

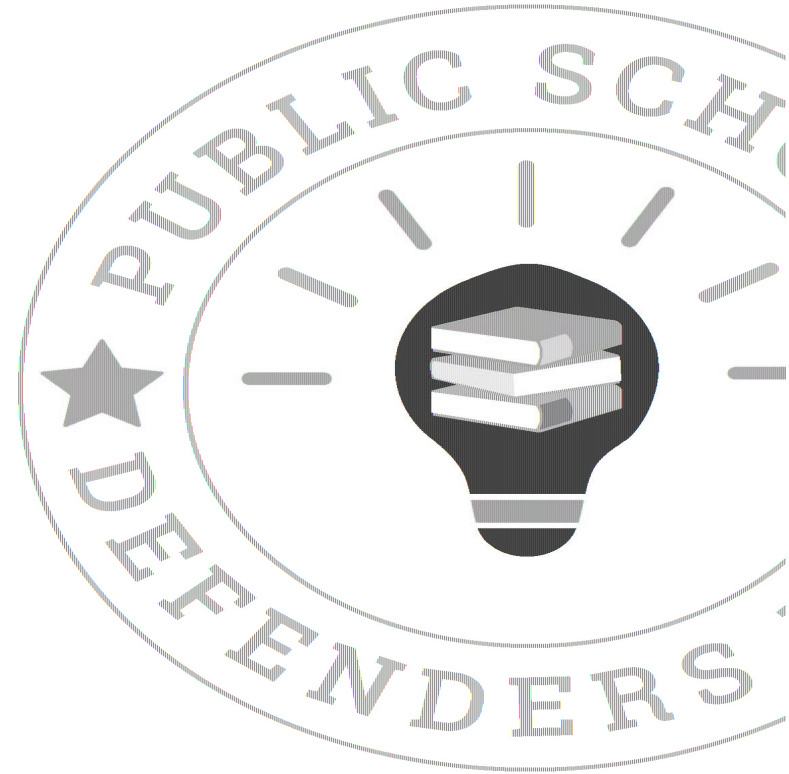
AAUW California

School Board Project: Monitors and Observers Training

April 24, 2025



Standing together for equity.





To attendees, please note:

- Presently, we are in silent mode.
- Chat is set for you to notify the panelists if you are having technical issues.
- The “raised hand” feature is turned off.



- Instead, use the Q&A option to enter questions for the presenters. The presenters will stop periodically to answer your questions or will address them after the webinar is over in a separate document.
- A link to a brief survey will show in the browser when the webinar ends.

Welcome

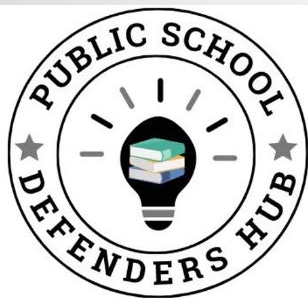


Kathi Harper
AAUW California Public Policy Committee
Chair, School Board Project



Briana Mullen
Executive Director and Co- Founder
Education Justice Academy





Learning Outcomes:

- Empower yourself to monitor school board meetings effectively.
- Learn key CA Education Code requirements to ensure local districts are following the law and protect students.
- Understand key School Board powers, limitations, and how to file a complaint when witnessing violations.

Led by Briana Mullen, Executive Director, Education Justice Academy, & Program Consultant, Public School Defenders Hub

Today's Training Agenda

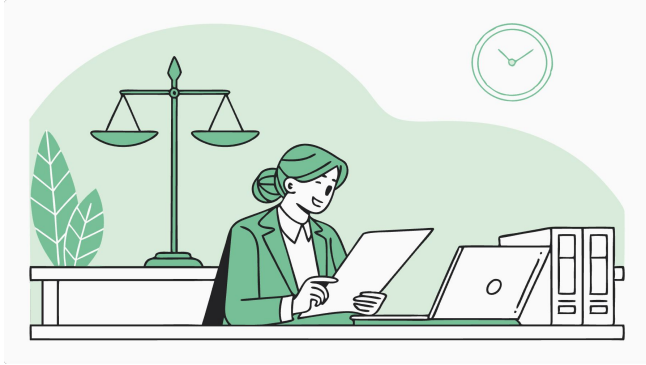
Board Roles: Understanding core functions and constitutional boundaries

