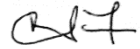


Board Decorum and the Seriousness of the Role
as prepared by Dr. Carmella S. Franco



The role and position of a Board and that of individual Board Members is a serious one. The District exists because of its students, and the Board is there to represent the best interests of the students. As such, it is important to exhibit behaviors that are serious-minded, respectful, and representative of the student-centered position that Board Members embody.

The Oakland USD Board adopted Protocols to govern their comportment during Board meetings and business and also away from the Board room. See attached. The Protocols are contained in Board Policy, specifically BB 9322 *Meeting Conduct*. The Protocols also are included in the beginning pages of the Board agenda for meetings. The intent of the Protocols is to cover a wide array of situations. This is helpful to Board Members as one does not need to guess at how to act, especially during challenging and contentious meetings.

Board members serve as role models to the students and constituents of the school district. The public wants to know that they can count on their Board of Education to present a dignified front in the face of the many challenges facing Boards today. There are nearly 1000 Board in California and approximately 15,000 Board nation-wide. All are charged to keep things in check and to deal with them with a degree of decorum. It is easy to become a Board that is known for its poor Board behavior during meetings, and thus an embarrassment to the community and its students.

Certain Board behaviors at the dais that are not in accord with the Protocols and expected dignity during meetings include: leaving the dais and going into the audience during the Board meeting; clapping at comments made by the public during Public Comments and standing in opposition to fellow Board members; taking photos of speakers; and holding side bar conversations while a fellow Board member is speaking. Taken individually and/or together, the above-mentioned behaviors are very concerning and unacceptable.

Oakland needs to demonstrate that it has a Board that can command the respect of those who are in attendance and/or watching online. Each Board member can do their part in ensuring that this takes place.