

1. L. Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Respect for Others

Always offer thanks to everyone involved in the system and those that fund the system.

Not all community members want to participate in the district business, but they will all respect your desire to communicate with them.

When you express that you wish to listen to the community, don't let anyone tell you that you don't speak for the community. You were elected to speak for the community as their representative. The principles you speak of are not yours, they are the principles that you and the community agreed on for your election. The community hired you to represent. You were not hired to represent the district; they already have representation through their unions, their administration and themselves.

Always state that you know why you were elected – “to represent the community”. That you are “student focused and community minded”.

1. Respecting the community means you will refrain from using “school speak”. School speak is when terminology is used inside the district that the community typically does not understand. The best example is when the district tells the community that personnel inside the district are not getting raises (not telling them that the step RAISES are automatic in the union contract and typically are above inflation). The district is referring to the base pay raises that are given on top of the typical 4% average step raises. If you find your district using school speak it is your duty to clarify in public what they are talking about or forgetting to talk about.

2. Respecting the community means you pledge to be honest and direct. The only times you cannot tell your constituents the facts of the district is when it involves specific private (by name or close enough) personnel or students. Every single personnel file is a public document and you and the public are entitled to them. Any public records request for a personnel file must be granted with only a few redactions. The district may redact the personnel records regarding health records and criminal background check.

It is perfectly lawful to hold community meetings by yourself if you want to interact with those you represent (every other office holder does this). Show the community what you know and how you know it. Show them why you say your district needs an action plan and to demand better for your students.

3. Respecting the parents of your district is easiest if your board adopts a policy or at least a resolution similar to the one piece of legislation found recently in Texas. See Texas Law-Parental Rights and Responsibilities. Parents must have the right to be in any location where their children are. Parents must have the right to be anywhere where their child is being asked questions. Parents must have the right to observe any curriculum and any test to which their child is being exposed. Parents must have the right to be in the room if their child is being asked questions about a possible crime. All these rights must be communicated to the parents as the school year starts. Parents should be asked if they want to yield these rights to the district.

4. Respecting the district is often a part of every board meeting as students, faculty and staff are often given their awards and recognition. Beyond the board meetings you can invite those district employees who wish to speak to a board member with an open-door policy. Do not be afraid of upsetting the union or the district admin. You have every right and responsibility to speak to those that the community employs. Your open door policy is not against the law and does not violate the negotiated agreements, though they may try to convince you it does. Don't worry about your open-door policy being perceived as micromanaging – it is your job to know the business and details of the district and to inform the other board members when things are being done well as well as when they need a new policy or direction.

5. Respecting the students means that you assure them the rights as an American citizen that everyone else gets. Offer them your open-door policy.
Offer the board a resolution or policy that secures student rights.

Students have legal rights. For example, see [here](#).

Even the ACLU agrees, as shown [here](#).

Student Bill of Rights in remote and digital work [here](#).

Example of an academic Student Bill of Rights [here](#).

6. Respect your other board members. While speaking to the other board members outside of the open public meeting, it is important to know the lines of communication are still open. Meaning, you are within your rights to speak to your fellow board members outside the board meeting. You can always call another board member to talk about something in the district and/or something on the agenda. You can give them your thoughts and ask for theirs. You can then call another board member to ask the same question. You cannot tell them how you or others will vote. You can ask another board member if they are willing to second a motion so it can get discussed. You can email or call the board president to put an item you wish to discuss on the agenda. If the president does not put it on the agenda, you can bring up the subject in the board meeting during board member comments. You can mention that the board president refuses to bring up your agenda item which is oppressive and disrespectful of the community's chosen representative.

When you request information from the administrative staff, first go through the superintendent. Make sure you put “public records request” in the subject line. If you have to make a second request or third request, put “second request” then “third request” in the subject line and you can always CC the other board members. This CC is just to let them know what you are asking – however, the other board members should not respond. If you must make a fourth request for the same information, make it stronger wording.

Who do you allow to speak at board meetings?

Your community has earned and deserves respect. Your state residents as well as your fellow Americans help to fund your education system.

It is important to welcome and invite input from all sources. This input does not have to influence you to change your vote, your principles, or your mission.

Some school districts restrict public speaking at their board meetings to only those that live in your district. While they likely do this because the district community members get to vote on levies – we are not sure that restriction is legal if someone wanted to challenge this in the courts. If the argument is that these community members pay the taxes so have skin in the game, that statement would be inaccurate. Most school **districts** operate on at least 50% of their funding from State and Federal funds. The truth is more likely that the board wants those that get to vote on the levies or on the board members to have the right to speak.

It is in your best interest to invite those stakeholders that live outside your district boundaries to email you and give your email address to them on camera at the board meeting and on your website.

Students have legal rights

https://adflegal.org/blog/school-officials-forced-third-grader-take-her-jesus-loves-me-mask?sourcecode=10014655_r450

Even the ACLU agrees

<https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/students-rights/>

Student Bill of Rights in remote and digital work

<https://studenttestingrights.org/>

Example of an academic Student Bill of Rights

<https://dos.uiowa.edu/policies/student-bill-of-rights/>