

# RUNNING FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD



What all prospective school board members should know



## Commitment to Public Education

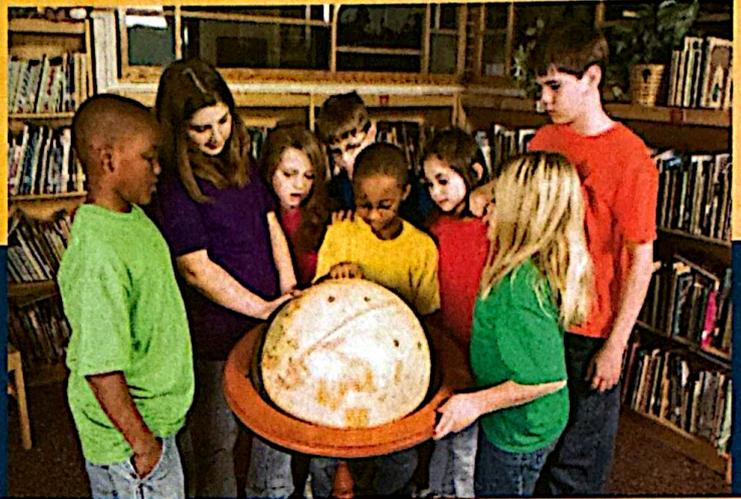
A school board member takes on one of the most important citizen responsibilities: overseeing the education of the community's youth. In these challenging times for public education, school boards are seeking men and women who find excitement and satisfaction in confronting tough challenges and working collegially to rise above them and help students in their communities succeed.

The board of education is a uniquely American institution. It oversees and manages the community's public school system. It ensures the public schools are flexible and responsive to the needs of the community.

School boards are comprised of volunteers within the community who dedicate their time to better public education. Except for those in Yonkers and New York City, board members are elected.

The size of a school board depends on the type of school district but generally ranges between three and nine members. With limited exceptions, school board members serve three-, four- or five-year terms. Terms are staggered so all board positions are never open at the same time. Voters have the power to change the size of the board as set forth within the law.

# RUNNING FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD



## Responsibilities of a board member

With schoolchildren always their ultimate focus, school board members act officially at the board table, working with other board members to serve students and accomplish the following:

- Create a shared vision for the future of education
- Set the direction of the school district to achieve the highest student performance
- Provide rigorous accountability for student achievement results
- Develop a budget and present it to the community, aligning district resources to improve achievement
- Support a healthy school district culture for work and learning
- Create strategic partnerships with the community stakeholders
- Build the district's progress through continuous improvement
- Adopt and maintain current policies
- Hire and evaluate the superintendent
- Ratify collective bargaining agreements
- Maintain strong ethical standards

## Characteristics of a board member

Below are attributes that all effective board members should possess.

- **Effective Communicator:** Can describe what he or she wants and describe what others want; a good listener
- **Consensus Builder:** Capable of working toward decisions that all can support and willing to compromise to achieve goals
- **Community Participant:** Enjoys meeting a variety of people, can identify the community's key communicators and reaches out to the community
- **Decision Maker:** Is comfortable making decisions and can support group decision-making
- **Information Processor:** Can organize priorities and schedules to handle large amounts of verbal and written information
- **Leader:** Willing to take risks, be supportive of board colleagues, district staff and community
- **Team Player:** Helps promote the board's vision and goals

# Running for Your Local School Board

Once you have made the commitment to run for your local school board, there are requirements, deadlines, and processes that must be adhered to.



2026 Dates  
to Remember

**April 20** – Petition must be filed for central, union free and common school districts

**April 29** – Petition must be filed for all small city school districts

**May 19** – Budget Vote & Election Day

## Eligibility Requirements

Generally, school board candidates must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, qualified voters in the school district and able to read and write. They must be residents of their districts continuously for one year (as little as 30 days or as long as three years in some city school districts) before the election. They cannot be employed by the board on which they will serve or live in the same household with a family member who is also a member of the same school board.

## Nominating Petitions

The requirements for filing nominating petitions for a school board vary depending upon the type of school district. Generally, candidates must submit a nominating petition to the school district clerk. The petition must be signed by at least 25 qualified district voters or two percent of the number of those who voted in the previous annual election, whichever number is greater. In small city school districts, nominating petitions must be signed by at least 100 qualified voters.

