

15 Things School Board Members Can Do

To Boost Public Confidence in Public Schools

1. Show the public what good governance looks like.
2. Model the behavior you want students and staff to emulate, especially during times of conflict.
3. Know your facts, and be proactive in sharing them.
4. Develop your elevator speech about your school system, why you serve, and why others should care about your local public schools.
5. Tell 10 success stories for every criticism you hear or share.
6. Bring someone new with you every time you visit a school, attend a school program, or district event.
7. Recruit new families for public schools, and stay in touch with current and prospective parents.
8. Reach out to Realtors, grandparents, human resource officers, and others who influence where people live and where families send their children to school.
9. Hit the breakfast, lunch, and dinner speaking circuit in your community, and remind people that public schools are the only game in town that serves all children.
10. Build relationships with opinion leaders in your community, and have them on speed dial and in your e-mail distribution list.
11. Add to your district's database of key audience members every time you meet someone new by sharing copies of the business cards you collect with the public information or superintendent's office.
12. Make sure your district is represented on other key community boards, groups, commissions, and committees. Require at least annual reports to back to the entire school board about news, information, tasks, and activities.
13. Contact your local, state, and federal representatives regularly about the importance of public schools, to share good news, or invite them to school and district events and activities.
14. Work with your local economic development teams to make sure public schools are represented fairly and on par with private school or charter options when new businesses are recruited, or new executives come to town.
15. Don't guess. If you don't know something, or haven't heard about something, don't express shock and dismay, or assume the worst is true. Carry blank note cards and a pen with you at all times so you can take down the information or concern, and promise to have someone get back to them quickly. Then share the information with the superintendent or appropriate staff member. Reserve judgment until you have all the facts.