



# Running for your local school board

A guide for school board candidates

## Serve your community and its children

Community service is a civic duty. It can be very rewarding. Serving on a public board of education requires a commitment of energy, time and talent to work as a team to help the children and adult students in your community.

The men and women elected to represent their communities on Ohio's school boards provide valuable leadership to public schools.

### The board member

Ohio's school board members, one of the largest groups of elected officials in the state, are charged with one of the major responsibilities in government — to provide the best educational opportunities possible for the youth of Ohio and to manage and control the political subdivision of the school district.

### What does a school board member do?

Once a person has met the qualifications, been properly nominated, duly elected and officially sworn in, his or her real job begins. No one can know the pressures, politics and satisfactions of such a position until he or she has had the experience of serving on a board of education.

A school board sets educational goals and establishes policy for the school system based on state laws and community values. Perhaps the most important responsibility of a school board is to employ a superintendent and treasurer and hold them accountable for achieving those educational goals and managing the day-to-day affairs of the district in accordance with the school board's policies.

Board members make decisions on a wide range of issues, such as hiring and evaluating a superintendent and treasurer; setting district policy; planning student services; goal-setting and long-range planning; adopting curriculum; establishing budgets; engaging parents; being good fiscal stewards; acting in the best interest of the school district and within the scope of their legal authority; and creating community relations programs. A board member should be a skilled decision-maker; however, decisions are only made by the board as a whole at a public meeting.

Another important part of the board's work is its public relations role. School board members help build public support and understanding of public education, and lead the public in demanding quality education. The school board serves as a link between schools and the public.



### Board member responsibilities

The role and function of board members often are misinterpreted by the public, and in some cases, by board members themselves. The board is a policymaking body and members are the chief advisors to the superintendent on community attitudes. Board members do not manage the day-to-day operations of a school district; they see to it that the system is managed well by professionals.

Board members are not education professionals. They do not evaluate staff, other than the superintendent and treasurer, nor do they become involved in employment interviews, other than those of the superintendent, business manager and treasurer. Board members may be consulted during the hiring process for other positions, such as assistant superintendent.



## Ohio School Boards Association

8050 North High Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43235-6481

(614) 540-4000 • (800) 589-OSBA • fax: (614) 540-4100 • [www.ohioschoolboards.org](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org)

## Learn about being a board member at a free workshop

OSBA will be conducting a free, two-hour Pre-board Candidate Workshop on Saturday, July 20, 2013, in Columbus. The session will run from 10 a.m.–noon at OSBA's office (8050 North High Street), and is led by veteran staff members.

This workshop is for people who are thinking about running for their school board and current board of education members who were appointed to office.

Space is limited, so please call (800) 589-OSBA to register.

## Unable to attend?

Visit the board candidate section of OSBA's website at [www.ohioschoolboards.org/candidate-for-school-boards](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/candidate-for-school-boards) for information on running for the board of education.

## A good board member

We often hear that one person is a good board member or another is a bad board member, and yet we seldom hear a clear definition of what constitutes a "good" board member.

In reality, there are about as many philosophical theories about boardmanship as there are board members. However, there are some acceptable guidelines. Members must recognize that seldom do two persons react to the same problem in an identical manner, so flexibility is necessary.

As a start, the following guidelines are offered. A good board member:

- Knows that he or she can legally act as a board member only when the board of education is in session. No one person, unless authorized, should speak on behalf of the board.
- Avoids administrative decisions or attempts to second-guess the administration. The superintendent is the chief administrator and the board has no administrative function.
- Is well acquainted with school policies.
- Should vote at all times in the best interests of the school district.
- Is flexible and realizes there are times when changes must be made, when tradition cannot be honored and when pressure must be ignored.
- Remembers that board business often requires confidentiality, especially in processes involving students, personnel, land acquisition, negotiations and security.
- Is interested in obtaining facts, but also remembers that the administration has responsibility for operating the schools and cannot spend all its time making reports to an individual board member.
- Is a good listener at board meetings, on the street corner, in church or anywhere else approached, but never commits himself or herself, the board or the administration.
- Knows that the reputation of the entire school district is reflected in his or her behavior and attitude.
- Is able to support a decision when it is made.



