

As you consider running for your local school board, think about what being a board member means to you, your family and your community.

Oregon's school districts, education service districts (ESDs) and community college districts are governed by elected boards of five, seven, nine or 11 members that help direct the superintendent or college president run what may be the largest businesses in their communities. Board actions affect the families of hundreds of students and employees, now and for years to come.

Your duty will be representing all students, staff and members of the community as you work with other board members to craft policy.

School board authority rests with the board as a whole, not with individual board members. Board decisions are made by majority rule and, as one member of this ruling body, you will find yourself in the position of supporting some decisions that you voted against.

Board service often requires long unpaid hours working alone, on committees and with members of your community. You'll struggle sometimes to find solutions to complex problems – and still the solutions won't please everyone.

Board Service Means Commitment

However, you'll have the satisfaction of watching students receive their diplomas, knowing that you played a role in their achievement. As an education board member, you will help shape tomorrow's citizens and leaders.

What does a school board do?

When you're elected to serve on the board, your education has just begun. Board service is like inheriting the reins of a corporation without any training. The "learning curve" for education leaders is steep. Plan to spend time in workshops and conferences. Training is essential to running a complex education system. OSBA equips board members with the leadership training they need to feel comfortable in their roles and to do their best.

The board's major responsibility is setting policy. The board hires a superintendent or college president who in turn hires staff to put policies into practice. The chief executive is accountable to the board for managing the district according to board policies.

Because they serve the community, board members must work with the public as they establish the mission and direction of education. It's up to the board to engage the community in public education.

A board member must be a skilled decision-maker and team player, a public-

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education advocate, a vital link between community and school, and a policy maker.

As a public employer, the board establishes policies that govern the recruitment, employment, supervision, evaluation and dismissal of employees.

Board members must also do the following:

- Establish budgets.
- Set goals and evaluate progress toward those goals.
- Ask voters to approve bond measures and local option levies for facilities and operations.
- Guide collective bargaining.
- Choose transportation systems.
- Evaluate the superintendent, college president or chief executive.

How much time does being a good board member require?

School board service involves a substantial time commitment – and remember, there's no salary.

Boards typically meet one or two evenings a month. Before the monthly meetings, you'll need to study the materials provided (board packets) so you can make informed decisions.

A substantial time commitment is required of board members beyond meeting and meeting-preparation time. There are committee meetings, work sessions and appearances on behalf of the district. During collective bargaining with employee unions, you may find yourself immersed in a very time-consuming process.

OSBA offers training, answers, advice and many other resources year-round that save time and keep you up to date on school issues. Our workshops and conventions provide opportunities to meet peers from throughout the state and experts from around the country – more people on whom you can rely for help with board-related issues.

What makes a good board member?

Many of the qualities that make board members great are acquired over time, through training and experience, so don't discredit your potential worth as a board member, even though you may never have served in such a capacity.

As you consider running for the ESD, community college or school board, think about whether these characteristics of effective board members describe you:

- You hold a conviction that public education is important.
- You are committed to public involvement.
- You have the ability to make decisions.
- You believe in the democratic process.
- You're willing to devote time and energy to your new position.
- You can accept the will of the majority.
- You have the courage to stand up for your convictions.
- You have respect for district employees.
- You communicate well with others.

These are some characteristics of ineffective board members:

- They become involved in school, ESD or community college administration.
- They allow personal feelings toward others to affect their judgment.
- They allow personal interests to transcend the best interests of the district.
- They neglect board duties.
- They can't make decisions or take a stand.
- They represent special interests or a particular geographic area rather than the interests of the entire district.
- They adopt an arrogant or paternalistic attitude toward district employees or the public.

How to become a candidate

Board members are elected to four-year terms. You must be a registered voter and you must have lived in the district for one year immediately preceding the election. School district, ESD and community college employees elected to serve on their board must give up employment with the district to sit on the board.

Board members are elected by zones or as at-large representatives. The procedure for choosing board members by zone or at large is determined at the district level. Board members elected at large may live anywhere in the district. Board members elected by zone may 1) live in the zone and be elected by all district voters or 2) live in the zone and be elected only by voters living within that zone.

Your county elections official, superintendent, college president or school board member can tell you how board members are elected in your district.

School board elections

Half of the board members in Oregon's schools, community colleges and ESDs are elected or re-elected in each odd-numbered year. Under Oregon law, school, ESD and community college board elections are held the third Tuesday in May.

The filing deadline for board positions is the 61st calendar day prior to the May election date. Candidates can file with the county clerk in one of two ways:

- Submit a petition containing the signatures of 25 registered voters or 10 percent of the registered voters in the district, whichever is less
- Submit a declaration of candidacy with a \$10 filing fee

All Oregon elections are by-mail ballots. Ballots are mailed to registered voters no sooner than the 18th day before the date of the election and no later than the 14th day.

To be counted, the county clerk must receive ballots by 8 p.m. on the date of the election. Voters may return the ballots by mail or in person. Ballots with election-day postmarks are not counted.

Your campaign

Board candidate campaigns range from simple to sophisticated, depending on the candidate and the community. One common element, however, is the state requirement for reporting campaign finances.

State law limits the sources and amounts of contributions and the purposes for which those contributions may be spent. Contact the Secretary of State Elections Division or your county elections office for guidance before accepting any campaign contributions or making any campaign expenditures.

By law, you must report all campaign finance transactions to the Secretary of State Elections Division. Political committees formed to support candidates also must report contributions and expenditures.

The candidate's treasurer and/or the treasurer of the political committee supporting the candidate is responsible for maintaining detailed records and filing reports of contributions received and expenditures made. These records are subject to inspection by an opposing candidate or that candidate's treasurer. These records must be kept current to within seven days of receiving a contribution or making an expenditure.

More information

Oregon School Boards Association

www.osba.org

Candidate information

School board roles and responsibilities

Publication: Boardsmanship

\$11 members/\$18 non-members each plus \$3 postage and handling. Order online, www.osba.org/pubs.

Online Learning Course: New Board Member Orientation

Free online course

www.osba.org/olc

National School Boards Association

www.nsba.org

Campaign regulations and finance reporting requirements

Elections Division

Secretary of State's Office

255 Capitol St NE, Ste 501

Salem, OR 97310

(503) 986-1518

<http://oregonvotes.org/>

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We encourage you to become actively involved with OSBA if you are elected to a school, ESD or community college board. Please contact OSBA with questions.

Oregon School Boards Association

PO Box 1068, Salem, OR 97308

1201 Court St NE, Ste 400, Salem, OR 97301

503-588-2800 or 800-578-6722

info@osba.org

www.osba.org

www.facebook.com/osba.org

