

HOW TO FUCK UP AN ASSHOLE SCHOOL BOARD

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NOVEMBER 10, 2024

This zine is meant to provide individuals and public or private interest groups with the tools necessary to disrupt destructive conservative school boards functioning in the United States of America.

The purpose herein is so that each and every citizen will understand the powers they can utilize in the fight against censorship and authoritarianism even in our small governmental institutions.

Activism is only as effective as the boots on the ground. It is more than a click of a mouse. It is more than a t-shirt. It is more than performative. Fight censorship.

This zine has been adapted from Chad Topaz's original Google Document. The original document was aided by a learning language model and refined with individual research. Check the details of your local school board for information on specific rules.

- J.D. Riley

I'M NOT ON THE SCHOOL BOARD WHAT CAN I DO?

When it comes to the ability for average people not normally involved in school board meetings, there are a limited amount of avenues to use for disruption. The first and most common is the **Public Comment Period**.

Stall, baby, stall.

Using the public comment period strategically is a powerful way to take up time. There are several strategies one can utilize during this period, including:

Community Mobilization

- **Organize a Group:** Organize a group of community members to attend the meeting and sign up for public comment. The more speakers you have, the longer this portion of the meeting will take.
- **Use Prepared Statements:** Ensure each person has a unique, prepared statement. While comments should address the agenda items or broader concerns, they can include questions or emphasize points that need a response.

An Effective Use of Time

- **Maximize Speaking Time:** If the board imposes a time limit for speakers (e.g., two minutes per person), make sure every speaker uses their full time. Coordinate with your group so that comments build on each other, creating a cohesive message that demands attention.
- **Questions:** Pose questions that require detailed responses from the board or administration. Even if they choose not to respond fully, your questions are entered into the public record, highlighting your concerns.

Create Pressure to Respond

- **Compelling Comments:** Use facts, figures, and personal stories to make your comments compelling. By framing your concerns as important and urgent, you may pressure the board into engaging, which can extend the discussion.
- **Request More Time:** For highly contentious issues, have some speakers suggest that more public comment time is needed, potentially leading to additional meetings or hearings. Sometimes this may not occur to you as an option and you may experience resistance.

Request Detailed Clarifications

Requesting detailed clarifications during the meeting can effectively slow down the agenda without requiring the board's cooperation. You can frame this as making certain that everyone in the room is on the same page when it comes to important actions the board is intent on taking and against what specific materials.

Prepare Specific Questions

- **Identify Key Issues:** Before the meeting, identify agenda items or policies that are unclear or controversial. Develop detailed questions related to these topics, focusing on points that may not have been thoroughly explained. If parts of your question are ignored and you have the ability to do so, insist that they be addressed. Follow up questions can also reiterate what has been ignored.
- **Example Questions:** Examples include, "Can you clarify the funding source for this program and any potential impact on the budget?" or "What research or community input informed this policy decision?"

Ask for Procedural Clarifications

- **Process Inquiries:** Use your time to ask about the

process by which decisions were made. For instance, inquire, "Was this policy vetted by relevant stakeholders? If so, can you outline that process for us?" These questions may require administrators or board members to explain their actions in detail, taking up time.

Highlight Unresolved Issues

- **Follow Up on Previous Meetings:** Emphasize unresolved issues or unanswered questions from previous meetings. For example, "At the last meeting, it was mentioned that further data would be provided on this topic. Has that data been reviewed and shared with the public?"
- **Create a Record:** If the board or administration cannot immediately provide detailed answers, it creates a record of the issue and may force them to address it in the future, causing additional delays.

Use Follow-Up Questions

- **Prolong the Discussion:** If the board provides incomplete or unsatisfactory answers, follow up with additional questions or ask for a commitment to provide the information in writing. This keeps the focus on your concerns and prolongs the discussion.

Document and Evidence Submission

Submitting documents or evidence and requesting that they be acknowledged in the meeting can create delays and require board members to respond.

Prepare Documents in Advance

- **Compile Supporting Materials:** Compile relevant materials, such as research studies, expert opinions, or community petitions, that support your position. Make sure these documents are thorough and professional to increase their impact.
- **Distribute Copies:** Bring multiple copies and, if possible, submit them to the board before the meeting, requesting that they be distributed to all members and included in the public record.

Request Document Reading

- **Read Aloud Key Excerpts:** If board rules allow, request that key excerpts of your documents be read aloud during the meeting. This can take up significant time, especially if the material is lengthy or detailed.
- **Example:** "I would like to submit this statement from a community health expert regarding the

impact of this policy. Could we have a portion read for the record, as it's crucial to our understanding?"

Use the Documents to Prompt Questions

- **Reference Materials:** Reference your submitted materials during the meeting to ask questions or raise concerns. For example, "Based on the data in the report I provided, how does the board plan to address these findings?" This forces the board to engage with the content or acknowledge it, slowing the meeting further.

Submit Evidence Strategically

- **Challenge the Board:** If you know a specific agenda item will be discussed, submit evidence that challenges or complicates the board's position. This can force board members to defend their decisions or reconsider their approach, extending deliberation.

Use of Points of Order

A "*point of order*" is a formal objection raised when someone believes the meeting is not following proper procedures. Using this method requires understanding the rules the board operates under, typically *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Preparation

Understand the Rules: Familiarize yourself with the rules of order that the board follows, usually Robert's Rules. Focus on key procedural requirements, like the order of business, debate rules, and voting processes.

- **Identify Common Violations:** Identify common procedural elements that are often violated, such as time limits for speakers, proper handling of motions, or rules related to quorum.

Raising a Point of Order

- **How to Raise It:** You can raise a point of order when you believe a rule has been broken. For example, if a motion is made without being seconded, you can interrupt by saying, "Point of order." The chairperson must address your concern.
- **Be Specific:** Be specific about the violation. For example: "Point of order. According to Robert's Rules, speakers cannot exceed their allotted time, and this member has gone over the limit."
- **Appeal Decisions:** If the chair disagrees with your point, you can appeal the decision, requiring a vote and potentially sparking further discussion.

Common Violations to Watch For

- **Improper Motions:** A motion is made without a second or before the proper time in the agenda.
- **Speaking Out of Turn:** A member speaks without being recognized by the chair, or debate occurs without a motion on the floor.
- **Time Limit Violations:** Board members or speakers exceed the allowed time for discussion or public comment.
- **Quorum Issues:** If there aren't enough members present to legally conduct business, you can raise a point of order to halt proceedings.
- **Voting Procedures:** If a vote is conducted improperly, such as taking a vote without adequate debate or failing to follow the correct voting method.

Potential Disruptions

- **Frequent Points of Order:** Repeatedly raising points of order—when valid—can disrupt the flow of the meeting. Highlighting every procedural error forces the board to address them.
- **Appeals:** If the chair rules against you, appealing

the decision requires a vote and can lead to further discussion, delaying proceedings.

- **Strategic Timing:** Raise points of order strategically, especially during contentious debates, to maximize their impact and slow down the process.

Know Your Rights

- **Assert Your Rights:** Understand your rights as a meeting participant or observer, including the right to challenge procedural violations. Use them assertively.
- **Demand Proper Consideration:** If the board tries to dismiss your point of order without consideration, insist that proper rules be followed.

To the Next Level: Media

Should a school board blatantly violate its own procedures or unfairly treat those who seek clarifications or explanations, note that *anyone* can submit a press release to the local news detailing the events which occurred at these meetings. As they are public meetings, many can be recorded and those recordings can be sent to news agencies.