



A Guide for School Board Candidates in Alaska

The Basics

As a candidate for your local School Board, you have taken a step towards becoming involved in strengthening the quality of life through good schools in your community. You have indicated an interest in serving and devoting the time necessary to meet the challenge of boardsmanship by seeking election to your local school board. This guide will provide you with some basic information about school boards.

What Does a School Board Do?

The five key roles of a school board member include:

1. Setting and ensuring the district has a clear vision, mission and goals in place,
2. Adoption and review of district policies,
3. Hiring and evaluating the superintendent,
4. Adopting and overseeing the district budget presented by staff,
5. Approving and reviewing classroom curriculum.

Roles & Responsibilities of Board Members

As you consider the prospect of running for your local School Board, there are a few things you should know about the responsibilities that role involves.

If you are elected, you and your fellow Board members' actions will have far-reaching results. The policies you set will shape the education of tomorrow's leaders. The guidelines you create will direct the Superintendent in navigating the problems your school district faces daily. Your decisions will affect the families of hundreds of students and employees, now and in the future.

School Board authority rests with the board as a whole, not each member individually. School Board decisions can only be made by a majority of the members at an officially posted public meeting.

From the moment School Board members begin service, they are accountable to the public, to the state government, and to the courts.

A Board Performs its Functions Through...

Planning

School Boards must provide vital leadership in establishing current and long-range educational plans and programs for the school districts. Working closely with the community and the school administration, the Board adopts focus areas to work on in the years ahead and the district leadership creates a road map of how these areas of importance are addressed.

1

Policy Making

A School Board sets school district policies. The Board hires a Superintendent and district staff to put that policy into practice. The Superintendent is accountable to the School Board for managing the district according to Board policies. The local School Board must develop and adopt policy that governs the operation of the schools. This includes acting on the Superintendent's recommendations in such areas as employment of personnel, administration of student services, adoption of educational programs, selection of instructional materials, and allocation of funds.

2

Professional Performance

One of the critical responsibilities of a School Board is to select a Superintendent. The School Board exercises authority primarily through its Superintendent. The Board must be kept informed by the Superintendent of the needs, conditions, achievements and progress of the school system. As public employers, the Board establishes the policies that govern the recruiting, hiring, employment, supervision, evaluation and dismissal of the superintendent.

3

Budget

The School Board is responsible for providing a **financial plan** to carry out the educational programs by adopting an annual budget. Needed improvements cannot be made until people are aware of those needs. Problems will not be solved until people become aware of the problems. It is important to openly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the schools. Since decisions made about the schools can have an impact on the whole community, it is important to involve local citizens.

4

Curriculum

The Board shall adopt a district curriculum which to the extent possible reflects the desires of the community, the needs of society, and the requirements of law. According to policy the Board shall also review each content area at least once every six years.

5



Board Service is Time & Commitment

School Board service can be both rewarding and frustrating. At times Board members feel the long hours they spend struggling with complex problems are all in vain. No matter what their decision, there will always be someone who complains.

These frustrations are offset, however, by reports of students going on to achieve further academic or other kinds of success. There is satisfaction in helping provide students with the education they need to live happy and productive lives.

Being a Board member, you are required to set aside 'single issues' and work with the other members of your Board to set policies for your schools that are in the best interest of all students, all employees and the entire community.

It is often said that being a school board member is like having a part-time job. Each week, you need to spend a few hours reviewing emails and board packets and going to events. The week of the board meeting, you will, of course, spend time at the meeting as well as committee meetings. This "part-time job" might seem easy at first, but there is a time commitment.



Interpreting Needs

School Boards serve a dual role of representing both the schools and the community. As a public trust, the local School Board must listen to members of the community, find out what citizens want and provide clear channels of communication between the community and its schools. Boards need to sense and influence public opinion about the direction and function of their schools. Board Members must also help community members understand the 'chain of command' and how to properly voice a concern or complaint.



