

TV interviews: Being effective, staying out of trouble spots

Exercise 1: Students cited, social media

You: Board chair

Scenario: Over the last two days a growing number of posts have appeared on social media about rumored teenage drinking and marijuana use at a party last Friday night after the basketball game. Several student-athletes and cheerleaders are alleged to have been involved. Your superintendent contacts the local police department and discovers that 10 students were cited for being minors in possession after police were called to a home where loud music was playing and cars had congregated. Five of the 10 students are on the basketball team, including four starters from a team expected to win league. One student who drove away from the scene was stopped and arrested by police for driving while intoxicated. She is on the cheerleading squad; three other cheerleaders were in the car with her. They were not cited.

Discussion issues: How do you respond publicly? Through what means (website/social media etc.)? How do you respect student privacy?

Media: Jake Arnold from the local TV station wants to interview you. How should you prepare?

Things to consider: Talking points, privacy/legal issues, careful language.

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Exercise 2: Teacher arrest

You: Board chair

Scenario: A teacher was arrested last night for allegedly engaging in a consensual sexual relationship with a 17-year-old senior.

Media: Jake again calls to set up an interview. How should you respond?

Things to consider: Should you appear on camera?

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Exercise 3: Changes at the top

You: Board chair

Scenario: After months of turmoil your board voted late last night in open session (after an executive session) to terminate your superintendent's three-year contract. He had 14 months remaining on a contract that pays \$135,000 annually. Your board voted to pay him a lump sum of \$150,000 to end his contract, effective in 30 days. Money has been tight in your district over

the last several years. Teachers have received raises averaging 1.5 percent over the past five years. They have complained that the superintendent, John Smith, is out of touch with staff. Your board had pushed Smith to take concrete steps to address the achievement gap and the 67 percent graduation rate at the high school. He had typically responded that because of high ELL numbers (30 percent) there was little hope of making progress. Your Latino parents have become increasingly vocal about the lack of services for students and what they describe as "institutional racism" by the district. They have formed a citizen committee and introduced several demands, including hiring more bilingual teachers and providing cultural training to staff. Your entire board is Anglo. Your staff is 94 percent Anglo. Your Board has concluded that Smith is an ineffective leader and needs to go, now.

Discussion issues: Generally, what steps should your board take next? What should you be public about? Why was this step necessary?

Media: Jake, who missed the late meeting last night, is knocking on your front door at 6:30 a.m. and wants to do a live shot in 30 minutes. You have had your phone off.

Things to consider: Talking points, personnel/legal issues, cultural awareness, taxpayer perceptions, off-the-record arrangements.