The petition must include the following:

- Candidate's name and residence
- Vacancy in question
- Incumbent's name (if any)
- Residences of the persons who signed the petition
- Length of the term of office for which the candidate is being nominated

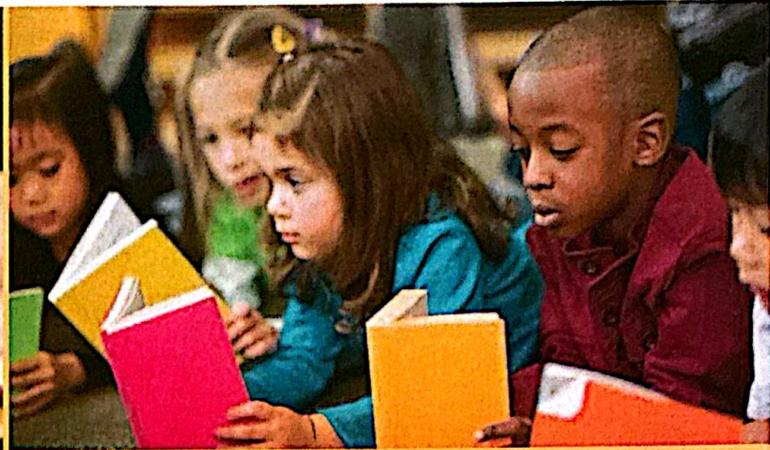
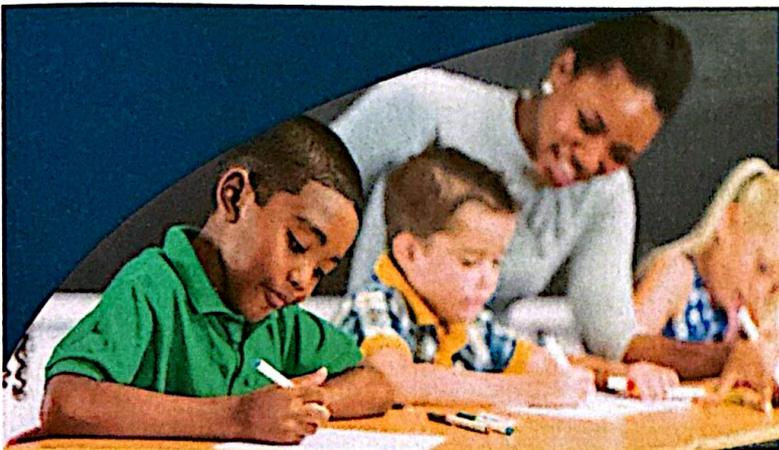
Blank petitions are often available from the district clerk.

If a school district runs for seats "at large" such that each nominee is eligible for each vacancy, the nominating petition does not need to identify the specific incumbent's seat the nominee is seeking. This petition must be filed with the district clerk at least 30 days (20 days in small city districts) before the election, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. In 2026 nominating petitions in small city school districts must be filed by April 29th, in other districts nominating petitions must be filed by April 20th.

## Campaigning

Once the petition is filed, the next step is to gather support. State law requires all candidates for election to a board of education to file a sworn statement with the district clerk disclosing both their campaign expenses and contributions received. Statements must be filed at three different times during the election period. If contributions received or expenditures made by the candidate or by the candidate plus others on the candidate's behalf exceed \$500, a statement also should be filed with the commissioner of education. Expenditures of not more than \$25 may be made without the candidate's permission if the donor or donors file a sworn statement with the clerk and the commissioner stating that the candidate did not approve the expenditure.

The expenditure and contribution statement prepared for the Commissioner of Education should be mailed to:  
Commissioner of Education  
c/o Educational Management Services  
89 Washington Avenue, 1075 EBA  
Albany, NY 12234



## Election

By state law, school board and budget elections, in all districts except the Big 5 (Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers), must be held on the third Tuesday in May. In 2026, the budget vote and election occurs on May 19th.

## New York State School Boards Association

If you are elected, you don't need to face this new challenge alone. The New York State School Boards Association is here to help you!

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) was founded in 1896 in Utica, New York. With over 100 years of commitment, NYSSBA serves as the statewide voice of more than 650 boards of education.

The Association provides current information and advice on matters affecting school boards and works with other educational and related organizations in promoting excellence in public education. Consistent with our dedication to children, learning and the community, the Association provides advocacy, information, leadership development and custom services to public school boards.



