



WISCONSIN
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL BOARDS

GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES

2012 Spring Election Edition

Fostering Effective School Board Practices for Student Success

Published by:

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL BOARDS, INC.

122 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 400

Madison, WI 53703

Phone: 608-257-2622 or 877-705-4422 (toll-free)

wasb.org



A MESSAGE FROM THE WASB PRESIDENT

Welcome to the challenging and rewarding world of school board member service! Thank you for considering this important position.

The common mission of school board members is to improve the achievement of students and prepare them to be active, productive members of our society and democracy.

You approach the position of school board member as an individual, but all of your actions will be as a board, working with the superintendent. It will be your responsibility to identify the needs of your students, recognize the challenges of your district, and to celebrate success with your communities.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards is here to serve new and experienced board members. We have a very knowledgeable staff ready to assist you. The seminars, workshops and conferences we hold around the state will help you grow as a board member, and our publications will help keep you informed and up-to-date on education issues.

Good luck! Our students thank you for considering a commitment to education in Wisconsin.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Eloranta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Rick Eloranta
President, WASB
President, Owen-Withee School Board

CONTENTS

	Page
Advocates for Children	1
Qualities of a School Board Member	1
What Does the School Board Do?	2
Questions and Answers	4
The Wisconsin Association of School Boards.....	6
The Elements of Board Leadership	9

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

School boards and school board members are uniquely qualified to be advocates for boys and girls.

A member of a school board is entrusted with one of the most important responsibilities that can be assigned to any citizen—that of helping to direct the education of the youth of his or her school district.

In no other country is there local responsibility for and authority in education comparable to the American school board. This local responsibility and authority—local control—varies in degree from state to state, but it assures that local public schools are flexible and responsive to community needs.

Wisconsin school board members are the elected representatives of their districts and set policy for the education of the district's children.

In Wisconsin, over 2,800 school board members are making decisions which affect over 800,000 children enrolled in the public schools of the 424 districts in the state. These board members, as individuals, generally have no more power or authority than any other citizen in the district. It is when the individuals are meeting as a board that they can make decisions affecting the district.

Board members in Wisconsin must go through an established procedure to gain election to the school board. Your district administrator or district clerk will tell you the specific requirements for your district. General requirements are included in this brochure.

State law provides that school board elections be held to coincide with the spring primary and spring general election for other nonpartisan offices.

QUALITIES OF A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

There are many qualifications and qualities which experienced school board members have indicated are important to school board membership. These include:

- A commitment to the belief that all children of the school district are entitled to have available to them a beneficial educational program.
- An open mind and readiness to learn.

- A willingness to attend various seminars and workshops which can help them make intelligent decisions in school affairs.
 - A vision and an ability to understand changes in our society.
 - The ability to act with other school board members to advance the best interests of the school district.
 - The capability to defend the philosophy and goals of the school board that they developed and to understand the criticisms offered by people with differing views.
 - A willingness to invest the hours that will be necessary to faithfully discharge their duties.
 - Freedom from conflict with any other interest.
-

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL BOARD DO?

School boards and school board members deal with local educational conditions and decide local educational issues. Their power and authority are established in the Wisconsin and federal constitutions and statutes. School boards have the general responsibility for the management and supervision of their school districts.

Wisconsin laws provide specific direction for the organization of school boards in common, union high, and unified school districts and in the Milwaukee Public Schools. While the overall responsibility of each of these types of school districts is basically the same, some distinction is made in the powers assigned to them. A school board in a common or a union high school district, for example, shares some district powers with an annual meeting of the electors.

Major Responsibilities:

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: The school board adopts academic standards for pupils and establishes expectations for education in the district. The school board monitors student achievement and exercises general supervision over the schools.

POLICYMAKING: Policymaking covers the broad range of rules and regulations that school boards enact, alter or repeal. Board policies are the basis of school district operations. To have a well-organized school system, the board needs a sound philosophy of education as a basis for policymaking.

EVALUATION: Evaluation is a continuous function that applies to policies, people and programs. All facets of school operations should be evaluated regularly because evaluation points out strong and weak points in the school system and establishes a basis for future action. Although the school board should welcome information and advice from all sources, the final responsibility for evaluation rests with the board.

BOARD-ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONS: Board members should be aware of the difference between their role and that of school administrators. In essence, boards set policy, and administrators carry it out. Thus, the school board should set its goals and operational policies and expect the district administrator to carry them out. Although the board should refrain from becoming involved in the day-to-day operation of the school, it should follow up on the administration and operation of the schools and require periodic reports for purposes of evaluation.

BUDGET RESPONSIBILITY: An important responsibility is the development of a district budget. The board, after a hearing, approves and adopts an annual budget for the district based on the educational plan of the district and the recommendations of the administrator. The board supervises the execution of the budget, reviews school district accounts and business procedures and provides for an annual audit of the accounts as required by law.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Another important part of the board's work is its public relations role. A board member should be concerned with building understanding and support of public education. A board member should lead the public in demanding better education. This means communications; it means serving as a link between the school system and the public; and it means interpreting the schools to the public and the public to the schools. It also means helping to establish a climate for change when change is necessary.

