



# SCHOOL BOARD 101

In the education system, school boards and state legislators play distinct but complementary roles in shaping the policies and governance of public schools. School boards are locally-elected bodies responsible for overseeing the operation of school districts, setting educational policies, and ensuring that local schools adhere to state and federal laws. They make decisions on budgets, curricula, and personnel, and serve as a direct link between the community and its schools. On the other hand, state legislators enact laws that establish the framework for public education across the state. This worksheet will help clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of school boards and state legislators in governing public education.

## WHAT IS A SCHOOL BOARD?

### A School Board Is A Group Of Locally-Elected Officials

- Also called “directors”
- Nine total members
- Superintendent as 10th non-voting member
- Receive no compensation

The “role” of a school board is to act as a governing body for the district



# SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

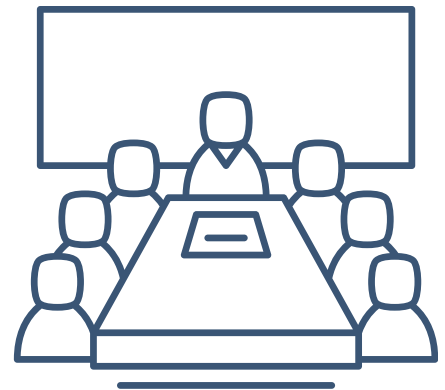
## Fixed term length

- Four-year terms.
- Elected in odd-numbered years.
- Candidates are allowed to “cross-file” during the primary election so the same candidate can appear on the Republican and Democratic primary ballots.
- The party listed on the primary ballot is not necessarily indicative of party the candidate is registered under.
- The top vote getters in the primary for both the Democratic and Republican ballot appear on the ballot for the fall general election.
- Five members are elected in one election year, four in the following year.



# SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

- At least once per month for regular full board meetings, although two meetings per month is typical.
- Regular business meetings are open to the public in person. Some boards also offer an online option via Zoom/YouTube, etc.
- Agendas for full board meetings must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- Boards accept public comment at their regular voting meetings.
- There is no legal requirement for the board to accept public comments at committee meetings.



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Public schools are a creation of the state constitution.
- School boards serve as local legislative bodies for public schools within the framework of state laws.
- A school board applies its authority through the collective decisions of the entire board. School boards should function as a “Team of 10,” working together with their superintendent to make decisions for the benefit of their students, schools and taxpayers.
- School board members should not be involved in the day-to-day operations of a district. The board hires a superintendent who has the knowledge and experience to run the district. A school board should be involved in planning, setting policy, and evaluating results.
- School districts must comply with hundreds of individual state mandates, many which are enacted by the state legislature. Most mandates are unfunded or underfunded, which means that the state imposes a requirement on schools, but does not contribute funding to specifically assist schools in paying the costs associated with compliance.
- Mandates impact district spending, school operations, and instruction. School boards do not have the authority to reject or ignore these mandates.

## Specific School Board Responsibilities Include

- Appoint a superintendent and approve the hiring of other necessary employees.
- Levy taxes and adopt an annual budget that is balanced and based on available funding from state and local sources.
- Adopt courses of study in consultation with the superintendent.
- Adopt textbooks.
- Enter into written contracts with professional employees and into collective bargaining agreements.
- Prescribe, adopt and enforce policy around reasonable rules and regulations regarding school activities, publications and organizations.



# ROLES OF SCHOOL BOARDS VS. STATE LEGISLATURE

## School Board

- Set district **policy**
- Pass districts **budget**
- Hire/oversee **Superintendent**
- Ability for the **public to attend public meetings**

Care deeply about public perception & need to know community members are watching how they vote on issues related to public education.

## State Legislature

- Determine how much **state funding** your schools will receive
- Vote on **education policies** that support or harm public schools. (school vouchers, charter school tuition rates)
- **Impose mandates** that impact district spending, school operations, and instruction

## IN REVIEW....

School boards are responsible for setting policies within a school district, managing budgets, and overseeing the hiring of key administrators like superintendents. They provide a platform for community involvement through public meetings. In contrast, state legislators influence education on a broader scale by deciding on the allocation of state funding and voting on significant policies that can impact public schools, such as school vouchers and charter school regulations. They also implement mandates that affect district finances, operations, and instructional practices. Both school boards and legislators are sensitive to public opinion, knowing that their actions are closely watched by parents and community members concerned about public education.

