



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 serves as a leader and champion for public education in the community. School board members represent the interests of the entire district, not a subgroup or specific area of the district community. Board members come from all walks of life and are as diverse as the communities they serve. 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

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. The taxpayers of the district 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 should 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. The school board delegates district administration and daily operations to the superintendent.

School Board and Superintendent

One of the most important responsibilities of the board is to hire a certified and qualified superintendent to provide district leadership. Through policies and defining the educational goals for the district, the board empowers the superintendent to function as the chief executive officer in managing 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

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. District improvement and student learning success do not happen by chance. 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

The board, collectively and individually, takes 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 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 support 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 Commitment

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 opinions while listening and respect the opinion 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, as required by law. Contact the Missouri School Boards' Association for training dates and locations, 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*.

Filing for candidacy occurs in the local school district office and opens at 8:00 a.m. on the Tuesday that is 16 weeks prior to the election for most districts. Filing closes at 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday 11 weeks prior to the election. Contact the 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 board meeting to take the oath of office. Contact the district office for details.

Also at this meeting, the board will typically elect officers to serve until the next election cycle. The officers and their respective responsibilities follow. The board must determine if the district secretary and treasurer will be filled by a board member. If the secretary or treasurer is not a board member, compensation for services must be provided.

President

The president leads the board meeting and is responsible for following the agenda and maintaining orderly conduct. The president consults with the superintendent to plan the agenda; signs all legal documents as required by law; calls special meetings of the board; appoints special committees subject to board approval; acts as public spokesperson for the board; and performs other duties formally allocated by the local board of education, State Board of Education, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or by legislative enactment.

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. The board may assign other duties to the vice president.

Treasurer

The treasurer shall be the custodian of funds derived from taxation for school purposes; execute a bond of security; receive and deposit all monies of the district and pay out upon order of the board; sign checks and other documents as authorized by law or the board; provide monthly report to the board reflecting current balance in district funds; and many other duties related to finances of the district.

Secretary

The secretary of the board has a lot of responsibilities, only some of which are reflected here (see MSBA policy BCC). The secretary must be present at all regular and special meetings of the board and committee meetings as requested to keep an accurate record of the proceedings. The secretary must also keep accurate attendance records, complete minutes of the meetings, keep all board records in a secured location, notify members of board meetings, post notices required by law, securely keep copies of district business records, and secure all district election results.

MSBA Delegate and Alternate

The delegate serves as the liaison between the local board of education and MSBA. In this capacity, the delegate will attend the MSBA Delegate Assemblies in the summer and fall; participate in the development of MSBA advocacy positions; serve as an advocate for public education through communication with elected officials; and share information between the board and MSBA. It is preferable for the delegate to be an experienced board member. The alternate delegate will assume the role of delegate if the delegate is unable to serve.

The Missouri School Boards' Association is a private, not-for-profit organization that exists to help school boards succeed.