

# Becoming a School Board Member



A Guide for School Board Candidates



# Thinking about public school leadership?

- Good school systems begin with good school boards. School boards have the ability to positively impact student achievement.
- If you are willing to put in the necessary time and effort, you can have an impact on your local schools.
- Service as a school board member is one of the most unselfish forms of public service that anyone can be called upon to perform.

*Do you have what it takes to make a difference for students in your schools?*

# What is a School Board?



Education is a civil right and public education is America's most vital institution.

The basic function of a school board is to provide local citizen control over public education, representing community beliefs and values in the education of our children.

School boards have a responsibility to all of the citizens in their community to prepare young people to live productive and satisfying lives.

A school board member should always focus on what is best for students – providing a world-class education.



School boards reflect the community's vision for student success and are accountable to the public for student performance. School boards are the voice of the community to lead children to excellence.



# Why Serve on a School Board?

*School board members often put in long hours on complex issues with no pay and take criticism when things don't go right... So why serve?*

There is a satisfaction that comes from:

- Ensuring a quality education for youth in the community and developing good citizens;
- Helping shape tomorrow's leaders, workforce, and innovators by preparing students for the future;
- Providing a voice to make your local district the best it can be for students, teachers and staff.

*Leading All Wyoming Children to Excellence*



# Public Education in Wyoming

## STATE OF WYOMING

- The ultimate responsibility for education rests with the State of Wyoming. The State has delegated much of that responsibility to the local school board.
- School boards – although locally elected – are state agencies carrying out a state function.
- Though school boards have wide latitude in governing their schools, they are subject to numerous state laws and regulations.

## LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Perhaps the single most important job of a school board is to employ a superintendent and to hold that person responsible for managing the schools in accordance with law and board policy.
- The board should also set educational goals for the schools – based upon state laws and community values – and see that the superintendent and district staff vigorously pursue those goals.



# Wyoming Election Code

The election of members of the board of trustees of each school district is held at the regular polling places in each district on the Tuesday next following the first Monday in November in general election years. Terms of office run for four (4) years beginning at 12:00 noon on the first day in December following the election.

A qualified elector resident in a school district is eligible to hold the office of school district trustee in the school district, but only from the trustee residence area in which he/she resides if the district is divided into residence areas. A “qualified elector “ is defined as:

- A citizen of the United States;
- At least eighteen (18) years of age on the day of the next election;
- Actually and physically a bona fide resident of Wyoming.

# Wyoming Election Code (continued)



A qualified person may file an application for election in the office of the county clerk not more than ninety (90) or less than seventy (70) days prior to the election.

No person may hold an elective public office in any governmental entity which either provides any funding for or receives any funding from another governmental entity in which that person holds elected office. If a person also is elected to a public office while holding another public office, the person shall resign from the public office first held prior to assuming the new office.



# Being a School Board Member



School board members in Wyoming serve without pay and are prohibited by law from having a significant financial interest in any business transacted by the school district.



The term of office for a school board member is four years. Most board members serve two or more terms.

Today's board members say they spend at least 30 hours a month in board work. This number is likely increasing because of the changing nature of our society and its schools.

# Preparation for Service on a School Board

A person who plans to run for the school board should acquire a basic understanding of the local district, including:

- Purpose (What is the district trying to accomplish?)
- Organization (Who does what?)
- Finance (Income and expenses)
- Governance (State law and local Board policies)
- Board procedures (How is business conducted?)

A candidate should meet with the superintendent to learn about the district and to discuss challenges and opportunities facing the Board.

# Governance as a Board

- Because a school board is a governmental body, it can take action only by majority vote at a public meeting.
- The individual board member has no authority other than the right to cast a vote at such a meeting.
- A board member who attempts – without authorization – to speak for the total board, to direct members of the staff, or to make other individual decisions is acting outside the law.



# Board – Superintendent Relationship

Responsibility	Board	Superintendent
<b>General</b>	Governance	Administration
<b>Policy</b>	Adopts	Suggests/Implements
<b>Meetings</b>	Discussion and Decisions	Serves as a Resource
<b>Budget/Finance</b>	Adopts and Monitors	Prepares, Administers, Monitors, Details
<b>Instruction</b>	Establishes Criteria, Approves, Monitors	Recommends, Oversees, Monitors, Details
<b>Personnel</b>	Establishes Criteria, Approves or Rejects	Interviews, Recommends, Hires, Evaluates, Promotes, Trains
<b>Labor Relations</b>	Provides Guidelines, Ratifies Contracts	Monitors progress within guidelines
<b>Student Services</b>	Adopts Policies	Recommends, Implements, Directs
<b>Operations</b>	Adopts Policies	Implements Policy, Make Recommendations
<b>Community Relations</b>	Communicates and Collaborates	Communicates and Collaborates

# Roles of the Board for Improving Student Learning

1

**Set Clear Expectations**– Boards need to communicate high expectations and narrow the focus for improvement.

2

**Create Conditions for Success**– The system should be aligned to support leadership and direct resources to stay a course.

3

**Hold the System Accountable**– Use of data to monitor progress creates a system of accountability.

4

**Build Collective Will**– Connection with stakeholders helps create urgency around the purpose and hope for change.

5

**Learn Together**– The Board should be a model for learning with commitment to improvement.

# The Best Board Members



School board members come from all walks of life. The ability to function as one member of a governing board is not determined by sex, occupation, race, income or social standing. Effective school board members, however, are characterized by the following:

## The Best Board Members

- The ability to work as a member of a team, including an open mind and an ability to engage in give-and-take to arrive at a group consensus.
- The willingness to spend the time required to become informed and to do the homework needed to take part in effective school board meetings.
- A desire to serve children and the community, and a strong belief in the value of the public schools.

# Traits of Effective School Boards

- **High expectations, clear goals:** Set high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction. Define clear goals to meet the vision.
- **Belief that all children can learn:** Share a belief in what is possible for students. Look for challenges to be met rather than excuses.
- **Focused on achievement:** Focus on policies to improve student achievement.
- **Collaboration and communication:** Inform and engage stakeholders.
- **Data savvy:** Identify student needs and make decisions based on data.
- **Goals and resources aligned:** Align and sustain resources to meet district goals.
- **Team leadership:** Develop a board-superintendent leadership team focused on the mission.
- **Team training:** Build shared knowledge, values and commitments for the district's improvement efforts.



## **Engaged School Boards Can Make a Difference in Student Performance**

Research has shown that a good school board can positively impact student achievement.

You can make a difference in the life of a child through school board governance.

You can help lead Wyoming children to excellence.

Feel free to contact us.

## Questions? Need More Information?



2323 Pioneer Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
(307) 634-1112

[www.wsba-wy.org](http://www.wsba-wy.org)  
[wsba@wsba-wy.org](mailto:wsba@wsba-wy.org)