



UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL BOARDS

WHAT ARE SCHOOL BOARDS AND WHAT POWER DO THEY HAVE?

Public schools are part of the state constitution. The school board is an elected body responsible for governing the school district. In this capacity, the board levies taxes and adopts an annual budget that is balanced and based on available funding from state and local sources, approves the hiring and compensation of personnel, approves curriculum and textbooks, appoints the superintendent, and enacts policy.

School board members should:

- ✓ **Model** responsible school governance and leadership.
- ✓ **Support** educational goals that will provide students with a quality education.
- ✓ **Vote** and act in the board meetings impartially for the good of the school district.
- ✓ **Work** for the best interests of all students and demonstrate a strong commitment to serving other people.
- ✓ **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:

- ✗ **Target** students or intimidate staff.
- ✗ **Be involved in the day-to-day** operations of a district.
- ✗ **Use their position on the school board to push a political agenda** or impose their personal and religious beliefs on students and staff.
- ✗ **Enact policies that are in violation of state or federal law**, forcing the district to incur legal costs defending these actions.

THE RISE OF EXTREMISM IN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BOARDS

In recent years, Pennsylvania has become a focal point for extremist politicians, including at the school district level. In some places extremists school board members promote a political agenda and impose their personal and religious beliefs on students, teachers, and district staff. Their goals include enacting regressive book bans, censorship of classroom discussions about race and gender identity, and policies discriminating against individual students because they identify as LGBTQ+.

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR DISTRICT

ADVOCACY DOES NOT STOP AFTER AN ELECTION

Advocacy does not end when elections are over; it is an ongoing commitment to safeguarding our educational values and ensuring the well-being of all students. We need dedicated advocates to continually monitor and challenge the rise of extremism in school boards across Pennsylvania. By staying vigilant and proactive, we can prevent harmful policies and ensure that our schools remain inclusive and focused on providing quality education.

Talking Points

- In our communities parents and educators continue to be partners, working together to ensure every student, no matter their race or background, has the opportunity to succeed.
- Pennsylvanians want thriving communities with good jobs and strong public schools, where all students have the resources and opportunities to succeed academically and in life after graduation.
- We want school boards to focus on ensuring that schools have the necessary resources and staff to provide students with safe, healthy environments and the individualized attention that they need.
- Students should have the freedom to learn and teachers should have the freedom to teach in their schools. Extremists should not be able to restrict the information students can access and discuss in schools.
- Schools work best when parents and teachers work together. Parents who do not approve of specific content already have a right to opt their own children out of specific lessons or restrict their own children's access to books that they find objectionable without restricting access for other students and families.

Extremists' goals

- Extremists are running for school boards in Pennsylvania. If elected, they will use their positions to push a political agenda and impose their personal and religious beliefs on students and staff.
- Extremists want to limit students' freedom to learn. They are pushing book bans and other policies to control the information students can access in public schools.
- Extremists disrespect educators and want to ban them from facilitating critical lessons and discussions with students about historical events and discrimination, as well as current political and cultural concerns.
- Extremists are targeting individual children and groups of students with discriminatory policies, making schools less safe and welcoming for some children.
- Extremists believe that they should decide what students learn in schools, not parents.
- Extremist school board members put the quality of our local public schools at risk.