POLITICAL RELATIONS: In addition to public relations, the school board must be aware of political relations. While election to the school board is conducted on a nonpartisan basis, education is deeply involved in politics. For a school board to be effective, its members must be willing to keep abreast of the actions of other governmental bodies and agencies and be willing to participate in the system, where appropriate.

More detailed information on the role, rights and duties of a school board member in Wisconsin is available from a variety of sources through the WASB.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What are the legal qualifications for being a school board member?

A member must be an eligible elector of the district. To be an elector eligible to vote in the election, a person must be:

- (a) A citizen of the United States;
- (b) 18 years of age or older;
- (c) A resident of the district for at least 28 consecutive days preceding the election.

In some school districts, school board members are elected to numbered seats or according to a plan of apportionment of members among the cities, towns and villages in the district. In either case, each board member is elected by the votes of the electors of the entire school district.

The code of ethics for local governmental officials prohibits any local public official from using his or her office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for private benefit for himself or herself, or his or her immediate family, or for an organization with which he or she is associated. Further, board members are prohibited by a criminal statute from having private, pecuniary interests, either direct or indirect, in school district contracts of more than \$15,000 in any year. Some limited exceptions to this prohibition are enumerated in the Wisconsin statutes (see s.946.13). The state common law also may prohibit school board members from being employed by the school district where they are on the board and may restrict other private activities of board members.

A person who is a public officer in some other capacity should determine if there is a legal incompatibility of offices between the held office and the office of school board member before seeking school board membership.

Q. What are the election procedures for the office of school board?

In Wisconsin school districts, school board members are elected in the spring in connection with the election of municipal and judicial officers.

In common, union high and unified school districts, candidates must file a declaration of candidacy and, if required, nomination papers with the school district clerk on or before 5 p.m. on the first Tuesday in January, or on the next

day if Tuesday is a holiday. This deadline may be extended by 72 hours where an incumbent, without prior written notification, fails to file for the election.

Q. What are some of the campaign finance requirements for a school board candidate?

Among the campaign finance requirements in chapter 11 of the statutes, every candidate or personal campaign committee must file a campaign finance registration statement with the school district clerk in a common, union high or unified school district.

While every school board candidate must be registered, a school board candidate may claim an exemption from filing financial reports and a termination report. If a candidate declares on the registration statement that he or she does not anticipate accepting contributions, making disbursements or incurring obligations in excess of \$1,000 in a calendar year and does not anticipate receiving a contribution or contributions from a single source, other than the candidate, exceeding \$100 in that year, no financial or termination reports need be filed. Otherwise, such reports must be filed. Requirements for campaign depositories and treasurers are also set out in chapter 11.

Q. Do school board members get paid for their service?

In common and union high school districts, the annual district meeting may vote annual salaries for board members or an amount for each school board meeting the member actually attends.

In unified school districts, each school board member may be paid an annual salary or an amount fixed by the school board for each school board meeting the member actually attends.

In the Milwaukee Public Schools, the members of the board of school directors are paid an annual salary in an amount set by the board.

Q. Are school board members protected from civil suits?

The laws of Wisconsin provide some protection for school board members and other public officials who become involved in a legal action in their official capacity.

However, school board members may not be entirely immune from personal liability. They may be held liable for their acts if they intentionally exceed their authority, fail to act in good faith, or fail to perform mandatory duties.

Q. How are vacancies on school boards filled?

Vacancies in school board offices in common, union high and unified school districts are filled by appointment by the remaining members. Such appointees shall hold office until a successor is elected and takes office. When a vacancy occurs in the office of a board member who is in the last year of his or her term, or when a vacancy occurs after the spring election but on or before the last Tuesday in November in the office of a board member who is not in the last year of his or her term, the successor shall be elected at the next spring election. When a vacancy occurs after the last Tuesday in November and on or before the date of the spring election in the office of a board member who is not in the last year of his or her term, the successor shall be elected at the second-following spring election. A vacancy on the board of school directors in the Milwaukee Public Schools is filled by a special election.

THE WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Inc. (WASB) is dedicated to fostering effective school board practices for student success. It is an organization that works to assist local school boards and bring them new ideas, leadership, resources and programs that will enable their school districts to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

The WASB is a voluntary membership organization whose primary mission is the advancement of education through the tradition of local citizen control of, and accountability for, the state's public schools. Founded in 1921, the WASB is dedicated to serving Wisconsin's school boards.

The WASB represents school boards' interests by maintaining close contact with the Wisconsin and federal governments, the National Association of School Boards, and other state and national educational agencies.

The WASB's activities focus on developing effective leaders and schools in every district of the state where education policy becomes reality for Wisconsin's schoolchildren. Special emphasis is placed on activities and actions that will create schools that are organized to meet the demands of our ever-changing world and to produce the informed and involved citizens and workers essential to our future civic, social and economic stability in the state.

