

# #1 DO & #1 DON'T worksheet

#1 DO \_\_\_\_\_

**ASK YOURSELF:**

Did I ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

Have I ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

What ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

How can I ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

#1 DON'T \_\_\_\_\_

**ASK YOURSELF:**

Do I ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

Am I ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

How will my ...  
 \_\_\_\_\_?  
 \_\_\_\_\_?

**ASK YOURSELF:**

Am I a "remarkable" leader?

## ▼ Bonus material

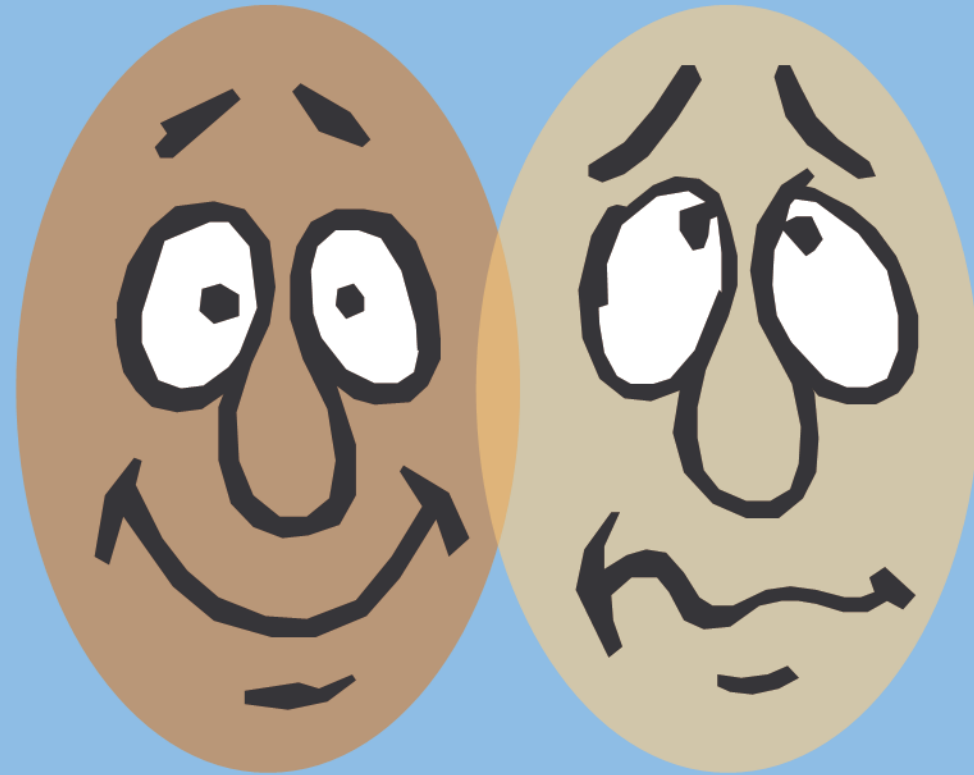
### 5 ALTERNATIVES TO "NO COMMENT"

If you say "no comment," the impression is you are stonewalling, aren't concerned or have something to hide. Instead of opening the door to more scrutiny, try these alternatives.

1. This is a very complex issue, but what I *can* tell you is ... (state the facts or key points).
2. I just learned of this (issue) and don't have all the facts, so it would be premature for me to discuss it now. Let me find out more and get back to you. (Keep your word.)
3. I'm sure you understand that our students' safety is the highest priority right now. We're working diligently to keep parents and the public up to date as events unfold.
4. Our superintendent assures us that he is studying this issue from every possible angle.
5. It's still very early, but a full investigation is under way. We should know more in a few days.

# 60 PR Do's & Don'ts

*Public Relations Tips for School Board Members*



**LEADERSHIP**  
 FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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## 30 PR Do's

