MISSOURI SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Understanding School Board Service

The board of education is:

- **A volunteer representative body**
- **Elected by voters of the school district**
- **Typically Non-partisan**

The board governs the school district and provides leadership and advocacy for public education.

School boards make decisions in the best interest of the entire school district and students.

"We need to give every child the opportunity for a quality education. It's not only about the quality education system we have built, but the quality citizens we have encouraged to go forward."

-Board Member for 19 Years



Board Member Commitment

Serving on a school board is a serious responsibility. Prospective members must understand the board's role, the time commitment required, and the board's legal limitations. Most Missouri school board members serve three-year terms, during which taxpayers entrust them with managing multimillion-dollar budgets to provide quality education for their students.

Before becoming a candidate, individuals should consider what the role requires. In addition to reviewing this publication, individuals are encouraged to observe the board in action at meetings.

School Board Authority

School boards derive their power and authority from state laws and regulations. The board has authority to take action by majority vote only when it is acting as a whole during an official board meeting. Individual board members have no authority to provide directions to the superintendent or other staff, change policies or procedures, direct operations of the district or make other individual decisions. School boards are not responsible for day-to-day classroom or district management; that is the responsibility of the professional staff.

School Board and Superintendent

A key responsibility of the board is to hire a certified and qualified superintendent. By establishing policies and defining the educational goals for the district, the board authorizes the superintendent to provide leadership to the staff and manage all district operations. The superintendent serves as the liaison between the board and staff. An effective school board develops and maintains a collaborative relationship with the superintendent to support continuous improvement in the district.

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School Board Roles and Responsibilities

Clarify District Purpose and Establish Goals

District improvement and student learning success do not happen by chance. Defining the purpose (mission) and identifying primary goals of the district, with input from the district community and in collaboration with the superintendent, are key responsibilities of the board. The board and superintendent work together to determine goal outcomes, how they will be measured, and the data that will be used to reflect progress and improvement.

Collaborate with the Superintendent and Delegate Authority

The board hires the superintendent and delegates authority to the superintendent to determine how to achieve the district goals, provide leadership to the staff and manage district operations.

Monitor District and Superintendent Performance

In the classroom, teachers measure student achievement and improvement throughout the year. Likewise, the school board and superintendent determine how district improvement and success will be measured. Regular use of data informs the board's assessment of district performance. The board is also responsible for evaluating the superintendent's performance based on clear goals, adherence to policy, and protection of district assets.

Connect with the Community

Effective school boards make sure the district has a plan in place to ensure the entire district community is regularly informed of the district's priorities and the progress toward achieving them.

Likewise, it is important that the district regularly seeks input from the entire district community regarding district priorities, satisfaction, concerns, and more. District surveys and public forums are just two examples of ways to obtain input.

Be Responsible Leaders

The board as a whole and individual board members must take full responsibility for board practices. Following policies, working together as a team, valuing and respecting each other's opinions, and keeping information confidential are just a few of the ways board members demonstrate responsibility and build trust in the community.

Each board member has the opportunity to share opinions and participate in discussions related to the meeting agenda items. Each board member has the opportunity to vote. Once the issue has been decided, the entire board should move forward with the decision. This promotes a culture of unity and support for achieving the district's goals.

> "If the center of our actions is truly the children we serve, then we are not competitors but rather teammates striving for the same end goal — reliable, responsible, educated young people."
>
> -School Board Member

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Board Member Expectations

In addition to fulfilling board responsibilities, board members are expected to:

1. Attend all board meetings. Up to 3 unexcused absences may result in removal from the board.
2. Arrive on time for each board meeting and stay for the entire meeting.
3. Read the board packet and related policies prior to the board meeting. Expect to spend a few hours each month to thoroughly understand the issues.
4. Follow district policy or procedure by directing questions to the board president or superintendent prior to a board meeting.
5. Keep information from closed sessions confidential.
6. Share own opinion and consider and respect the opinions of other board members.
7. Make decisions based on evidence rather than personal experience, relationships or beliefs.
8. Observe laws against nepotism and conflict of interest.
9. Advocate on behalf of students, the district, and public education within your community and with local, state and federal elected officials.
10. Complete 18.5 hours of training within 12 months of being elected and one hour refresher training every additional year you serve, as required by law.

    Contact the Missouri School Boards' Association for training opportunities, training@mosba.org, 573-208-7847.

How do I become a candidate for the school board?

If you are ready to make a commitment for school board service, make sure you are eligible. Missouri law specifies the qualifications that must be met. For complete details, refer to MSBA's A Candidate's Legal Guide to Running for the School Board at **www.mosba.org/page/board-candidates.**

For most districts, filing for candidacy occurs in the local school district office. Contact the school district office for the specific procedures and office hours for filing.

About MSBA

The Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) is a private, not-for-profit organization that exists to help school boards ensure all students succeed. MSBA is the only organization in Missouri established by and governed by local school board members.

MSBA provides a variety of services for public school districts throughout Missouri:

- Legally required board member training
- Comprehensive policy support
- Board professional development
- Legal assistance
- Superintendent search guidance
- School safety and security training and support
- Cost savings products and service

Learn more at **mosba.org.**

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