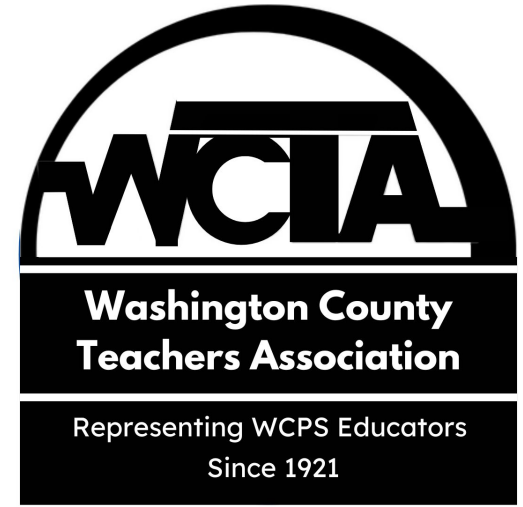


Advocacy Training for the WCPS Community



Washington County Teachers Association (WCTA), Hagerstown, MD

Training Slides Adapted from the "[Public School Strong](#)" Campaign Materials created by The HEAL Together Initiative
(A partnership of [Race Forward](#), [NYU Metro Center](#), and [the Schott Foundation](#)) Page 1

AGREEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY Advocates in Washington County, MD

- Be willing to support “***honest, equitable, safe, & adequately funded local public schools.***”
- Be willing to advocate for the needs of students and staff of the Washington County Public Schools by attending school board meetings, county commissioner meetings, and other events.
- Be aware of the various forces that are seeking to harm or dismantle public education in order to either privatize the system or undermine the principles that support equal access to all, ***whatever their race, their gender, their zip code, where they're from, whatever their religion.***

This presentation was inspired by and adapted from training slides created by the organization "Public School Strong" for its nationwide campaign, a HEAL Together Initiative .



HEAL TOGETHER



What is HEAL?

HEAL = Honest Education Action & Leadership

HEAL Together is building a movement of

Students
Parents & Family Members
Educators
School Board Members

in school districts across the United States who are fighting for an **honest, equitable, and fully funded public education** as the foundation for a **just, multiracial democracy**.

Understand The Basics: "School Board 101"

Basics of a School Board: What do they do?

Basic responsibilities of a school board:

- Adopt district goals; set priorities; monitor success
- Adopt and oversee policies
- Hire and evaluate the superintendent
- Adopt a budget
- Adopt curriculum
- Communicate with the community

Policies should align with district goals and the needs of the community.

**Community engagement is CRITICAL
for co-governance!**

VOTERS
Elect the local Board of Education
Washington County elections are NONPARTISAN.
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Selects the Superintendent/Director of Schools
Adopts policies, budgets, and goals
Communicates with community
SUPERINTENDENT
Hires staff
Implements goals, objectives, and policies

What School Boards Don't Do

- Hire, manage, evaluate, or fire school principals, administrators, or educators – this is the role of superintendent
- Select curriculum or decide on day-to-day instruction – this is the role of administrators and educators
- Speak on behalf of the school board on any decisions or matters before the board
- Write the district budget

Green Flags for a School Board

Member



- A conviction that public education is important and willingness to advocate for the funding it deserves;
- The ability to make decisions, evaluate the outcomes, and modify based on the needs of the community - ***not political affiliation or personal agendas***;
- Implements and commits to the democratic process;
- Time and energy to devote to Board business;
- Courage and fortitude in the face of opposition;
- Champion for ALL learners and school staff**;
- Professional respect for district staff & community;
- Ability to communicate well with ALL stakeholders.

QUESTIONS for PARTICIPANTS:

- ★ What are the qualities YOU look for in a strong school board member?
- ★ Do you know who is currently running for positions on the Washington County Board of Education?
- ★ If so, what do you know about their motivations and supporters?
- ★ If not, where can you find out?

KEY Vocabulary

- **Robert's Rules of Order:** Guiding principles of meeting facilitation to ensure everyone is heard + motions are made fairly.
- **Open Meeting Laws:** Requires public disclosure of government meetings + materials in the form of posted agendas (48-hour notice).
- **Consent Agenda:** Organizes and groups routine meeting discussion points into a single agenda item.
- **Resolution:** An official expression of the opinion or will of a legislative body.
- **Policy:** Governing rules and regulations that hold a school board and district staff accountable.
- **Quorum:** More than half of a governing body present. A quorum is required in order to conduct business and vote on issues.

Resolutions & Policies:

What's the difference?

Resolution: An official expression of the opinion or will of a legislative body. A resolution is *not* a policy.

Resolutions are great community organizing tools and useful in showing wide-ranging support for an idea or issue!

SAMPLE School Board Resolution

Nominating Senator/Assembly Member/Representative _____ for the California School Boards Association Outstanding Legislator Award/Outstanding Freshman Legislator Award

NOTE: Use the whereas section to highlight the nominee's legislative history, including leadership roles, committee chairs and/or memberships, legislative accomplishments relating to the nomination, and any other reason this person is being nominated. Sample statements are included below. This sample shows a current Senator who was an Assembly Member and school board member and who is being nominated for Outstanding Legislator.