Current Rules and Laws: AB 1955, Uniform Complaint Procedures, and critical curriculum requirements

Effective Meeting Monitoring: Meeting, and voting requirements, public comment guidelines

Monitoring Toolkit & Support: Resources and network connections for ongoing observation





Board Role & Current Rules and Laws



School Board Roles

Key responsibilities and positioning of school boards in the educational system:



Independent Bodies

Separate from city/county government



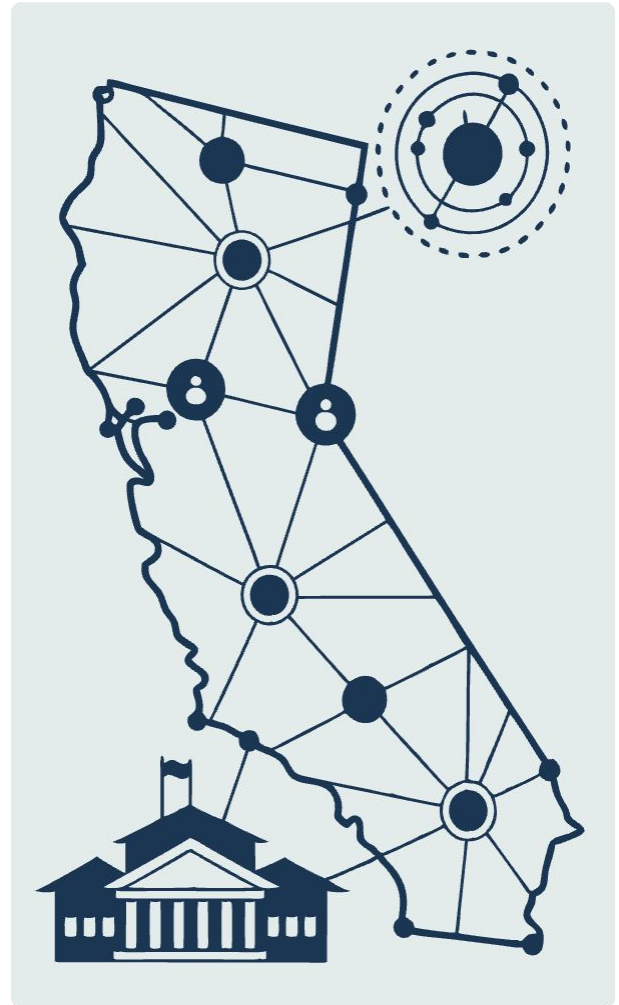
Employers

Hire/review superintendent only



Local Business

Primarily state/federal funded



Core Curriculum Authority

1

Determine Core Curriculum

Within state/federal standards

2

Must Offer Minimal Materials

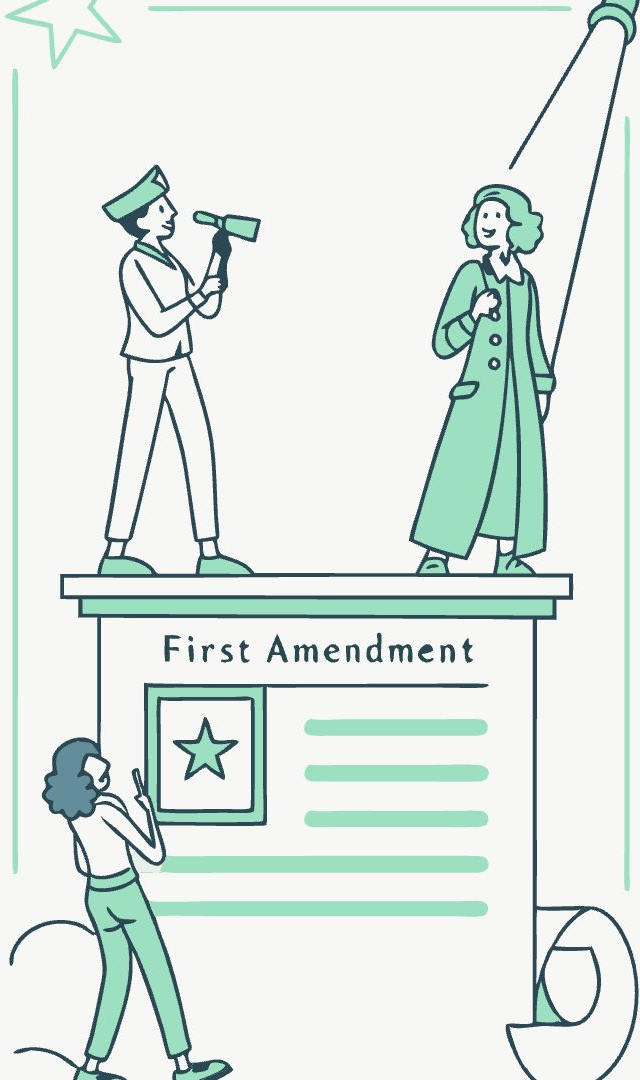
Per Education Code 60604-60618

3

Teacher Involvement Required

EC Section 60002





Constitutional Boundaries



No Political Ideology Motivation

Cannot bar discussions on race, gender, orientation



No Book Banning

Censorship violates 1st Amendment



Equal Protection

U.S. and CA Constitution protections apply



Free Speech

BUT Individual board members retain their first amendment



Look for Buzzwords

Political Wedge Tools

Critical Race Theory (CRT) as wedge issues

Coded Language

"Race-blind" rhetoric

Social Emotional Learning

SEL Programs and mental health support are often targeted

Ban Discussions

"Protecting our Children" rhetoric



Key Curriculum Education Code Sections

Safe Place to Learn Act

Protects student rights

EC 60040 & 60045

Accurate, diverse representation required

EC 51204.5

Social science must include all groups

AB 1078 / EC 243

Protects inclusive materials

EC 51930-39

CA Healthy Youth Act

EC 60119

Sufficient materials required

AB 1955 SAFETY Act



Student Privacy

Bans disclosure of orientation/identity without consent



Employee Protection

No retaliation against supportive staff



Resource Development

CDE to create support materials

Education Code 234

1

Protects Approved Textbooks

Cannot disallow previously approved materials

2

Safe Place to Learn Act (2023)

