



# Become a voice for Ohio students

## *A guide for 2021 school board candidates*

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

### What does a school board member do?

The broadest definition of a school board's role is that it acts as the governance team for the school district. It is important that the board serves as a positive and responsible liaison between the school district and community. School boards adopt policy and oversee the district's policy manual. The board's most important role is to employ the superintendent and treasurer and work closely with them to establish and set policy, vision and long-range goals and be accountable for the fiscal health and opportunities provided to the district's students and families.

School board members need to be strong district ambassadors to the community and work to build public support and understanding of public education. Remember, individual board members do not hold authority unless it has been delegated to them. The board's legal authority is held by the governing body as a whole and is exercised through voting in public meetings.

### Board member responsibilities

The role and function of board members often are misinterpreted by the public. The board is a policymaking body and members are the chief advisers 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 professional administrators.

Board members do not evaluate staff, other than the superintendent and treasurer, nor do they typically 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.

## KEY DATES

**Aug. 4** nominating petition must be filed with county board of elections by 4 p.m.\*

**Nov. 2** Election Day

**Jan. 1** Newly elected board members take office

\*If your district is one of the few that has a primary election, your nominating petition will be due earlier. Check with your county board of elections.



### Ohio School Boards Association

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# What is a good board member?

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

In reality, there are about as many philosophical theories about board governance as there are board members. Members must recognize that people usually don't react to the same problem in an identical manner, so flexibility is necessary. However, there are some acceptable guidelines.

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 single person can act for the board. No board member, unless authorized, should speak on behalf of the board.
- Avoids administrative decisions or attempting to second-guess the administration. The superintendent is the chief administrator, and the board has no administrative function.
- Is well acquainted with school policies.
- Votes 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

## What makes a good school board member?

- public education advocate
- skilled decision-maker
- courage to stand up for your convictions
- willing to devote time and energy to your elected position
- a good team player

that the administration is responsible for operating the schools and cannot spend all its time making reports to an individual board member.

- Is a good listener at board meetings, in the community or anywhere else, 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.

**It's a rewarding service.** And you'll have the satisfaction of watching students receive their diplomas, knowing that you helped shape tomorrow's citizens and leaders.

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

OSBA will be conducting a free, two-hour Pre-Board Candidate Webinar on Saturday, July 10, 2021. The virtual event will run from 10 a.m. to noon and be led by veteran staff members.

This webinar 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 register online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/preboard-candidate-workshop> or call (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA to register.

## 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 nonpartisan, 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, transportation consulting and policy development, among others.

OSBA's website ([www.ohioschoolboards.org](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org)) is an excellent source for boardmanship information, including the latest in education-related legislation and issues.

# Running for your local board of education

## What you need to know

### 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 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 of which all board members must be aware to prevent jeopardizing their reputation or that of the school district. In addition to actions and relationships prohibited by school statutes, other prohibitions are set out in criminal statutes and statutes enforced by the Ohio Ethics Commission (OEC). 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 (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

# School Board ELECTIONS

FILING DEADLINE 4 P.M. ON AUG. 4

anything of value, or the promise of anything of value, 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 list is neither all-inclusive nor does it list the many exceptions to these laws. They also are subject to interpretation by the courts, Ohio Attorney General's Office and OEC. If you think you may have a potential conflict of interest, please check with your board counsel, county prosecutor or city law director, or contact OEC at (614) 466-7090.

### Compatibility of public offices and positions

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 opinions discussing compatibility of offices is available on the Ohio attorney general's website ([www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov)). Contact the Ohio attorney general at (800) 282-0515 or OSBA at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA for more information.

### 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. When elected, 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.

## How to become a school board candidate?

- You must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen and both a resident of your school district and registered to vote in your school district for at least 30 days prior to the election.
- You can obtain an election packet from your county board of elections office that includes the necessary forms and petitions required to become a candidate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG](http://GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG)

# Running for your local board of education

## Getting started

### Filing your petition

A candidate must file a petition to run for a seat on a board of education. This petition must be filed with his or her county board of elections by 4 p.m. on Aug. 4, 2021, the 90th day before the Nov. 2 general election (RC 3513.254, 3513.255). As of February 2021, the filing fees were \$30.

The number of registered voters' signatures needed varies:

Type of school district	Number of signatures required
Local and exempted village	25
City (population under 20,000)	25
City (population 20,000 to 49,999)	75
City (population 50,000 to 99,999)	150
City (population greater than 100,000)	300
Educational service center (ESC)	50

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 for political campaigns. For instance, you must periodically file an itemized statement of campaign contributions and expenditures. Also, most campaign advertising must include a disclaimer with the phrase "paid for by" followed by the name 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 a total student count (enrollment) of 12,000 or more (as most recently certified by the Ohio Department of Education) must file a financial disclosure statement with OEC. Candidates for boards of education, including incumbents, must file such statements no later than Oct. 4, 2021. Write-in candidates must file no later than Oct. 13, 2021. Candidates for districts that have a primary election must file 30 days before the primary election. Write-in candidates for districts with a primary must file 20 days before the primary. If the district where you are a candidate has a total student count of 12,000 or more and a primary election, contact OEC at (614) 466-7090 for the filing deadlines.

## SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE TRAINING

## Attend a Board Candidate Workshop or Webinar for insight on running your campaign

OSBA will be conducting five **Board Candidate Workshops** in 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 campaigning and being a board member. The cost to attend is \$50.

The dates and locations are:

Sept. 8 — ESC of Northeast Ohio, Independence  
Sept. 9 — Laurel Oaks Career Campus, Wilmington  
Sept. 15 — Wood County ESC, Bowling Green  
Sept. 16 — Muskingum Valley ESC, Zanesville  
Sept. 18 — OSBA office, Columbus

All sessions (except Sept. 18) run from 6 p.m.–9 p.m. The session on Sept. 18 runs from 9 a.m.–noon. Registration begins a half-hour before the workshop.

As an alternative, OSBA also is offering a condensed version of this workshop as an on-demand webinar beginning Monday, Aug. 9. The first half of the **Board Candidate Webinar** will focus on board roles and responsibilities, and the second half will cover campaign finance and legal issues. The cost is \$50.

Workshop and webinar registrants 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; and a subscription to Briefcase, a semimonthly newsletter.

Registration information is available at [www.getonboard.ohio.org/board-candidate-workshops](http://www.getonboard.ohio.org/board-candidate-workshops). Visit that website to register online or contact **Laurie Miller**, OSBA senior events manager at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG](http://GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG)**