

DEALING WITH CONTROVERSY

TED HAEDER



Wolsey-Wessington
Every Child, Every Day

WHAT CAUSES CONTROVERSY?

- Obvious: hiring, firing, taxes, spending, consolidation
- Unexpected: prom, misinterpretation, something someone deems offensive



WHERE AND WHEN TO ADDRESS

- In a properly noticed school board meeting
- **NOWHERE ELSE**

WHY PREPARE FOR CONTROVERSY?

- It's going to happen.....eventually

WHAT TO EXPECT



- Obinna Ajibo Sambrown** Dio E Grande, why you say so?
Like · Reply · 2 hrs
- Obinna Ajibo Sambrown** Abeg wetin the man do? as stories wey i dey hear don plenty
Like · Reply · 1 · 2 hrs
- Dio E Grande** Inbox me on am
Like · Reply · 2 hrs
- Wade Nyapila** Nah explain on here because you made the public comment keep it public inbox Coward
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr
- Dio E Grande** your father COWARD
Like · Reply · 1 hr
- Dio E Grande** Animal
Like · Reply · 1 hr

HOW TO RESPOND

DO THIS

- Follow the agenda
- Allow public input
- Deal in facts
- Follow policy
- Discuss in public session when possible
- Discuss in executive session when appropriate
- Act in public session – ALWAYS
- Accept the outcome

NOT THIS

- Share private or confidential information
- Comment unnecessarily
- Be overcome by emotion
- Deal in opinion over facts
- Ignore policy
- Shut down public input
- Use executive session inappropriately
- Hold a grudge when in the minority

EXAMPLES

- Prom
- 4-Day school week
- Opt-out
- Building projects
- Personnel issues

THEY ARE CANCELLING PROM!!



(angry shouting)

4-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

- Planning
- Public input
- Surveys
- More public input
- Still more public input
- Action

OPT-OUT

- Planning
- Public input
- Surveys
- More public input
- Still more public input
- Action
- Was not referred

BUILDING PROJECT 1

- Planning
- Public input
- Surveys
- More public input
- Still more public input
- Action



BUILDING PROJECT 2

- Planning
- Public input
- More public input
- Then.....pushback
- “Why there and not here?”
- Reset and reassess
- More public input
- Action



PERSONNEL ISSUES

- Administration, teachers, non-certified, coaches, etc.
- Private discussion – when appropriate
 - Executive session – only when permitted by SDCL 1-25-2
 - What is said in executive session stays in executive session
- Public action – when required
 - “The board took the following action.....”
 - “The vote was.....”

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Questions, comments, and crowds
- Active public comments
- Uncomfortable discussions
- Buildup
- Action
- Letdown
- Loss of sleep
- Accepting responsibility – board members don't get to sit on the sidelines

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

- Showing up is half of the battle
- Allowing public input is important
- Stopping public input is rarely productive
- Taking a beating is not the end of the world
- Board members are elected to make decisions
- The school attorney is a valuable resource – use them

THE END

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