

Case Study: Who Will Censure This School Board Member?

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## Who Will Censure This Board Member?

### Key Issues/Questions

1. As superintendent I would absolutely not allow the incident to affect my personal relationship with Elmer, another board member, the principal or other staff at North Richmond High.
2. No, it is not common for individual school board members to be reprimanded for their behavior.
3. Instead of a reprimand, a conversation in private would be appropriate.
4. I do not believe that the superintendent is correct in his judgment that Elmer was acting unethically by going to the state athletic association with his complaint. Before acting as a board member, a member is an individual with personal concerns.
5. The board should set standards for school board member behavior. It would be wise to hold retreats whereby the policy and code of ethics is reviewed that may address situations such as the one presented in this case.
6. I believe that the superintendent should have talked to Elmer first and explained that he was going to speak to the president or bring it up at the next meeting.
7. Yes, it is legal to vote on matters that affect members of their immediate families although it could be interpreted as a conflict of interest.
8. Social and political behaviors that might reveal the way the school board operates include vocalizing opinions about other members at social events, situations such as this case that would indicate people are using their “clout” for their own personal gain instead of for the good of all.

9. As superintendent, no I would not tell the media about Elmer's behavior because unless it has a direct effect on the members of the community at large, it is best not to publicize certain issues that can only cause a divide amongst the community. This issue absolutely can be and should be dealt with internally.
10. "A school board member seeking the removal of another member must demonstrate willful misconduct or neglect of duty on the part of the member. The Commissioner explained that a member of the board of education or a school officer may be removed from office pursuant to Education Law §306 when it is proven to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the board member or school officer has engaged in a willful violation or neglect of duty under the Education Law or has willfully disobeyed a decision, order, rule or regulation of the Board of Regents or Commissioner of Education. To be considered willful, the actions of the individual must have been intentional and with a wrongful purpose." (<http://publicpersonnellaw.blogspot.com/2011/04/school-board-member-seeking-removal-of.html>)
11. I am not convinced that experiences and elements of academic study can typically prepare an individual for the interpersonal requirements of education administration. Formal education can teach law, protocols, procedures and the like but interpersonal skills are something that comes from within. A leader needs to have the passion to lead and must be moral and trustworthy. Integrity is of utmost importance. These characteristics and qualities are not something that can be learned or taught.
12. My assessment of the school board president is that he is correct in not making a major issue out of this publicly or privately. It is not typical for any board member, president

or not, to shoulder the responsibility of regulating peer behavior. They are just that – peers. You can speak privately to a member but a formal reprimand is not appropriate.

13. The suggestion made by the school board president that the situation should be ignored – advantages include avoiding internal turmoil amongst the board members and disadvantages include the repetition of this type of situation by either Elmer or another member in the future.