New board majorities limited in curriculum restrictions

3

Textbook Compliance

No replacing compliant with non-compliant texts





School Restrictions



Cannot Restrict Library Access

Materials must remain available



Must Protect Protected Classes

No limits on materials about protected groups



Must Act Against Discrimination

Failure may result in funding loss

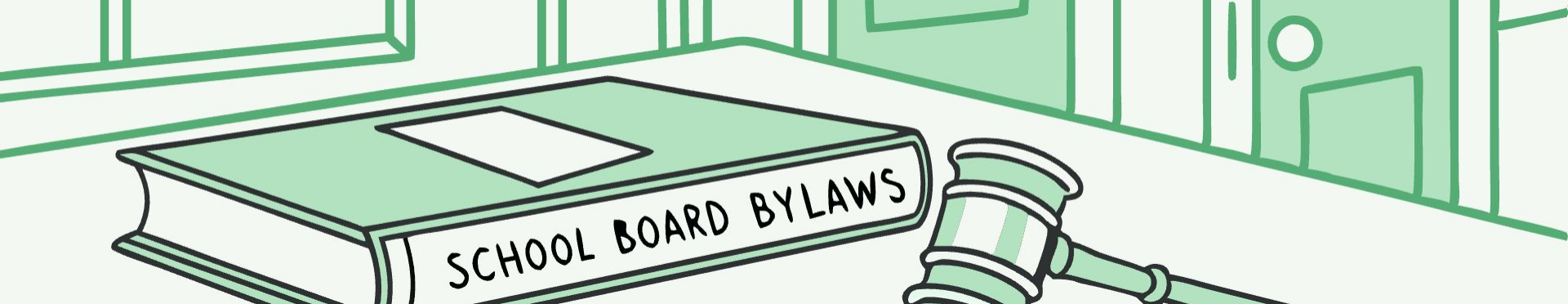
Questions & Reflections





Monitoring and Action





Board Procedural Rules



Quorum Requirement

Minimum members for valid meeting



Remote Voting

Only if policy permits



Emergency Actions

Lower standards during emergencies



Board Bylaws

Found in 9000s of policy manual



Closed Session Rights

1

Agenda Required

Subject to same posting
rules

2

Public Comment Period

Must be allowed before
closed session

3

Hiring Criticism Permitted

Public may comment on district practices

Closed Session Basics

Permitted Topics

Personnel matters

Labor negotiations

Pending litigation

Public Requirements

Must be on agenda

Public comment
allowed

Reporting Out

Must disclose
actions taken

Documents
available on request



Taking Action

Document Everything

Meeting notes

Agendas and votes

Immediate Actions

Review upcoming agenda

Public comment at meetings

Formal Actions

Uniform Complaint filing



Meeting Agenda Requirements

1

Regular Meetings

Agenda posted 72 hours prior



Special Meetings

Agenda posted 24 hours prior



Website Posting

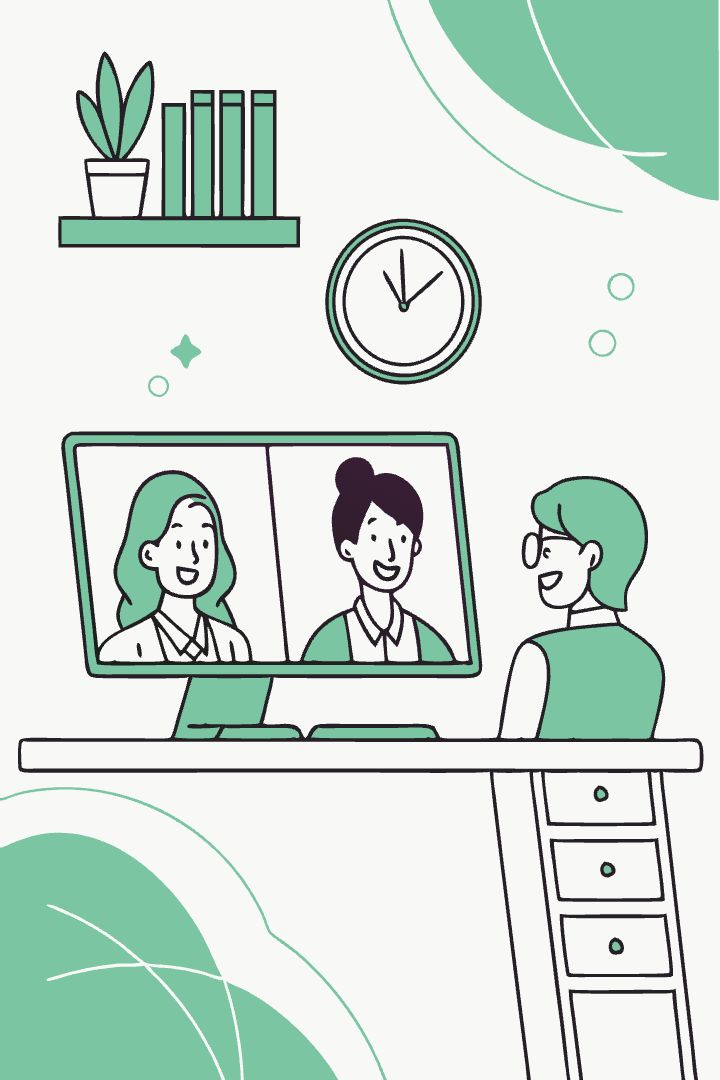
Must be publicly accessible



Description Requirement

Brief description of all items





Remote Meeting Allowances



COVID Era Changes

Remote meetings initially allowed during pandemic



Statute Amendments

Remote meeting options continued



Hybrid Policies

Boards may allow mixed attendance formats



Still Accessible

Member must still post and be available to public

Meeting Exceptions



Individual Contact

Unless becomes serial meeting



Seminars or Conferences

Professional development events



Community Meetings

If open, no board business



Social/Ceremonial Events

No board business discussed





Finding Agendas

Check Multiple Sources

Online, board, meeting room door

Request If Not Found

Email or mail request

Make Standing Request

Regular delivery of all agendas

Research Local Policy

How community members can add items

BB 9322 - Meetings and Agenda

Meeting Process Standards

Meeting Elements

Invocations allowed, Prayer is not

Action vs. Discussion items

Public Access

72 hours for regular meetings

24 hours for special/emergency

Legal Basis

Gov. Code § 54954.2



Voting and Action Red Flags

Off-Agenda Items

Introducing controversial topics not listed

Dramatic Item Changes

Altering agenda items beyond recognition

Hidden Topics

Sneaking items under different topics

Public Intervention

Call out improper procedures immediately



Effective Board Monitoring



Attend Meetings

In-person or online participation



Document

Take detailed notes



Record Proceedings

You have legal right to record



Bring Witness

