Look out for the best interest of the students.
- Tackle the large issues.
- Listen to input from those affected.
- Take responsibility for making the difficult decisions without bowing to public pressure.

Tips on How to Interact with Your School Board

- Communicate with your entire school board.
- There should be no surprises regarding the athletic and activity programs for the school board.
- Don’t assume the school board knows all the issues.
- Listen and answer the board’s questions regarding the athletic and activity programs.
- Equity Issues: Title IX, transportation, team fees, interactions with intramurals and clubs.

Be Prepared to Address Title IX Issues with the Board and Community

- **Athletics**
- Title IX regulations prohibit sex discrimination in interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics offered by a recipient institution, including with respect to:

  (a) student interests and abilities;

  (b) athletic benefits and opportunities; and

  (c) athletic financial assistance.

Understanding How to Get on the Board Agenda

- First, consult with the school District Administrator.
- Focus on big picture issues.
- Be proactive rather than reactive.
- Athletic/Activities Directors have to make difficult decisions. When speaking before the board, the goal is to get the board's support for actions of the Athletic/Activities Director.

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Tips on How to Interact with Your School Board

- It's all right if you don't have the answer. Tell them you will research and provide the answer.
- Be proactive about upcoming WIAA issues and other governing bodies.
- Make sure the board is aware of potential insurance liabilities and legal responsibilities of your athletic and activity programs including volunteers.
- Educate your school board about your athletic and activity code.

Tips on How to Interact with Your School Board

- Try to be on the school board agenda at least once a year and not just when there is a controversial athletic and activity issues.
- Discuss the role of the Booster Club in your district with the school board.
- Clarify parental expectations with your school board.
- Clarify which items are school sponsored:
  - a. Varsity sports
  - b. School district endorsed sports and clubs.
  - c. Student-initiated sports and clubs.

For more information, contact:

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