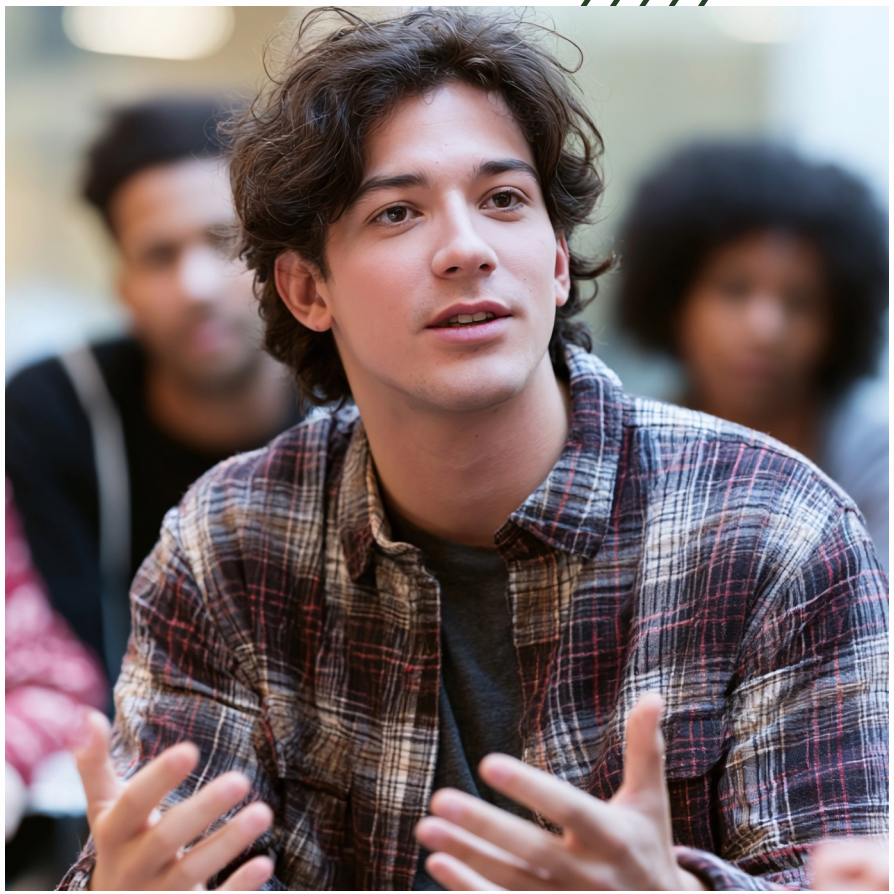
Student Board Member Field Guide

Westchester Putnam School Boards Association





Welcome

Congratulations!

You have been selected to represent the voices of students in one of the most important leadership roles in your district. Your perspective helps school boards make more informed decisions about policies and programs that affect students every day.

Why You’re At The Table



As a student board member, you bring a perspective that no one else can. Your role is to help the board better understand how its decisions affect students by sharing ideas, asking thoughtful questions, and representing the experiences of your peers.

Your role is to:

- **Bring the student perspective** to discussions.
- **Represent all students,** not just your own opinions.
- **Share what you're hearing** from classmates, clubs, and student groups.
- **Ask questions** that help the board better understand student needs and concerns.
- **Build understanding** between students and the board by communicating information in both directions.

Remember: You aren't expected to have all the answers. Your value comes from listening to students, sharing their perspectives, and contributing thoughtfully to the conversation.

What Does The Board Actually Do?



- ✓ **Set Direction**
- ✓ **Make Policy**
- ✓ **Oversee the Superintendent**

What the Board does not do

Daily school operations
Student discipline
Running the schools
Teachers' lesson plans

Where Do You Fit In?

You help the board by:

- Pointing out how decisions affect students.
- Identifying emerging student concerns.
- Sharing perspectives from across the student body.
- Asking questions that bring the student viewpoint into the discussion.
- Communicating to students about what the board is doing, as well as to the board about student concerns.

Meeting Essentials

Before



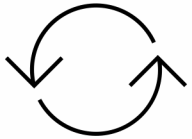
- Review the agenda packet
- Ask questions
- Gather student input
- Meet with your district mentor (ask if one hasn’t been assigned)
- Prepare talking points

During



- Listen actively
- Take notes
- Share the student perspective
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Stay respectful and professional

After



- Reflect on what went well
- Follow up on lingering questions
- Share updates with students
- Think about what feedback to gather before the next meeting
- Thank the people who helped you prepare

⭐ **Quick Reminder**
The more prepared you are before the meeting, the more comfortable you'll feel during it.

Ways To Gather Feedback

- Google Forms
- Student Council
- Lunch conversations
- Club meetings
- QR codes
- Advisory periods
- Anonymous surveys
- A dedicated student BOE email address could be helpful





Don't forget...

Ask yourself whose voice am I missing?

Common Challenges



Remember

Every student board member faces challenges. What matters most is showing up, staying curious, and continuing to grow.

I’m nervous about speaking.

Everyone feels this way at first. Prepare a few talking points before the meeting and remember that asking a thoughtful question is just as valuable as giving a speech.

I disagree with the board.

It's okay to respectfully share a different perspective. Focus on explaining the student experience rather than trying to convince others you're right.

I don’t know the answer.

That's okay! It's perfectly acceptable to say, "I'd like to gather more student feedback and report back."

Leading With Confidence

Communicate with purpose

- Represent **all** students—not just your own opinions.
- Support your ideas with student feedback whenever possible.
- Prepare talking points before meetings.
- Ask respectful questions.
- Focus on understanding, not winning.

Take care of yourself

- Prioritize the responsibilities only you can do.
- Ask classmates or student leaders to help gather feedback.
- You don't have to solve every problem.
- Remember: You can't advocate effectively if you're exhausted.

Top 10
Tips For Success

1. Read your board packet.
2. Ask questions.
3. Gather student input regularly.
4. Represent all students.
5. Be respectful—even when you disagree.
6. Come prepared.
7. Listen before you speak.
8. Build relationships with board members.
9. Take care of yourself.
10. Connect with other student board members.

🎯 Success Tip

You don't have to do everything perfectly—being prepared and engaged makes the biggest difference.

Learn From Students Who Came Before You

"You have real power to influence change."

"Speak your mind - for better or worse."

"No question is a bad question."

"Watch a meeting first - every district is different."

"Make sure you share the truth—not what you think people want to hear… even if it's uncomfortable."

"It's the best leadership position ever."

"They want to hear you. Don't be shy."



PAY IT FORWARD

Every student board member helps shape the future of this role. Share what you've learned, encourage the next student representative, and leave them feeling more prepared than you did. Your experience can make someone else's first meeting a little less intimidating.

Reach out any time
info@wpsba.org
(914) 345-8737
wpsba.org

WestPut is here to support your student board service!

Student BOE Connect Series

8/31/26 - In Person Orientation

12/7/26 - Virtual Connect

3/8/27 - Virtual Connect

Register through your district clerk or contact us directly.

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