WASB Purpose:

The WASB bylaws provide that the association aid and assist public school boards and public school agencies of the state of Wisconsin in performing their lawful functions by meetings, communication, dissemination of information and providing other services to such public school boards and public school agencies and to otherwise support, promote and advance the interests of public education in the state of Wisconsin.

WASB Functions:

- To further the educational interests of the state and its people.
- To provide a medium for exchange of ideas and information.
- To inform school boards of successful methods of school administration and educational trends.
- To provide school boards, and the local districts they represent, a voice in educational policymaking at all levels — local, state and national.
- To encourage the most desirable and efficient working relationships between school boards, school administrators, school staff, parents and the public.
- To provide in-service programs for new and experienced school board members.
- To inform school boards and administrators about legislative issues and new laws.

WASB Governance:

Member school boards direct the activities of the association through a 15-member board of directors elected at fall regional membership meetings. The WASB's policies are established by a delegate assembly which is held each year at the State Education Convention. The Delegate Assembly includes representation from each member school board, each member Cooperative Educational Service Agency and the WASB Board of Directors.

WASB Board Governance Services:

Leadership to carry out effective school governance will come from school board members, administrators, state agencies, business and industry, state and local education organizations and state and local agencies. The WASB is committed to building and sustaining strong leaders in the state and in local communities who have the skills and resources to implement essential changes.

Through its programs, the WASB supports school board leaders in their quest for better schools. It is a goal of the WASB to help school leaders work effectively in their schools and community, and to work cooperatively on issues in their region and across the state.

The WASB, through meetings, seminars, conferences, workshops and the convention, provides opportunities for board members to work on their skills and expand their vision of educational governance.

The WASB calls on state and national experts, school attorneys and local school personnel to present wide-ranging in-service programming. Annual events include spring workshops for board members, the Leadership Conference, the fall and spring Personnel and Employment Law Seminars, the School Law Seminar and the annual WASB•WASDA•WASBO State Education Convention. Throughout the year, other sessions are planned around new or recurrent issues.



THE ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

Serving on a local school board demands much more than making sure the school roof doesn't leak or keeping the food service program operating smoothly. The board is broadly responsible for the management of the school district. The district's day-to-day functioning is within the purview of the district administrator and his or her staff.

Board members are elected to serve as a community's educational leaders. They create the policies that guide the district in fulfilling its mission of educating the community's children.

As you contemplate your role as a school board member, I urge you to think about this four-pronged leadership role.

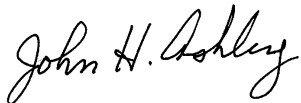
VISION. The board—with extensive participation by the community—envisions the community's education future and then formulates the goals, defines the outcomes, and sets the course for its public schools.

STRUCTURE. To achieve its vision, the board establishes a structure and creates an environment that ensures all students the opportunity to attain their maximum potential. This infrastructure reflects local circumstances. It begins by employing a superintendent, adopting missions and goals in harmony with its vision through strategic planning, developing and approving policies, formulating budgets and setting high standards for students and staff. The board also collaborates with families, community organizations and other public and private agencies for the benefit of the whole child and the community. Knowing that education is not static, the board nurtures a climate conducive to change.

ACCOUNTABILITY. Because the board is accountable to the community, it directs the continuous assessment of all conditions that affect education. These may include monitoring student achievement, correcting programs as needed, keeping the public informed about the status of educational programs and progress, ensuring that all functions of schools as institutions of teaching and learning fit together harmoniously, providing appropriate staff and board training and fulfilling the governance responsibilities required by state and federal law.

ADVOCACY. The board serves as the key advocate in the community for students and their schools—encouraging progress, energizing systemic change and dealing with children as whole persons in a diversified society.

In a larger sense, the ultimate role of the school board is to help preserve our nation's liberty, prepare our economy for prosperity, and enrich the lives of our people—all through continually striving to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education for all our children. These four leadership thrusts will equip school boards to meet this challenge.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Ashley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Ashley, Executive Director
Wisconsin Association of School Boards

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER ELECTION DATES

Election Notice Deadline —

Fourth Tuesday in November (November 22, 2011)

General Deadline for Declaring Candidacy —

First Tuesday in January (January 3, 2012)

A candidate needs to file a declaration of candidacy and campaign finance registration form with the school district clerk. In some districts, nomination papers also must be filed.

Spring Primary —

Third Tuesday in February (February 21, 2012)

Spring Election —

First Tuesday in April (April 3, 2012)

New School Board Member Gatherings

Between April 3 and April 23, 2012

School Board Members Take Office —

Fourth Monday in April (April 23, 2012)

More information about the various aspects of candidacy and election to a school board in Wisconsin is included in the *School District Election Schedule*, published annually by WASB. The above dates reflect current law. Please check the *School District Election Schedule* and other WASB publications for any change due to new legislation.



WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Fostering effective school board practices for student success.

122 W. Washington Ave., Suite 400
Madison, WI 53703

608-257-2622
(Toll Free) 877-705-4422