In recent years, we’ve seen concerted attacks on school boards, with protests erupting across Arizona (and the country). Though press coverage often suggests students and staff, and erodes support for public schools... thus clearing the way for the ultimate goal of school privatization. Attacks often take the form of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of board members, teachers, and administrators who take a stand against racism, bigotry, and hate.

What do school boards do? What many who attack school board members lack understanding of board roles and responsibilities, as defined by Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA):

- Hiring and evaluating the district superintendent
- Providing guidance in the development of the budget to ensure funding needed to meet board-established goals.
- Approving and monitoring the budget
- Setting employee salaries
- Approving purchases
- Establishing and approving policies
- Approving curriculum materials
- Adapting the school calendar
- Reviewing regulations for compliance with policy
- Approving personnel actions based on the superintendent’s recommendation
- Closing or constructing schools
- Assessing board effectiveness
- Monitoring progress toward goals

What do school boards not do? Many protestors have unrealistic expectations of what school board members can do. Board duties do not include the following:

- Implementing policy; school boards make policy and superintendents carry it out
- Managing the daily operations of the school district; school boards see to it that the district is managed by professionals
- Evaluating staff, other than the superintendent
- Involvement in employment interviews, other than those for superintendent

Hot button issues for religious right protestors include firing superintendents.

- This is fiscally irresponsible; forced resignations end up costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in severance packages
- Volatile boards that fire without cause struggle to attract solid candidates (though this may be unintentional so they can fire the day-to-day operations of the actual educator)
- There’s not only a teacher retention crisis, but a principal and superintendent retention crisis
- Firing without cause opens school districts to potential wrongful termination lawsuits.

Now there’s not only a teacher retention crisis, but a principal and superintendent retention crisis—yet many who attack school board members lack understanding of board roles and responsibilities, as defined by Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA):

- What do school boards do?
- What do school boards not do?

Hot button issues for religious right protestors include Comprehensive Sex Education/CSE.

- “Fighting against CSE is just another example of not letting professionals do their jobs.”
- “Purity culture” creates and perpetuates fear.
- Hot button issues for religious right protestors include Socio-Emotional Learning/SEL.

- The five pillars of SEL are Self-awareness, Self-management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Making Responsible Decisions... are these important skills for children/people to have?
- SEL initiatives provide tangible benefits. A meta-study of more than 270,000 students shows that SEL interventions that address the five core competencies increased students’ academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate in SEL initiatives.
- Medical experts agree that learning how to manage stress is medically necessary and life-saving for transgender youth (for instance, access to puberty blockers during adolescence is associated with lower odds of suicide.)
- Such decisions should be between youth, their parents, and their doctors—not politicians.
- Medical experts agree that learning how to manage stress is medically necessary and life-saving for transgender youth (for instance, access to puberty blockers during adolescence is associated with lower odds of suicide.)
- Trans people face extraordinarily high levels of risk for physical and sexual violence, at school, work, home, in public spaces, and at the hands of government officials.
- Trans women and trans people of color.
- Bills targeting transgender people—and the political rhetoric surrounding anti-trans bills—send a message that trans people are not worthy of equal treatment, contributing to dangerous stigma that drives an epidemic of violence.
- Trans individuals are four times more likely to experience violent victimization including murder, rape, sexual assault, and aggravated assault.
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Hot button issues for religious right protestors include Critical Race Theory/CRT.

- “CRT is not taught in Arizona’s K-12 schools; CRT is graduate course-level material”
- Studies show that more comprehensive sex ed keeps kids safe(r) from abuse.
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- Trans people are supported.

Hot button issues for religious right protestors include “astroturf” operation orchestrated and facilitated through deep-pocketed donors and strategists via the religious right.

This manufactured outrage — based on a toxic brew of disinformation, religious dogma, and racist culture war propaganda — endangers educators, harms students and staff, and erodes support for public schools... thus clearing the way for the ultimate goal of school privatization. Attacks often take the form of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of board members, teachers, and administrators who take a stand against racism, bigotry, and hate.