

School Boards put the Public in Education

The decision to run for your local school board is one to which much thought and consideration must be given. Serving as a board member is one of the most important responsibilities that a citizen can undertake. If elected, the educational standards which you, together with your fellow board members, establish will affect the future of the students, the community, and society.

Being a board member is a complex and varied position, and often is frustrating as you struggle long hours with difficult choices. However, it is also rewarding, as you watch students succeed and go on to lead productive lives as the result of educational opportunities you helped to create.

There are certain implications in being on the team responsible for the entire district, which you may want to consider. Decisions need to reflect what is in the best interest of all students and all citizens. This demands constant effort and a strong, unselfish commitment to serving other people.

If you are willing to devote your time and talents to meeting these challenges, the Arkansas School Boards Association applauds your decision to run for election and wishes you the best of luck. We are ready and willing to serve you.

Additional Sources of Information

Key Work of School Boards

This National School Boards Association publication describes the role of school board members and how it relates to increasing student achievement.

Access *Key Work* at
www.nsba.org/keywork

A Handbook for Arkansas School Board Members

This Arkansas School Boards Association publication outlines the roles and responsibilities of school board members, as well as other important information.

Access the *Handbook* at
arsba.org/resources/asba-handbook



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RUNNING FOR SCHOOL BOARD

It's About Students!

A candidate guide from the
Arkansas School Boards Association

Fundamental roles of school boards

Vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, conduct, ethics

School boards are most effective when members focus on the big picture; making policy, setting goals and engaging stakeholders, all with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. When boards focus too heavily on administrative issues, children suffer. Divided boards lead to a divided community.

Legally defined duties of a school board are:

- make, enforce and obey district policies
- hire and evaluate the superintendent
- set the district's vision, mission and direction
- oversee district finances and budget
- approve the employment of staff
- attend legally convened board meetings
- conduct hearings
- visit schools annually when students are present
- receive training and professional development
- follow state and federal laws and Arkansas Department of Education regulations governing public schools, including the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act

Additional roles of school board members include:

- monitor and advocate for student achievement and district progress
- advocate student needs to lawmakers and stakeholders
- collaborate with community partners
- ensure facilities are safe and adequate
- align resources with goals

What qualities make a good board member?

Integrity, commitment, vision, courage, respect

Outstanding school board members share common traits. A board member has no individual authority; an effective board acts as a whole and respects the expertise of the district's staff. Most good board members develop and strengthen skills over time through experience and continued training. Board members who run on a single issue or for personal gain often create discord in a school district.

Outstanding school board members are:

- motivated by the best interest of ALL kids
- passionate about public education
- share responsibility for fiscal accountability, facilities and student academic achievement
- willing to follow high ethical standards
- strong communicators, willing to listen
- ready to rely on facts and weigh all sides of an issue before making a decision
- well informed about current issues in public education
- supporters of the democratic process and accept the will of the majority
- willing to spend time and energy on board business
- committed to learning by participating in on-going training
- collaborative and able to function as part of a team
- willing to exercise power only at legally held meetings

Who is eligible and what is required to run for a school board position?

- must be a qualified voter residing in the school district – and in the respective zone if members are elected from zones
- must not be an employee of the district (a family member employed by the district does not disqualify you from running for office)

How do I get started?

- visit your county clerk's office to request a packet of material about running for office
- circulate a petition no earlier than 100 days prior to the election to gather signatures of at least 20 qualified, registered voters who are residents of the district (and respective electoral zone if school board members are elected from zones)
- file the petition with the county clerk during a one-week period ending at noon 70 days before the election

Is there information on the Internet to help me understand the process?

Yes, get a copy of the publication, "Running for Public Office," published by the State of Arkansas, which contains information about petitions, certifying as a candidate, information sheets, campaign contributions, financial statements and other important facts; access the publication online at: www.sosweb.state.ar.us