

## **Have YOU considered running for the SCHOOL BOARD?**

### ***What you should know about school board service***

New York State School Boards Association  
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### **The New York State School Boards Association**

The New York State School Boards Association was founded in 1896 in Utica, N.Y., and incorporated in 1935. The Association's headquarters are in Latham. NYSSBA coordinates activities designed to serve the interests of New York State's school boards. It provides information and advice on school board issues to its members and cooperates with other educational organizations for the welfare of public school children in the state. During the legislative session the Association advocates for adequate state support of education and enactment of legislation that favors the interests of the public schools.

NYSSBA conducts a wide-ranging program of education for school board members and administrators as well as an annual delegate assembly and convention. One of the most important Association services is its orientation academies in July and September for new school board members. Participating in one of these is perhaps the most effective way a new board member can learn about his or her job quickly. The expenditure of public funds for the New York State School Boards Association has legal basis in section 1618 of the Education Law.

For more information about NYSSBA programs and services, contact the Association at (518) 783-0200 or via e-mail at

nyssba@nyssba.org. Or check out our website at <http://www.nyssba.org>.

These are challenging times for public education. School boards are seeking men and women who find excitement and satisfaction in confronting tough challenges and working collegially to overcome them.

The board of education is a uniquely American institution. It keeps the country's public schools flexible and responsive to the needs of their local communities. A member of a board of education in New York State takes on one of the most important responsibilities that can be assigned to any citizen: helping to plan the education of the state's youth.

### **What makes a good school board member?**

The legal requirements for board membership are few, but qualifications for effective service are many. The most effective board members possess most or all of these attributes:

- **Effective Communicator**- Can describe what he or she wants and describe what others want; a good listener.
- **Consensus Builder**- Capable of working toward decisions that all can support and willing to compromise to achieve that goal.
- **Community Participant**- Enjoys meeting a variety of people, can identify the community's key communicators and reaches out to the community.
- **Decision Maker** – Knows his or her own as well as others' decision-making styles, can support group decision-making.
- **Information Processor** – Can organize priorities and schedules to handle lots of verbal and written information.

- **Leader-** Willing to take risks, be supportive of board colleagues, district staff and community.
- **Team Player-** Helps promote the board's vision and goals.

### **What does a board member do?**

With children always their ultimate focus, school board members act officially only at the board table, working with other board members to accomplish the following:

- Create a shared vision.
- Set student performance standards.
- Oversee development of assessment program based on those standards.
- Account for student achievement results.
- Adopt the annual budget, aligning district resources to improve achievement.
- Create a healthy environment for work and learning.
- Build strategic partnerships.
- Sustain the district's progress through continuous improvement.
- Adopt and maintain current policies in written format.
- Hire and evaluate the superintendent.
- Ratify collective bargaining agreements.
- Maintain strong ethical standards.

### **How do I become a candidate?**

School board members in New York State, except for those in the five largest cities-Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers- receive no remuneration except the satisfaction that comes from rendering an indispensable Public service.

Generally, school board candidates must be at least 18 years old,

qualified voters in the school district and able to read and write. They must be residents of their districts continuously for one year (as little as 30 days or as long as three years in some city school districts) before the election. They cannot be employed by the board on which they serve or live in the same household with a family member who is also a member of the same school board. Local school board members in the New York State are elected, except for those in the New York City and Yonkers who are appointed. The method of election may vary from district to district. Check with your superintendent of schools or your district clerk to learn about the voting plan in your district.

With limited exceptions, school board members serve three-, four- or five-year terms. Terms are staggered so all board positions are never open at the same time. By state law, school board and budget elections, in all districts except Albany and the Big 5, must be held on the third Tuesday in May.

**Procedures for filing petitions** for vacancies on a school board vary depending upon the type of school district. Generally, candidates must submit a nominating petition to the school district clerk. The petition must be signed by at least 25 qualified district voters or 2 percent of number of those who voted in the previous annual election, whichever number is greater. In small city school districts nominating petitions must be signed by at least 100 qualified voters. The petition must include the candidate's name and residence, the vacancy in question, the incumbent's (if any) name, the residences of the persons who signed the petition and the length of the term of office for which the candidate is being nominated. The petition must be filed with the district clerk at least 30 days (20 days in small city districts)