



## Sarasota County School Board Report Card

The League of Women Voters of Sarasota has established an Observer Corps to monitor the Sarasota County School Board meetings. The goal of the Observer Corps is to objectively evaluate meetings for ethical, legal and professional conduct on the part of the board and chairperson with respect to the public comment session and the meeting agenda. This evaluation will be shared with the Board and the public following each meeting.

**Meeting Date: 8/19/2025**

A = Consistently    B = Frequently    C = Occasionally    D = Rarely    F = Not at All

<b>Board follows and advances a written agenda.</b> The meeting strayed from the agenda (and probably rightly so) when a new motion was made to change the wording for the code of conduct.	A-
<b>Board limits citizens' comments only to opinions on topics that are in the Board's purview.</b>	A
<b>* Board Chair does not allow speakers to personally attack board members or use abusive language.</b> Although there was no need to stop anyone at this meeting, the chair did not remind speakers to be courteous and respectful at the beginning of public comment.	C
<b>Board Chair treats speakers equitably.</b>	A
<b>Board adheres to Robert's Rules of Order.</b> Sometimes they were followed. Clarification of the Rules was requested several times by Board members, but even after that, members strayed. As a result, the board conversation was very confusing and hard to follow.	C+
<b>The Board Chair runs an orderly meeting.</b> The suggestion to change the wording in the proposed student conduct policy, while well intended, led yet again to a less than orderly meeting. However, it did highlight the need for more discussion on this topic.	C+
<b>Board delegates operational and educational decisions to the professional staff.</b> One commenter raised the issue of better lighting at a bus stop crosswalk. This issue could have been referred to the Superintendent.	B

<p><b>Board gives evidence of being responsive to public comment.</b></p> <p>The public was never given a clear, detailed explanation of the consequences of noncompliance before this meeting...that we would have difficulty applying for grants and receiving federal funds if we had a policy that was out of compliance. Perhaps this full explanation could have been given to the public before the comments began. Instead the board and public had two hours of heartfelt, researched based testimony that seemingly mean little for board members who already knew how they were going to vote.</p> <p>Additionally, board members did not respond to several public comments regarding book challenges and how district policy would be affected by the recent ruling regarding this. According to this ruling, many books should not have been pulled.</p>	C
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### **Additional comments:**

**\*Please note that the wording for the item regarding personal attacks and abusive language will be changed.** It was brought to our attention that commenters are within their legal rights to say almost anything they choose to Board members. This does not mean that the League condones personal attacks or abusive language. We would expect that the chair would take a moment at the beginning of each meeting to remind the public and colleagues to be courteous and respectful at all times. Also, we note that the chair is legally allowed, in extreme cases, to stop a speaker and request decorum or pause a speaker and ask the lawyer for clarification. The chair is most certainly allowed to stop a speaker from disrupting the proceedings of the meeting. Further, if a speaker is disrespectful, when the speaker has concluded commenting and without singling out that individual, that chair could remind everyone that they should be respectful of each other.

The Board has heard nearly 100 comments in the last two meetings alone concerning the lack of inclusion of enumerated classifications of vulnerable individuals in the board's proposed changes to the student codes of conduct. The community continues to come forward with repeated concerns and expresses feelings of not being heard or valued. With the extent of community concern, we would hope the board would find meaningful ways to involve the community in finding acceptable, creative solutions or simply leave the policies unchanged. Speakers have consistently challenged the board to eliminate unnecessary distractions from the more urgent issues facing the board and the public.

Near the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Edwards addressed a concern related to the appointment of Mr. Enos as the new Police Chief for the district. The superintendent does have the right to hire and fire personnel without board approval. Other issues were referenced in Mr. Edwards' comment, but not clarified.

### **Recommendations:**

The public relies heavily on agenda items and their attachments when preparing for board meetings. Comments are prepared with those items considered final and ready for a vote. Change to be made to an item or its documentation, should be noted as such before the meeting---certainly for the board but also for the public. If there is an anticipated need for a change during the course of

the meeting, it should be well planned in advance. Procedures, discussions and votes should be very clearly articulated to board members and also to the community. Only in cases of emergency should new items be added to the agenda during the board meeting. Other new items should be researched and then workshopped for full discussion.