Board Standards

The following are the standards that were developed for School Boards in Alaska. Boards need to create a shared vision for the district, develop a structure to support that vision, establish accountability, and advocate for students and schools all while doing the work with transparency and adhering to high ethical standards.

Vision

The Board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.

- Encourage community involvement in strategic planning, especially the development of a vision and mission statement.
- Make decisions based on your mission statement and strategic plan focus areas.
- Share your vision with the community.
- Read vision and mission statement at each Board meeting.

Structure

The Board provides a structure that supports the vision.

- Follow District strategic plan.
- Establish goals and priorities for the District.
- Review and evaluate policies.
- Request reports about the curriculum.
- Link the budget to Student Achievement.
- Support staff recruitment.
- Maintain facilities.
- Assist Advisory School Boards.

Accountability

The Board measures district performance toward accomplishing the vision and reports the results to the public.

- Annually conduct:
 - Superintendent evaluation
 - Board self-evaluation
- Ensure staff evaluations are performed.
- Request the evaluation of programs.
- Review the results of student assessments.
- Request timely financial reports and audits.

Advocacy

The Board champions the vision.

- Recognize staff achievements.
- Recognize student achievements.
- Promote parent involvement.
- Develop business partnerships.
- Be a student advocate.
- Participate in grassroots lobbying.
- Meet with parents and community members.

Conduct-Ethics

The Board conducts its business of the district in a fair, respectful and responsible manner.

- Understand your role in the District.
- Respect the roles of others.
- Provide a New Board Member orientation.
- Use meetings effectively.
- Follow State law and District policies.
- Conduct business in an ethical manner.
- Work toward developing a healthy leadership team.





Advocates for Alaska's Youth

Alaska's education policymakers and educators struggle with the complex challenge of providing quality education to all students across our vast state, particularly when there are so many other factors impacting children's lives and, therefore, their education. We also recognize that schools cannot act in isolation to overcome such obstacles to learning. Schools, families, and communities must share responsibility for children's development and learning. Since education is a continual process occurring both in and out of school, school is just one institution that can educate children. We ALL must shoulder the responsibility for public education. Through the innovative programs that AASB has established, we are focused on increasing **student achievement** in Alaska.

About AASB

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) is an organization representing local school boards in Alaska. Its membership consists of more than 330 individual board members, responsible for the students who attend Alaska's public schools.

Formed in 1954 by four districts, AASB has expanded over the years to include more than 50 School Boards as members in cities, boroughs, and REAAs. Today the Association is a source of assistance, information, and liaison for these boards and the districts they represent.

AASB is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors, consisting of 11 directors and four officers. Representation comes from all regions of the state. The Board is elected by the membership at the Annual Conference. The membership as a whole passes resolutions establishing the positions taken by the Association before the legislature and other agencies throughout the year.

Member boards pay dues to the Association based on the size of the district to help support the organization's functions. With the membership, districts have an opportunity to partner with grant projects and receive a reduced rate for professional development and/or training sessions.

Our Services

State & Federal Representation

Publications & Websites

Boardsmanship Training

- Board Member Education Programs
- Conferences
- In-District Workshops

Policy Development

Superintendent Searches

Strategic Planning

Districts have been able to be part of:

School Climate – Looking into how students, staff and families feel about their school's climate and how connected they are to adults and peers impacts students' motivation to learn and the ability of school staff to create positive conditions needed for learning.

Social & Emotional Learning – SEL is a comprehensive systems approach that supports children, youth and adults in developing skills for school and life.

Family-School Partnerships – Helping families and educators to work together to support children's growth and success from birth through high school and beyond.

Early Childhood – Programs to equip children with the skills needed for kindergarten and beyond.

Community Coordination and Dialogues – Host training for dialogues, Community Conversations, and more.

Youth Leadership & Engagement – With district teams, develop sustainable local community engagement efforts guided and maintained by local community members.

Trauma-Engaged Services – Trauma-engaged services change the way we think about learning and school environments to more fully support the needs of the whole student and address trauma.