WHEREAS, Senator Jane Doe served the community of Anytown as a board member of the Anytown Unified School District from 1990 through 1999; and

WHEREAS, Senator Jane Doe was elected to the California State Assembly in 2000, serving in that body on the Education and Appropriations Committees (sample listing of related committee assignments) and authored and supported numerous bills that benefited public schools, including but not limited to AB 0000 which provided (list benefits) to our community; and

WHEREAS, Senator Jane Doe was elected to the California State Senate in 2006, rising to the position of chair of the Budget Committee (sample leadership assignment/accomplishment) where she spearheaded additional positive measures for our community, such as (list of positive measures/impacts); and

WHEREAS, Senator Jane Doe is known throughout the 99th District, as well as right here in Anytown for her numerous community outreaches and forums, many of which focus on public education; and

WHEREAS, Senator Jane Doe was pivotal in securing state school construction matching funds to assist the Anytown Unified School District in completing the XYZ High School, 123 Middle School and UVW elementary school; and

WHEREAS, ; and

WHEREAS, ; and

WHEREAS, ; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the (name of school district/county) hereby nominates Senator Jane Doe for the California School Boards Association 2016 Outstanding Legislator Award/Outstanding Freshman Legislator Award.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted immediately to the California School Boards Association.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Education of the (name of school district/county) on (insert date).

Board President

Board Secretary

Resolutions & Policies: What's the difference?

Policy: Governing rules and regulations that hold a school board and district staff accountable.

Policies include legal definitions and are explicit – they have *teeth!*

Arizona Sample School Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Violence

Prepared by the Office of the
Attorney General

I. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of this District to maintain a learning environment that is free from harassment because of an individual's race, color, sex, national origin or disability. The School District prohibits any and all forms of harassment because of race, color, sex, national origin, and disability.*

It shall be a violation of District policy for any student, teacher, administrator, or other school personnel of this District to harass a student through conduct of a sexual nature, or regarding race, color, national origin or disability, as defined by this policy.

It shall also be a violation of District policy for any teacher, administrator or other school personnel of this District to tolerate sexual harassment or harassment because of a student's race, color, national origin, ethnicity, or disability, as defined by this policy, by a student, teacher, administrator, other school personnel, or by any third parties who are participating in, observing, or otherwise engaged in activities, including sporting events and other extra curricular activities, under the auspices of the School District.

For purpose of this policy, the term "school personnel" includes school board members, school employees, agents, volunteers, contractors, or persons subject to the supervision and control of the District.

The school system will act to promptly investigate all complaints, either formal or informal, verbal or written, of harassment because of race, color, sex, national origin, or disability, to promptly take appropriate action to protect individuals from further harassment; and, if it determines that unlawful harassment occurred, to promptly and appropriately discipline any student, teacher, administrator or other school personnel who is found to have violated this policy, and/or to take other appropriate action reasonably calculated to end the harassment.**

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Sexual harassment

For purposes of this policy, sexual harassment of a student consists of unwelcome and unsolicited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical conduct, or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

1. a school employee causes a student to believe that he or she must submit to unwelcome sexual conduct in order to participate in a school program or activity, or when an employee or third party agent of the school district causes a student to believe that the employee will make an educational decision based on whether or not the student submits to unwelcome sexual conduct; or

2. the unwelcome sexual conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment.

Examples of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment include

- sexual advances
- touching, patting, grabbing or pinching another person's intimate parts, whether that person is of the same sex or the opposite sex
- coercing, forcing or attempting to coerce or force the touching of anyone's intimate parts
- coercing, forcing or attempting to coerce or force sexual intercourse or a sexual act on another
- graffiti of a sexual nature
- sexual gestures
- sexual or dirty jokes
- touching oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others
- spreading rumors about or rating other students as to sexual activity or performance
- unwelcome, sexually motivated or inappropriate patting, pinching or physical contact. This prohibition does not preclude legitimate, non sexual physical conduct such as the use of necessary restraints to avoid physical harm to persons or property, or conduct such as teacher's consoling hug of a young student, or one student's demonstration of a sports move requiring contact with another student
- other unwelcome sexual behavior or words, including demands for sexual favors, when accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning an individual's educational status or

Prepping to attend school board meetings...

- **LOOK AHEAD!** Visit your district website (www.wcpsmd.com) and WCBOE portal (<https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/wcps/Board.nsf/Public>) to find...
 - Date, time, and location of meeting (some meetings are remote)
 - Agenda and attachments
 - Information about your school board members
 - District policies (Found on platforms like **BoardDocs**)
- **MAKE A PLAN!** secure childcare (or make plans for them to come with you!) + decide when and how you'll get to the meeting
- **BRING A FRIEND (or two or three!)** there's a feeling of security and support when you know that you have others who agree with your perspective and who will support you if you decide to make any public comments.
- **PREPARE PUBLIC COMMENTS, when you are ready!** You don't have to speak publicly. Just being in attendance and sending emails or letters or simply calling your elected officials - all of these are valuable ways to support our schools!

*Most school board meetings are open to the public - **it is your right to attend!***

Being an Effective Observer

- **Identify key players:** Who are the school administrators and other staff present? What are their roles?
- **Take notes on school board members:** buzzwords/themes, votes, board chair governance, overall behavior with each other and towards the public, behavior towards school staff, pro-public ed or not, resolutions, superintendent, behavior/comments
- **Take notes on public commenters and attendees:** other coordinated groups, buzzwords/themes made in public comment, issues brought up
- **Agenda conformity:** Is the agenda closely followed or does the board get distracted? Is open meeting law being followed?

Some of the Key Agreements from the Public School Strong Campaign

- Attend my school board meetings in order to support **honest, equitable, and fully-funded public schools**
- **See school board members as potential partners** in our movement to protect and transform public education
- **Engage** with other school board meeting attendees **safely and respectfully**
- Support positive interactions and respectful advocacy.
- **Non-violence at all times.**

Additional Documents & Support for Local Advocates

- [HOW TO PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENTS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS](#)
- [Examples of Public Comments \(primarily from WCTA\)](#)