



SPOTLIGHT ON NEWS



Bob Fisler, Editor

September 2001 Edition



FROM THE PRESIDENT...

By Don Sedgwick

“E-mail Communication Between Trustees: A Two-edged Sword”

Welcome back, board members! I hope you had some time to rejuvenate your minds and bodies in preparation for another terrific year of education in Orange County.

I would like to address an issue that has become increasingly important to board members. If you are like me, e-mail has gone from a novelty to becoming an essential part of everyday life. It is a terrific tool for gathering and disbursing information with one another. However, like great technological breakthroughs, it can be a double-edged sword if we are not careful.

For board members, the ability is there to communicate frequently and painlessly as we can alert fellow trustees of parent correspondence, district correspondence, pertinent educational issues, and personal notes—all in a fraction of the time that it used to take to communicate. Are we allowed, however, to communicate in this fashion? After all, doesn't the Brown Act prevent us from communicating with all of our board members (even a simple majority) in this fashion?

The key for you to consider is the word “deliberation.” We may not, in any way, deliberate with our boards. We should not discuss our opinions or an issue by e-mailing it to the rest of the board members. We can neither discuss how we plan to vote on any item on the agenda, nor solicit their intentions. We cannot express or solicit opinions on any issues relevant to our school districts—agendized or not. We cannot deliberate or discuss any district-related issue by e-mail with our boards. But, then, what can we do?

E-mail can be a useful communication tool, if used cautiously. New information or legislation we would normally forward through the district office with a request to

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(From the President, continued)

distribute to our fellow board may be e-mailed instead. This is fine, as long as you do not deliberate over it. You could e-mail an article for all to read. But, if you attached a comment that you think your district should implement the strategy contained in the article, you may be crossing the line. You might have received a complaint letter from a parent that you would like to share. Fine, but if you attach your opinion of how the district might adjust its policies to address this parental issue, you could be going too far. You might wish to let everyone know of your personal vacation calendar or a new phone number.

Finally, because e-mail is an information tool that is fairly new to many of us, the consequences that can stem from its misuse can be dangerous. Violating the Brown Act is circumventing the public's right to involvement in the education of our children. Penalties for doing so can be severe. We ought to take advantage of this new communicative resource and use it to help one another become more informed as board members. By using restraint, we will assure ourselves the end result of such e-mail will be positive for our communities and our children.

**SUPREME COURT WILL HEAR
DISPUTE ON HOW TEACHERS
GRADE CLASSWORK**

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide in its next term whether school districts violate federal law when they allow students to grade each other's classwork. The justices have agreed to hear an appeal from the Owasso, Oklahoma District, of a federal appeals court ruling that the classroom practice violates the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA. The law guarantees the privacy of education records. The cases will be argued during the Supreme Court's next term, with a decision likely by next summer. (For more details, see the article in Education Week, July 12, 2001.)

*The OCSBA Board of
Officers and Directors
would like to express
heartfelt condolences
to the family and
friends of*

Gloria Scanlon

*Twenty-four
Years of Service as*

***Trustee
Centralia
School District***



From the President of California School Boards Association...

Marilyn Buchi

One of the important roles of our job as a school board member is that of an education advocate. In our local school districts, that part is easy. We advocate within the community for our students, for our parents, for our staffs, for our schools, and for our districts. This is important, natural, probably easy, and is universally accomplished because of the commitment that we have to what we do and to our public schools.

Moving beyond this local advocacy and into the political arena with our local, state and national legislators reduces the numbers active board members. To most of us, this is more difficult and certainly not as much fun. But it is critical. Education or fixing education seems to retain the number one spot on every politician's "To Do" list and this is a major reason for advocacy outside our local district borders.

Becoming acquainted with other elected district officials and their staffs is the first step. This connection opens the door to discussion of issues important to our districts. It also enables us to correspond with them when issues of statewide importance need our advocacy.

The California School Boards Association (CSBA) is heavily involved in advocacy and through our Governmental Relations Department has many avenues of direct contact with those who make the laws that affect our students. The CSBA Legislative Committee, composed of a cross section of school board members from throughout the state, works with the CSBA staff to determine what action to take on numerous education bills. Each legislator in the state is assigned a Governmental Relations Chair to act as a direct link to CSBA on legislative issues. This Chair can act as a connecting point between local board members and our representatives. These Chairs also serve as leads in the lobbying meetings during the CSBA Legislative Action Conference in Sacramento each May.

Some things for your "To Do" list may be these five areas: 1) Get to know your local and national elected officials and their aides; 2) Get to know the CSBA Governmental Relations Chairs who are assigned to your representatives (*Regional Director Virginia Wilson has this information*); 3) Respond to the CSBA Action Alerts that request some legislative contact; 4) Keep informed on legislative issues through as many avenues as possible (*CSBA publications, your district staff, state publications, local newspapers*); and 5) Attend the CSBA Legislative Action Conference in 2002. You may even think this legislative stuff is fun!



SAN DIEGO - NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 1

CSBA Annual Education Conference

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The Education Trade Show

For more information: regarding the conference:

(800) 266-3382

www.csba.org/aec01 (800) 266-3382

Bob Fidler



FROM THE EDITOR...

I would like to extend a personal invitation to all Trustees and Superintendents to attend the OCSBA dinner meetings. These meetings are an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and information. Speakers have been selected to provide the most up-to-date information concerning our districts.

The newsletter is another venue for sharing or expressing ideas. We encourage your suggestions for newsletter topics or information that should be included in a future issue. Please forward information to our editorial staff c/o Catherine Graham, Orange County Department of Education, (714) 966-4313 or catherine_graham@ocde.k12.ca.us

Let us know what you think. We are here to be of service to you — this is your newsletter!

Newsletter Deadlines

August 13, 2001

September 28, 2001

January 14, 2002

February 22, 2002

May 20, 2002

Welcome New Board Members!

Orange County
Board of Education

DEL CLARK

Orange Unified
School District

**KATHY MOFFAT
JOHN ORTEGA
LISSA SMITH**

PAGE

**Political Action
Group Efforts**
Mary Fuhrman, Chairperson

**Community
Redevelopment Agencies
Are You Getting Your Fair Share?**

Dave Doomey, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities Planning, Capistrano Unified School District, will highlight the current status of Community Redevelopment Agencies and the impact to public school funding. Learn about how to ensure your district is maximizing its potential revenue.

OCSBA CALENDAR

General Dinner Meetings

Location: Irvine Marriott, 18000 Von Karman Ave., Irvine 91612
Evening Schedule, 5:30 p.m. PAGE Meeting, 6:00 p.m. Social, 6:30 p.m. Dinner
*Joint ACSA Dinner Meeting



September 12, 2001
October 17, 2001*
January 23, 2002*
March 20, 2002*
April 24, 2002

Officers and Directors Meetings

Location: Orange County Department of Education, Board Room
200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, 92628
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

August 29, 2001
October 10, 2001
January 9, 2002
March 13, 2002
April 10, 2002



ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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2001 – 2002

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2001-2002 OCSBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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