## What is the Ohio School Boards Association?

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) was founded in 1955 to serve the needs of the state's local boards of education. The non-partisan, not-for-profit association's mission is to lead the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

OSBA is an association of member boards of education. Members have a wide range of services available to them, including training, advocacy, legal assistance, administrator searches, negotiation assistance and policy development, among others.

For more information about school boardmanship contact OSBA at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. An excellent source for boardmanship information, including the latest in education-related legislation and issues, is OSBA's website. Visit it at [www.ohioschoolboards.org](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org).



## Plan to attend a Board Candidate Workshop

OSBA will be conducting five Board Candidate Workshops in August and September. Veteran staff will lead candidates through a concise and valuable program to help them better understand the everyday roles and responsibilities of school board members and the legal aspects of being a board member.

All sessions (except Sept. 7) run from 6 p.m.–9 p.m. The session on Sept. 7 runs from 9 a.m.–noon. Registration and buffet

begin a half hour before the workshop begins.

The dates and locations are:

Aug. 20 — Ohio University Inn, Athens

Aug. 22 — Hilton Garden Inn, Perrysburg

Aug. 27 — Dayton Marriott, Dayton

Sept. 5 — Northeast Ohio Medical

University (NOMU), Rootstown

Sept. 7 — OSBA office, Columbus

*See back page for more information.*

## Running for your local board of education

### Eligibility requirements

To run for a school board seat you must be:

- a U.S. citizen;
- at least 18 years old;
- a resident of the state for at least 30 days preceding the election;
- a resident of the school district for at least 30 days preceding the election;
- registered to vote in the school district for at least 30 days preceding the election.

### Conflicts of interest

There are conflicts of interest which all board members must be aware of so as not to jeopardize their reputation or the reputation of the school district. In addition to actions and relationships prohibited by the school statutes, other prohibitions are set out in criminal statutes and statutes enforced by the Ohio Ethics Commission. Please note that these statutes need to be read together. Even though under one statute there may not be a conflict, there could be a conflict under another.

Among the statutory prohibitions are:

- No member shall have, directly or indirectly, any pecuniary interest in any contract of the board or be employed for compensation by the board of which he or she is a member (*Ohio Revised Code Section (RC) 3313.33*).
- No member of a school board may knowingly authorize or employ the authority or influence of his or her office to secure authorization of any public contract in which he or she, a member of his or her family or any of his or her business associates have an interest (*RC 2921.42*).
- No board member may use or authorize the use of the authority or influence of his or

her office to secure anything of value, or the promise of anything of value, to himself or herself, or solicit or accept anything of value that is of such a character as to manifest a substantial and improper influence upon him or her with respect to his or her duties (*RC 102.03*).

The above listing is neither all-inclusive nor does it list the many exceptions to these rules. They also are subject to interpretation by the courts, the Ohio attorney general's office and the Ohio Ethics Commission. If you think that you may have a potential conflict of interest, please check with your district counsel, county prosecutor, city law director or the Ohio Ethics Commission at (614) 466-7090.

### Compatibility of public offices and positions

It is possible that if you already are a public employee or officeholder, a position on a board of education may be incompatible with your current position. Before seeking election, potential candidates should make certain they are eligible to serve. An index of compatibility of offices opinions is available on the Ohio attorney general's website. Contact the Ohio attorney general or OSBA for more information.

### Deciding to run

You've now had the opportunity to review what a board member does, characteristics of good board members, eligibility requirements and potential conflicts of interest. Still interested? If so, the following section will give you the legal requirements for getting nominated and campaigning.

### Filing your petition

A candidate must file a petition to run for election to a board of education. This petition must be filed by 4 p.m. on Aug. 7, 2013, the 90th day before the Nov. 5 general election (*RC 3513.254, 3513.255*). As of March 2013, the filing fees are \$30.

