

The Role of the School Board in Responding to the Coronavirus



With the uncertainty surrounding the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the public is looking to their school district leadership teams to provide a unified message to employees, parents, and the general public.

Meetings, events, and normal routines are being interrupted all over the world. They will likely change in your district as well. Providing education and delivering services may look different than you have seen before. Your district may even need to provide services that support the work of emergency management in your area.

There is deep concern about reaching non-English speaking populations with appropriately translated messaging and maintaining individualized instruction for students with disabilities, and providing related medical services for our most vulnerable students. And this is just the tip of the iceberg for districts across the state.

Your board and superintendent have vital and unique roles to play as this unprecedented event unfolds. With the situation changing daily, best practices are as important as ever.

Here's what school board members can do to best serve their district.



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THE SCHOOL BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT SHOULD STAY CONNECTED

Social distancing is the watch word, but boards need to stay together, even if at a distance. Though in-person meetings are discouraged, stay in touch with your governance team members but within the confines of the Sunshine Law. Stay connected with your community. They are looking for your district's calm and capable leadership.

[Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-69 \(Emergency Management- COVID-19 - Local Government Public Meetings\)](#). This clears the way for governmental bodies like school boards to meet by telephone or video conference in order to comply with social distancing recommendations and any restrictions on gatherings.

The leadership team should be thinking about how remote meetings will work when trying to involve the wider community in these times, too. Proactively seeking community partnerships (private and public) to extend web access into the community is one option to explore.

As your team discovers what works best for remote meetings and distance learning, share those best practices and resources (digital or analog) with neighboring districts.

LET YOUR SUPERINTENDENT LEAD

This is the time for your superintendent to manage the district and focus on operational changes. They need to make most decisions that are being made at this time.

Allow your superintendent or other designated spokesperson to continue to be a directing voice of your district. Relying on the chain of command as a best practice is as important as ever.

There's no need to publicly challenge your superintendent's decisions right now. It only leads to more confusion in the community.

Stay in regular contact with your superintendent or ask that your superintendent designate a liaison for regular contact and information.

Though you will need to ensure that school board business continues, call emergency board meetings only when the meeting is necessary for the good and welfare of your district, and ensure that your school board attorney is involved in calling emergency meetings.

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM SHOULD KNOW THE MESSAGE

Make sure your district maintains a unified public message.

Promote messages that are:

- Supported by your leadership team



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- Clear, calm, and reassuring
- Factual (Here's what we know, here's what we are doing, here are organizations we are working with)
- Showing leadership in communicating about health practices (not just school stuff). Schools are often the primary source of information about health and nutrition

Take time to connect with your community, too. Share positive messages through video on social media. Share hope, gratitude, and compassion in a world facing panic and a pandemic. Participate in FSBA's Virtual Spirit Week for School Boards next week (attached).

ONLINE SUPPORT AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL BOARDS

FSBA is focused on everyone's health and safety as we continue to monitor the implications of COVID-19. Some of our events are being canceled or postponed. A decision on June's Annual Summer Conference cannot yet be made but we will keep you informed of any changes that may be necessary.

We've created a [COVID-19 Resource](#) section on our website. It is updated daily with the latest information.

Plan on joining us for FRIDAY LIVE again on Fridays (until further notice) with Executive Officers and Executive Director, Andrea Messina. Call in time is 9 -10 a.m. EST. All members are encouraged to call, receive updates, and ask questions.

FRIDAY LIVE call-in information

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/998389365>

You can also dial in using your phone. (For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

United States (Toll Free): 1 877 309 2073 - One-touch: tel:+18773092073,,998389365#

United States: +1 (312) 757-3129 - One-touch: tel:+13127573129,,998389365#

Access Code: 998-389-365

If you missed any of our previous communications from the previous weeks, you can access archived versions of them on our [COVID-19 Resource](#) page here.

As always, your FSBA staff is here and available for anything you may need.



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