Have someone corroborate observations



Public Comment Guidelines

100%

Required Access

Public must be granted speaking
time

3

Average Minutes

Standard speaker time limit

0

Name Requirements

Cannot require name to speak



Public Comment Best Practices



Focus on Issues

Avoid personal attacks



Prevent Arguments

One-sided exchanges more effective



Document Intimidation

Note attempts to silence speakers





Uniform Complaint Procedures



File Anonymously

Identity protection available



3-Day District Response

Must report to County office



Even One Student

Applies to individual cases



ALL Students

Must receive complaint materials

Complaint Resources



Comprehensive Guide

ACLU & Defenders Hub resource



Example Complaints

Templates for effective filing



Step-by-Step Process

Clear instructions for success



EDUCATION COMPLAINT GUIDE

For more information, visit [MySchoolMyRights.com/freetoLearn](https://myschoolmyrights.com/freetoLearn)

Overview

In California, every young person should have the freedom to learn, be themselves, pursue their dreams, and get a good education that prepares them to succeed in life. But sometimes, things happen in schools that take away these freedoms, affecting some students more than others.

If you see problems at your school that stop or limit these rights, it can be useful to speak up and file a complaint. Filing a complaint can sometimes help make schools accountable for their actions. Sometimes, filing a complaint means a government agency can start an investigation into your school. This Education Complaint Guide will help you understand how California law protects students' freedom to learn and be themselves, and it'll show you how to file a complaint if your school isn't following the rules.

If you want to learn more about students' rights in California's public schools, visit [MySchoolMyRights.com](https://myschoolmyrights.com)

1

WRITE WHAT HAPPENED

In your own words, describe what happened in detail. Include the name of the school or school district; the names of the people involved or witnessed the event; & dates. Do this soon after the event or incident.



2

GATHER EVIDENCE

Write down the names of any witnesses or people who were involved. Save copies of emails, board agendas, policies, social media posts, videos, photos, or other documents that are relevant to the incident.



3

IDENTIFY THE VIOLATION

To help you identify legal violations, use the “Cheat Sheet to California Education Laws.” To identify policy violations, research your school district’s Board Policies & Administrative Regulations on the district’s website.



4

IDENTIFY THE AGENCY

There are different government agencies that may receive a complaint for your issue. See our “Education Complaint Guide” to identify the best agency for your issue.



5

SUBMIT YOUR COMPLAINT

Be sure to write the date on the complaint and keep a copy of the complaint for your records. Keep an eye out for any deadlines.



6

APPEAL, IF POSSIBLE

You may be able to file an appeal if your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction.



Issue	Accurate and Inclusive Curriculum
Examples of Potential Violations Related to this Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to teach inclusive history, meaning history that includes Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities • Failure to teach inclusive sex education • Failure of a school board to adopt or removal of curricula materials (like schoolbooks) or library books because they include Black, Indigenous, or people of color and/or LGBTQ+ people)

Issue	Discrimination or Harassment on the Basis of a Protected Class
Examples of Potential Violations Related to this Issue	<p>Protected classes are groups of people who share a particular characteristic that is protected from discrimination. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and/or immigration status.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A trans student being denied access to the restroom matching their gender identity • Black students being disproportionately disciplined • School districts adopting discriminatory policies that single out students based on their identity

← Some of these are currently being challenged in different courts, but are standing law in California

Effective Monitoring Toolkit



Learn Local Policies

District agenda publication rules



Active Monitoring

Review agendas, attend meetings



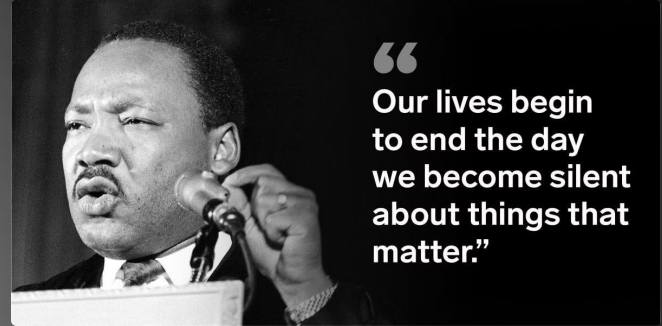
Public Participation

Speak up, request materials



Use Available Tools

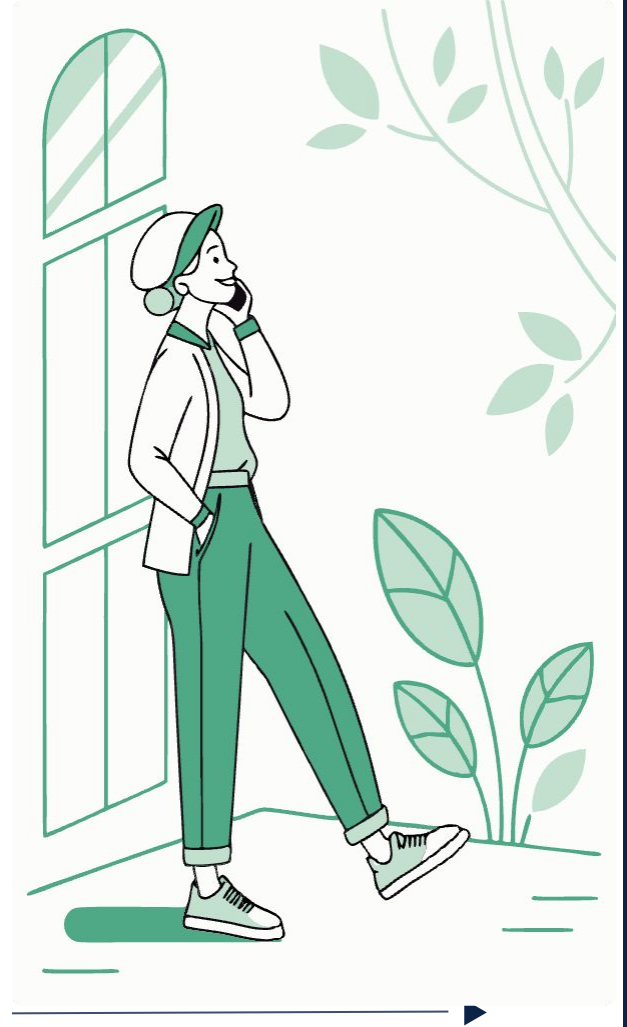
Complaint forms, media contacts



“

Our lives begin
to end the day
we become silent
about things that
matter.”

Questions & Reflections





Questions & Support Network



Email Updates

Periodic resources
and information



Resource Library

Ask questions, share
information



Events

Virtual and in-person
gatherings



Contact

programs@cpihub.com

Give Us Feedback

Please click **Continue** to participate in a short survey.

you will be leaving zoom.us to access the external URL below

[https:// docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScjggnUviyOhGhkS2Rzohxubbs-ufS9ujasuT4Vn0qdCFHiwg/formResponse](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScjggnUviyOhGhkS2Rzohxubbs-ufS9ujasuT4Vn0qdCFHiwg/formResponse)

Are you sure you want to continue?

