

What makes a great school board member?

An effective school board plays an important watchdog role in keeping your school on track, and setting policies that affect your child and your school. The school board sets the vision and goals for the school, and holds the Head of School accountable for results.

One school board member cannot do the job alone. Effective school board members contribute their unique talents while collaborating and working as a team with other board members.

What do school boards do?

The school board's primary responsibilities are to:

- Set the vision and goals for the district
- Develop and adopt policies that give the school direction to set priorities and achieve its goals
- Adopt strategic, financial, and facilities plans
- Hire and evaluate the Head of School
- Adopt and oversee the annual budget

A typical school board meeting will include many business items, such as approving the school calendar, adopting curriculum, overseeing construction, and approving contracts with outside vendors. A successful school board will balance discussion of the seemingly tedious business of running the school while paying close attention to the school's priorities for academic achievement.

Signs of an effective school board member

- Great school board members have a clear vision for the school, aligned with the school's mission and core values. They set the vision and direction, and measure the success of the school and its Head against the goals.
- Great school board members communicate their actions to the community. Through public discourse and written reports, great school board members keep the school community informed of the school's progress and challenges.
- Great school board members work as a team. They collaborate well with others and are respectful of the other board members and Head.
- Great school board members adopt a fiscally sound district budget. They pay attention to finances and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the school.
- Great school board members focus on what is best for all students. They focus on student achievement and implementing policies that will ensure success for all students.
- Great school board members advocate for the school.

Signs of an ineffective school board member

- The school board member continually focuses on one issue or talks aimlessly at meetings.
- The school board member doesn't conduct him or herself in a respectful, collaborative manner in public.
- The school board member comes to meetings unprepared.

- The school board member “rubber stamps” all the superintendent’s proposals without asking hard questions.
- The school board member micromanages rather than focusing attention on strategies and policies.
- The school board member uses his position on the school board as an opportunity to put forth a political agenda with little relevance to student achievement.