

Culture Wars in Seaview

Public Schools

Case Discussion Protocol



**Developed by the
Collaborative on
Political Leadership
in the
Superintendency**

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Culture Wars in Seaview Public Schools



Case Discussion Protocol

Lesson objectives:

- To identify the political challenges that superintendents face
- To examine how micro, meso, and macro political leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions support superintendents in navigating political complexity
- To deepen understanding of strategic reactions to unanticipated political dilemmas

Pre-reading:

- Framework on Political Leadership in the Superintendency
- Case: Culture Wars in Seaview Public Schools

Case Study questions:

- What are the major challenges in this case?
- How does the context (who the leader is, the local context, and/or the national context) influence how the leader approaches the challenges you've identified?
- What does the leader do to respond to political challenges?

Tools:

Graphic organizer for analysis

Lesson Timing:

One and a half hours; optional 30 minutes additional to make personal connections

OPENING (10 MIN)

Today, we are going to talk about a case in which the superintendent of Seaview Public Schools is responding to a barrage of “culture war” issues. As we explore the case, put your feet in the shoes of this leader.

Turn to a partner (2 min each): Take a minute to connect, leader to leader. You've probably been through similar things. What is this case about **at its core?**

Have a few people share-out.

Possible look-fors:

- It is about how to deal with push back when making equity-focused change



- It is about figuring out where to compromise while still moving the work forward
- It is about how and when to open up and explore conflict in educational spaces

Yes, this is not just about how to respond to any single issue because the issues always evolve. So, while you may be tempted to debate the pros and cons of transgender students' use of bathrooms, or culturally responsive teaching, or book bans, your job is to think deeply about how this leader can make change that improves outcomes for youth in an environment where people do not agree.

CONTEXT (20 MIN)

But while we've all faced similar things, every situation is different. Even when we face new challenges in our own districts, we need to reflect on the context because it is always shifting.

- **Micro:** What do we know about the leader? Who is he in this case? Why is this important? (5 min) Chart.
- **Macro:** What do we know about the wider context (external to the district)? What is going on that might influence local change? Why is this important? (5 min) Chart.
- **Meso:** What do we know about the local context? What are the stakeholder groups? What do they bring? Why is this important? (10 min) Chart.

Now that we have a handle on context, and let's assume that the superintendent knows this as well, let's talk about what the superintendent does.

ANALYSIS (30 MIN)

Discuss in small groups:

- What are the **challenges** he is facing? (5 min)
- How does he deal with them? What are his **strategies**? (10 min)
- Now take the strategies and place them on the graphic organizer. What **dispositions** does he lean on most? The least? (15 min)

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION (25 MIN)

Now, we've all been in these situations. And it is so often easier to analyze someone else's work rather than our own.

Based on your analysis, what would you say he did especially well? Ask for evidence. (5 min)



What could he have done better? Ask for evidence. (5 min)

Given where he is at, should he put the Parents Rights policy on the agenda? What are the pros and cons (10 min) (Chart the pros and cons.)

If you had to make a **recommendation** to the superintendent moving forward, drawing on the dispositions that we've discussed today, what is it and why? Ask people to share some examples. (10 min)

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Turn back to your original partner: What do you see as the implications for your own leadership?

Close with big ideas to remember and resources available on CPLS site.

(OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL 30-75 MINUTES)

Now that we've had a chance to discuss the case, it is time to turn toward our own work as political leaders.

Option 1: In pairs, superintendents can talk through this [reflective tool](#).

Option 2: In triads, superintendents can work through [this consultancy protocol](#).

Option 3: In triads, superintendents can work through the grounding exercise in the [Superintendents Political Leadership Field Book](#).

QUICK EVALUATION (5 MIN)

At the end or after the session, we suggest using this set of questions.

Prompts:

1. What do you think about the case analysis process that we went through? How did it support your learning? How could the process be improved in support of your learning?
2. What did you learn from the case discussion about navigating political challenges?
3. What are your current thoughts on what you need to work on as a political leader?