

# SCHOOL BOARD ACTION SHEET

Items in red and underlined will be linked to Chesterfield

All policies must "align" with the VA CODE so Chesterfield's policy should link you to the VA CODE which would help you find your area's. Most districts in the State use boarddocs since they are partnered with the VSBA.

- **GO TO SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS!**

- This is the easiest thing to do to start getting involved
- Find your official school district website.
- Find the link to the school board website. If you can't find it, put the name of your school district and "school board" in a search engine. The calendar should always be on the school district's website.

- **JUST GO** the first time- watch how they are conducted and what the speaking process is like. It is an easy way to meet people who think like you and care about what you care about.

- **YOUR STORY MATTERS!**

- Sign up to speak
  - At the school board website, look for "Citizen Participation" or a similar option.
  - Once you select this option, you will see a button or link to "Register to Speak at Regular School Board meeting" or something along those lines.
- **Your story needs to be heard!** (and your child's) no matter if you think it will make a difference or not, it needs to be on public record, "even if your voice shakes". YOUR voice could give one parent or community member inspiration to do the same
- You can speak usually for 3 minutes about anything being discussed during that particular meeting during the agenda public comment period and/or during non-agenda public comment period on anything pertaining to the public school system in your county
  - write down what you want to say and practice. It helps the nerves!
  - Generally, 200 words is around one minute.
  - Tell your story - identify the main problem and the solution you would like. Give as much detail as you feel comfortable with.
  - You can leave copies for the board members, and also hand any items to the clerk to be submitted for the record.
- **YES, YOU HAVE A VOICE TOO!** Most members of the community think only parents of children in the country school system can speak, this is not correct. *As a tax paying citizen of your county or city*, you have every right to comment on what your tax dollars are being spent on. If you aren't sure, Ask us!

## WITH GOVERNMENT, WHOEVER SHOWS UP- WINS!

- **IF YOU CAN NOT GO**

- **Submit a public comment!**- this also goes under both minutes and public record. Most divisions use boarddocs and the school board should make information public on how to submit public comment or to speak publicly, If not just search for your school board clerk information and ask them.
- **Spread the word** throughout your community about upcoming meeting and why it is important for EVERYONE to go!
- **Watch LIVE!** (and I encourage everyone to watch archived videos usually they go back YEARS.) You will find some of the most vital intel in what has been filed away thinking no one would ever care to dig it up.



- **DOCUMENT! DOCUMENT! DOCUMENT!**
  - Take pictures using either your phone or computer if it has the capability.
  - Most phones and computers have screen recording capabilities if you are unable to save a video
  - Audio record- Virginia is a state where "one party" recording is allowed and there are tons of free apps available
  - Communicate with teachers, principals, etc through email primarily as written word is the hardest thing to dispute
  - Transparency is an issue across the board. Most will not offer up any more disclosing information than they can legally wiggle out of, so ASK THE QUESTIONS! (in email)
- **RESEARCH!!!**
  - **Figure out what is happening.** Who are the key players? How is the information about your issue being shared by officials and/or policymakers? How do other stakeholders feel about this?
  - **Establish the timeline.** What has happened, and what's on the horizon? Are there any immediate deadlines for your issue? Examples include principal meetings, PTA meetings, school board meetings, Board of Supervisor meetings, state policy decision dates. Are there any scheduled votes for your issue? When and where will those votes be held?
  - **Speaking intelligently** with fact and evidence is key to winning an argument- it is worth the investment if you want to make real and lasting change.
  - **Read all "the things".**
    - School board policy and procedure manuals as well as governances and roles and duties for them and the superintendent, policies on boarddocs or your divisions archival site should have date of adoption and all dates modified, etc.
    - Going back to see WHAT was changed is key- you will start to see a pattern of dates.
    - KNOWING what you are fighting that could be in violation under the county charter, Code of Virginia, etc. is extremely important.

## REASONS WHY PARENTS SHOULD ATTEND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

### 1. **Accountability is invaluable.**

There's something to be said about accountability: it encourages responsibility.

Positive changes can happen when parents hold their school board members accountable.

**Your presence alone can remind them of who they represent**, they don't get to make their decisions in a vacuum.

### 2. **Your voice matters.**

By attending these meetings, you'll be better equipped to discuss school issues and make your voice heard.

Having a voice matters. Don't forget that you can speak up during the public comment period.

Learning how to write a press release is an invaluable resource!

### 3. **You'll stay informed.**

When you regularly attend school board meetings, you'll have a better idea of what discussions are on the table and what decisions are being made for your child.

Additionally, you'll understand the decision-making process and how school board meetings work to serve the community.

#### **4. You'll get to know your school board members.**

At these meetings, you get to **connect a face to the name** and see how your school board member's ethics play out as they navigate these meetings.

You'll see firsthand how they make use of their vote on issues that matter.

#### **5. You'll have an impact on the future of your school.**

When you are involved in your local school board meetings, you play a part in the school's trajectory. This, in turn, impacts the future of your community.

Some issues become so big that parents have created petitions and **RECALL EFFORTS**, written letters to the local newspaper editor, written an op-ed, or rallied other parents to speak up at public meetings.

By being informed and keeping others accountable, through proper means, you can change your school's future.

#### **6. Curriculum! Curriculum!!! They are the deciders!!**

It is important to remember that the authority for **approving curriculum lays squarely with a local school board**.

While the state board of education may have standards that have to be met or upheld, the decision rests on the vote of each school board member to accept or reject the recommendations of the superintendent.

#### **7. No one oversees the school board- except the people who elected them!**

Watching a school board meeting will further reveal how the board is governing itself.

Since there is no body – state or local – that oversees the school board, this is the public's responsibility.

The board should follow a meeting protocol, such as Robert's Rules of Order, and have parliamentary procedures built into the conduct of its meetings, this includes **POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION**.

**Voting** on policy adoption or agenda items should always be public and never done in secret

Duties and power of both the **school board** and **superintendent** are extremely important, as well as looking at the bottom of each policy and seeing when they were amended, then going back to that date in archives and seeing what is removed.

THIS IS VERY TELLING IN MOST COUNTIES WITH ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES as you can see here with the **Chesterfield County Superintendent Qualifications** and what they were up until **June 2019**.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, REMEMBER THAT YOU—AS A PARENT AND A TAXPAYING, COMMUNITY CITIZEN—HAVE A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT, AS WELL AS A GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY, TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN. (CHECK OUT PROVERBS 22:6 AND MALACHI 2:15.) SO LET THE FACTS ON FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S WEBSITE—[TRUETOLERANCE.ORG](http://TRUETOLERANCE.ORG)—INSPIRE YOU WITH THE CONFIDENCE YOU NEED TO STAY INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION**