



How Do I Become A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER?

The board of education is a volunteer representative body elected by the registered voters of the local public school district. The board governs the school district and provides leadership and advocacy for public education. School boards make decisions in the best interest of the entire district.

People serve on school boards for many reasons, but most do it for the satisfaction they get from seeing the positive impact that they can have on students and the community.

"We need to give every child the opportunity for a quality education. It's not only about the quality education system we have built, but the quality citizens we have encouraged to go forward."

*-Board Member
for 19 Years*

Board Member Commitment

School board service is not to be taken lightly. Individuals need to clearly understand the role of the school board, the time commitment involved and the legal limitations of the school board. School board members in most school districts serve three-year terms. Taxpayers entrust the school board to responsibly manage a multimillion-dollar budget to provide a quality education for their students.

It is important to understand what it means to be a board member before deciding to be a candidate. In addition to the information in this publication, individuals are encouraged to attend board meetings to observe the school board in action.

School Board Authority

School boards derive their power and authority from state laws and regulations. The board has authority to take action only when it is acting as a whole during an official board meeting, i.e. action occurs by majority vote at a public meeting. Individual board members have no authority to provide direction to the superintendent or other staff, change policies or procedures, direct operations of the district or make other individual decisions.

School boards are not responsible for day-to-day classroom or district management. That job is left to the professional educators hired by the school board.

School Board and Superintendent

One of the most important responsibilities of the board is to hire a certified and qualified superintendent. Through policies and defining the educational goals for the district, the board empowers the superintendent to provide leadership to the staff and manage all district operations. The superintendent serves as the liaison between the board and staff.

An effective school board develops and maintains a collaborative relationship with the superintendent to support continuous improvement in the district. The board is also responsible for evaluating the superintendent's performance based on clear goals, adherence to policy and protection of district assets.

School Board Roles and Responsibilities

In compliance with state and federal laws, school boards establish policies and rules to serve as guidelines for the general management and administrative actions of the district. Some other key responsibilities include the following.

Clarify District Purpose and Establish Goals

District improvement and student learning success do not happen by chance. Defining the purpose (mission) and identifying primary goals of the district, with input from the district community and in collaboration with the superintendent, are key responsibilities of the board. A clear focus helps district leaders and staff connect their daily work with achieving the district's purpose and priorities. The school board identifies the results the district is expected to achieve.

Collaborate with the Superintendent and Delegate Authority

The board hires the superintendent and delegates authority to the superintendent to determine how to achieve the district goals, provide leadership to the staff and manage district operations.

Monitor District and Superintendent Performance

In the classroom, teachers measure student achievement and improvement throughout the year. Likewise, the school board and superintendent determine how district success will be measured.

Systematic use of data informs the board's decisions and assessment of district and superintendent performance. The board ensures accountability for the district's improvement from year-to-year. Further, the board has an obligation to ensure that district funds are being used efficiently and effectively.

Connect with the Community

Effective school boards engage in ongoing two-way communication with the entire district community. It is essential to frequently communicate district priorities and progress toward achieving them.

Likewise, it is important to systematically seek input from the community regarding district priorities. District surveys and public forums are examples of ways to obtain input.

Be Responsible Leaders

The board, collectively and individually, must take full responsibility for board practices. Following policies, working together as a team, valuing and respecting each other's opinions, and keeping information confidential are just a few of the ways board members demonstrate responsibility and build trust in the community.

Each board member is provided the opportunity to share opinions and participate in discussions related to the meeting agenda items. Each board member is provided the opportunity to vote. Once the issue has been decided, the entire board should move forward with the decision. This promotes a culture of unity and support for the district.

"If the center of our actions is truly the children we serve, then we are not competitors but rather teammates striving for the same end goal — reliable, responsible, educated young people."

-School Board Member

Board Member Expectations

In addition to fulfilling board responsibilities, board members are expected to:

1. Attend all board meetings. Up to 3 unexcused absences may result in removal from the board.
2. Arrive on time for each board meeting and stay for the entire meeting.
3. Be informed of district issues by reading the board packet and related policies prior to the board meeting. Expect to spend a few hours each month to thoroughly understand the agenda issues.
4. Ask questions to clarify information in the board packet prior to the meeting. Follow district policy or procedure by directing questions to the board president or superintendent.
5. Keep information from closed sessions confidential.
6. Share own opinion but consider and respect the opinions of other board members.
7. Make decisions based on evidence rather than personal experience or beliefs.
8. Observe laws against nepotism and conflict of interest.
9. Advocate on behalf of your students, the district and public education within your community and with local, state and federal elected officials.
10. Complete 18.5 hours of training within 12 months of being elected and one hour refresher training every additional year you serve, as required by law. Contact the Missouri School Boards' Association for training opportunities, www.mosba.org, 573-445-9920.

How do I become a candidate for the school board?

If you are ready to make a commitment for school board service, make sure you are eligible. Missouri law specifies the qualifications that must be met. For complete details, refer to MSBA's A Candidate's Legal Guide to Running for the School Board at www.mosba.org/board-candidates/.

For most districts, filing for candidacy occurs in the local school district office. Contact the school district office for the specific procedures and office hours for filing.



What are the legal requirements for school board candidates?

Candidates in most Missouri districts are required to complete a financial interest statement. There are also rules for running a campaign, contribution limits, using a campaign committee, record-keeping and reporting.

Details are provided in MSBA's A Candidate's Legal Guide to Running for the School Board on the MSBA website at www.mosba.org/board-candidates/.

What's next if I am elected?

Soon after the election, successful candidates must attend a school board meeting to take the oath of office. Contact the school district office for details.

Also at this meeting, most school boards will elect board member officers to serve until the next election cycle. The primary responsibilities of the officers are described below. More specific responsibilities are described in board policy.

President

The president leads the board meeting and is responsible for following the agenda and maintaining orderly conduct.

Vice President

The vice president performs all duties assigned to the president in the event of the president's absence or inability to fulfill those duties.

Treasurer

The treasurer shall be the custodian of all funds derived from taxation for school purposes and signs checks and other documents as authorized by law or the board. The board may elect a treasurer who is not a board member and may provide them with compensation for their services.

Secretary

The secretary of the board has a lot of responsibilities related to keeping accurate records of the board meetings and fulfilling legal requirements. The board may elect a secretary who is not a board member and may provide them with compensation for their services.

About MSBA

The Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) is a private, not-for-profit organization that exists to help school boards ensure all students succeed. MSBA serves as the unified voice of school board members throughout the state and provides board member training, comprehensive policy support, legal assistance, superintendent search guidance, and other services designed to allow school boards to put maximum resources in the classroom. MSBA's Center for Education Safety is the only organization in Missouri supporting school safety and security.

School boards remain an essential institution to ensure that local communities are connected to their public schools. MSBA is the only organization in Missouri established by and governed by local school board members.