1. Do learn everything you can — from board service to superintendent/board roles.
2. New member? Do seek an effective, veteran board member to advise and mentor you. Meet with the school system public relations team to learn about communication and media relations protocols.
3. Veteran board member? Do become a mentor to new board members and be open to learning new skills and about innovative approaches to team governance and leadership.
4. Do speak with one voice — as a board.
5. Do think twice before speaking.
6. Do be a positive education advocate.
7. Do be proactive, not reactive.
8. Do return calls and e-mails promptly .
9. Do ensure your system has an updated communication plan that addresses internal and external communication.
10. Do ensure your system has an updated crisis plan in place that positions to system to "expect the unexpected."
11. Do designate "official" spokespersons. For the board, it's usually the president. For the system, it's usually the superintendent.
12. Do know when it's best to refer questions to designated spokespersons. (Generally personnel matters, day-to-day system operations, comments on behalf of the board and highly controversial issues.)
13. Do stay abreast of local, state and national education news and issues.
14. Do be willing, patient and careful when explaining complicated stories to inexperienced reporters.
15. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
16. Do address harmful rumors and innuendos right away, or they'll fester.
17. Do admit when you make a mistake, and be ready to outline steps for getting back on track.
18. Do admit when you don't know, but find a way to get accurate, timely info.
19. Do listen to your constituents. Become the board member who listens to all the facts before taking a position or passing judgment.
20. Do cultivate relationships with the media, and keep them and your constituents informed.
21. Do understand how board actions and other issues impact your system and constituency.
22. Do practice. (Practice speeches, news conferences, media interviews, etc.)
23. Do study the laws, rules, protocols and policies that apply to school boards and public K-12 education.
24. Do know the facts, do the research, become familiar with information sources and ask the right questions.
25. Do give credit where it is due.
26. Do keep the lines of communication open between you, the superintendent and fellow board members.
27. Do build your board's capacity to work together as a team through open dialogue, training sessions, team-building exercises, retreats and work sessions.
28. Do work as a board team to develop 1-3 key messages that you want your audience to remember about any issue, and look for opportunities to repeat those points. Have your 15- to 30-second "elevator speech" ready.
29. Do act as a board. Be a team and not just a group of individuals. On crucial PR issues, the team includes the board, superintendent, school PR professional and, if applicable, the board attorney.
30. Praise what you want to raise. (If you want to raise student achievement, praise successes in that area. If you want to renew a tax, discuss how it would benefit students.)

## 30 PR Don'ts



1. Don't screw up on a slow news day!
2. Don't micromanage.
3. Don't be a rogue/maverick board member.
4. Don't gossip about board, school business.
5. Don't let your emotions get out of control.
6. Don't make promises you can't keep.
7. Don't play the gotcha game. No surprises.
8. Don't say "no comment to the media."
9. Don't speak "off the record" with the media or have "just between you and me" conversations with the public.
10. Don't speak before you think. Check your facts and figure out what you want to say. You can always ask reporters to call back.
11. Unless you're the official board spokesperson, don't speak for the entire board. If you're sharing a relevant *personal opinion* with the public or media, be sure to say so.
12. Don't be so rigid that you can't be flexible in a crisis or when opportunities arise.
13. Don't speak out of turn or release info that you aren't certain is public record.
14. Don't take board business personally. Agreeably disagree. Be a united front.
15. Don't abuse your position or "political capital." Avoid favors and veiled threats.
16. Don't misbehave. Negative behavior impacts the board, school system and community you represent.
17. Don't stray far from talking points. Share too much, and the message gets lost.
18. Don't duck an unpopular decision. Boards must make the best possible decision for all students in its system given the resources and info they have. Tough choices often come with a price.
19. Don't sit on a good story. Ask the school PR professional to share good news. If you don't tell your story, somebody else will and maybe not in a positive way.
20. Don't hire a superintendent who you can't trust to operate the school system, enforce board policies and meet goals.
21. Don't try to control the media. They have a job to do and don't work for you. Say it, they may print it. So, control your mouth.
22. Never write anything in an e-mail, Internet posting or letter that you wouldn't want to read on the front page of the newspaper.
23. Don't fail to explain that deliberation involves constructive debate, varying viewpoints and weighing the pros and cons.
24. Don't leave your fellow board members or superintendent in the dark. They shouldn't see your PR blunder or learn about your position for the first time on the news.
25. Don't treat reporters like non-entities. Acknowledge them. Respect their deadlines. Keep them informed. Be responsive.
26. Don't go to a board meeting without a clue. Educate yourself. Do your homework.
27. Don't go into board service without a clue. If you only want to "change a thing or two," "fire somebody" or "launch your political career," you don't belong on the board.
28. Don't forget to communicate and exercise good PR even when you don't think you have to. Perception is reality for some. Not all taxpayers have children in school. Not all employees are as informed as they should be. The next crisis may be lurking.
29. Don't blame the board's or system's problems on the media. If they are covering bickering and feuding at board meetings, you don't have a PR problem. You have a board problem. Fix the board problem, and the PR problem will likely go away.
30. Don't lie. Be open, honest and sincere. Keep your word. You can tailor your messages and use discretion when deciding what information to release and when, but use caution. Evading, hiding or blatantly stretching the truth is very much like lying.