The number of registered voters' signatures needed varies. Local and exempted village district petitions must have 25 valid signatures (*RC 3513.254*). A candidate in a city district with a population fewer than 20,000 must have 25 valid signatures; a population of 20,000–49,999, 75 valid signatures; a population of 50,000–99,999, 150 valid signatures; a population of 100,000 or more, 300 valid signatures (*RC 3513.254*). Educational service center governing board candidates must have 50 valid signatures (*RC 3513.255*).

Candidates may obtain the petition forms and discuss questions about filing with their county board of elections or the Ohio secretary of state.

### Campaigning

After filing your petition, it's time to begin gathering support. Candidates for boards of education must comply with all requirements relating to political campaigns. For instance, you must periodically file an itemized statement of campaign contributions and expenditures. Also, all campaign advertising must include the name and address of the candidate or the chairman, treasurer or secretary of the candidate's campaign committee (*RC 3517.20*). For further information on campaign laws, contact your county board of



elections or the Ohio secretary of state (elections section) at (614) 466-2585 or visit [www.sos.state.oh.us](http://www.sos.state.oh.us).

Every member of, or candidate for, a board of education of a school district or ESC having an average daily membership (enrollment) of 12,000 or more students (as most recently certified by the Ohio Department of Education) must file a financial disclosure statement with the Ohio Ethics Commission. The filing date for board members is on or before April 15 of each year. Candidates for boards of education (including incumbents) must file such statements not later than 30 days prior to the

election upon which his or her vacancy is to be voted. Write-in candidates must file no later than 20 days prior to such election. Any person appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term must file within 15 days after he or she qualifies for office.

### Election

Members are elected on a nonpartisan ballot on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in odd-numbered years. The term of office is four years, although in certain instances, two-year terms must be filled to complete an unexpired term. Your term begins on the first day of

January after the election and expires on Dec. 31. Most boards of education have five members; however, some larger districts have seven. Two members (or four on a seven-member board) are elected at one general election and three members are elected at a general election two years later.

Vacancies caused by resignation, death or any other reason are filled by an appointment made by the remaining board members.

Joint vocational school district (JVSD) boards are appointed from the boards of education that send students to the JVSD. The number of members appointed to a JVSD board varies.

# OSBA Board Candidate Workshops

If you wish to become one of Ohio's nearly 3,400 school board members, prepare yourself by attending one of OSBA's Board Candidate Workshops. Veteran staff of the association will serve as your workshop presenters. Directions to each location are on the OSBA website at [www.ohioschoolboards.org/event\\_listing](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/event_listing). All sessions (except Sept. 7) run from 6 p.m.–9 p.m., with registration and buffet beginning at 5:30 p.m. The session on Sept. 7 runs from 9 a.m.–noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.).

### What will I learn from this workshop?

- school board powers and duties
- the most difficult things to learn about being a school board member
- campaign issues, including campaign finance
- board member ethics and behavior
- conflicts of interest
- compatibility of public offices and positions
- locally developed policies
- Ohio's Open Meeting Law

Time for a question-and-answer session is included.

### Board Candidate Kit

Workshop registrants also will receive a Board Candidate Kit, which includes:

- *Candidate: A practical guide to running for school board*
- a subscription to the *OSBA Journal*, the premier bimonthly magazine for school board members
- a subscription to *Briefcase*, a semimonthly newsletter
- other useful materials

Mail registration to:

OSBA, 8050 N. High St., Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43235-6481

## 2013 OSBA Board Candidate Workshops registration form

Please enclose \$90 to cover registration, the meal and an OSBA Board Candidate Kit.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

I am a candidate for the \_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education in \_\_\_\_\_ County.

This is my first campaign for a board seat

I am running for re-election

Check the seminar you wish to attend. Space is limited. Reservations are accepted in the order received. Walk-in registrations are welcome on a space-available basis.

Aug. 20 — Ohio University Inn, Athens

Sept. 5 — NOMU, Rootstown

Aug. 22 — Hilton Garden Inn, Perrysburg

Sept. 7 — OSBA office, Columbus

Aug. 27 — Dayton Marriott, Dayton

Pay by check

Pay by credit card

Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_

expires (Mo./Yr.) \_\_\_\_\_ billing ZIP code \_\_\_\_\_