**Independence**

Booster clubs and parent organizations should be independent of the schools they serve. But schools and booster clubs work very closely together and sometimes lines get blurred between the two. Independence can be tricky, but if you understand the basics, you’re off to a great start.

**Rule #1:** The school, or school district, is a legal organization and your booster club is a separate, legal organization. Walmart and McDonalds don’t share the same bank account, tax id number, name, or address and neither should your club and your school. **Your club MUST:**

* Choose a name that does not imply that you are a part of the school
* Obtain an Employer Identification Number that is unique to your club
* Open a bank account in your club’s name and ALL club transactions will run through it
* Establish a legal address for your club that isn’t the school or school district address

**Rule #2:** Stay in your lane. Just like the school has a principal and vice-principals and other administrators who run the show, your booster club has officers who run your club. Sometimes parents like to tell the school principal how to run her show, but at the end of the day, she will make decisions for her school – that’s her job. Conversely, sometimes school employees, like coaches or band directors, want to tell your booster board how to run your show. But guess what? Your club is independent of the school, so you and your board run your own show.

**Basic Rule #3:** Independence does not mean freedom. California school districts have a legal obligation to protect students. No organization can solicit funds on behalf of a California public school without the school district’s explicit approval. That is why most districts have developed an application and accountability program for their parent organizations. If your club isn’t in compliance of the law or a good steward of the money collected, the school district has the right and obligation to revoke your club’s ability to raise funds, access school property and otherwise operate.

**Key Takeaways**

* *The booster club is legally separate from the school district. It’s your job to make sure that you establish and maintain a separate identity.*
* *The school sets curriculum. The booster raises funds and provides volunteers to support the school programs. The booster doesn’t get to run the school and the school doesn’t get to run the booster.*
* *Work hard to foster a great relationship with your school. The booster’s very existence is to support school programs. The best school/booster relationships are those that communicate effectively and often and understand their mutual and independent roles.*