



**CANYONS**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Utah School Boards Association Conference

**Let's talk.**

## Tips and Tricks: Difficult conversations



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# New Times, Creative Measures



- Describe today's climate for elected officials.
- Has there ever been a political climate in which we are operating right now?
- What can we do to change that?

# Board Meetings: Set the room temperature

- You can set the agenda.
- Nonverbal communication.
- Maintain a poker face.
- Establish the rules. Follow them.
- Be fair.
- Work with staff in advance to maintain rules, decorum.
- Play the long game.

## ■ TIPS and TRICK: Recognitions



# Conversations: Set the tone.

- Respond affirmatively.
- Set a time limit for yourself.
- Don't allow yourself to be disrespected.
- Find common ground.
- Talk when you can best address their concerns.
- Remember that few conversations are 100 percent private.
- Provide context but don't argue.

## ■ TIP and TRICKS: Ask questions

- "Can you give me specifics?"
- "What makes you say that?"
- "What would you like to see happen?"



# Texts, emails: The 'Write' Way.

- Personalize with salutations.
- Express thanks.
- Broadly re-state their issue.
- Stick to the message.
- Set ground rules for responses.
- Remember that all emails and text messages can be forwarded. In fact, expect it.
- Ask for staff help if you need it.
- Assign staff to respond with approved responses.

## ■ TIP and TRICKS: More honey, less vinegar.

- Thank you for reaching out with your thoughts ...
- Please know that much thought and deliberation went into the decision ...
- Rest assured this is the start of a robust public - input process ...
- All this said, members of the Board of Education appreciate your input. It's valuable for us to hear the perspective of the parents of the students in our schools ...

# Social Media, Press: Telling your story.



- Remember Framing Theory.
- The press is not the enemy.
- Mistakes will happen. Be ready for forgive and move on.
- "Flood the zone."
- Respond judiciously on social media.
- Remember "The Matrix."
- It's not who you are. It's not real.
- You don't have to participate.





## Lessons learned • Biggest challenges in 13 years

- Bus driver accused of abusing autistic children
- Shootings at two schools
- COVID-19 protocols
- Social media

■ Tips and Tricks:  
Extend yourself  
a lot of grace.

# QUESTIONS?