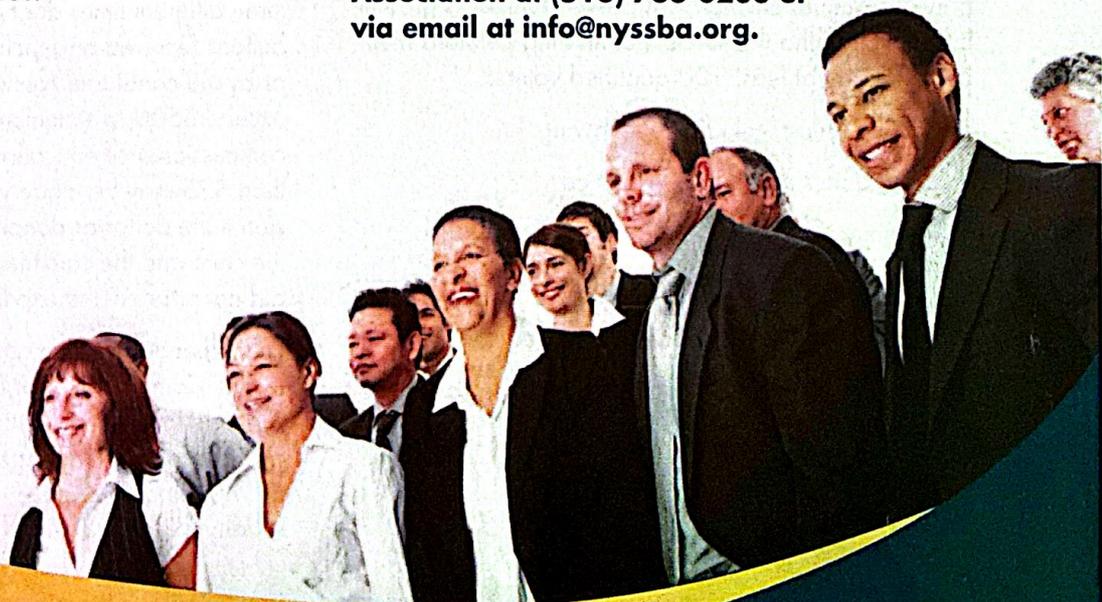
New York State  
School Boards  
Association

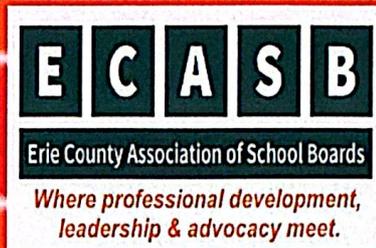
## Training

Once elected, you will be required by New York State law to fulfill mandatory training within your first year of service. This includes fiscal oversight training and governance skills training. NYSSBA provides convenient online courses and regional academies to fulfill these requirements and to further your knowledge of public education and your responsibilities as a board member.

NYSSBA is ready to assist you in your effort to serve your community. Good luck in your pursuit of school board service and thank you for your dedication to providing quality education for New York State public school children.

**For more information on school board service training and support, visit [The School Board Member Experience at www.nyssba.org/experience](http://www.nyssba.org/experience) or contact The New York State School Boards Association at (518) 783-0200 or via email at [info@nyssba.org](mailto:info@nyssba.org).**





## Qualifications & Questions

### When Running for a School Board

Education Law governs school board elections in New York State. The following eligibility requirements must be met:

- *Be able to read and write.*
- *Be a citizen of the United States.*
- *Be 18 years of age or older.*
- *Be a resident of the school district for at least the past year on election day. (moving within the district is allowed).*
- *Not be a district employee (You may be an employee of BOCES or employed by another district).*
- *Not be a convicted felon (unless you have a certificate of relief).*
- *Not be in the family of a currently seated board member (ie...spouse, relative in the same home).*

#### Know your role as a School Board Member:

*A board member has three main jobs. An individual board member cannot make decisions. Decisions are made when the board meets in public as a board. A board member's three primary responsibilities are to:*

- *Approve of an annual budget.*
- *Hire the Superintendent.*
- *Establish Policy.*

*\* In addition, the board member needs to develop a clear vision and goals for the district. The vision and goals will help to define policies and procedures and establish the framework for the budget. School Board Members serve as leaders in the community and are advocates for students, the school district and public education.*

## **What Questions Should I Consider Before Deciding to Run for the School Board?:**

- What skills do I bring to board service?***
- What goals do I have for the district?***
- How much time do I have to devote to board service?***
- Am I willing to attend workshops and information sessions to learn more about public education and information that will help me to do my job?***

## **Are there Limitations?**

***As a School Board Member, there are powers that are defined by statutes in sections 1709, 1804, 2503, and 2554 of New York State law. Additional powers are defined in the following areas:***

- The Constitution***
- Federal and State Laws and Regulations***
- Board of Regents***
- Board of Education Policies***
- Contracts***

## **What is the time commitment necessary to do the job well?**

***This will vary slightly district by district based on the number of meetings, board practices and committee membership. Board service can require between 10-20 hours per week /month and will include:***

- Reading of board packets, reading reference and educational materials and getting any questions clarified by the board president or superintendent prior to board meetings.***
- Attending board meetings, work sessions, committee meetings, workshops, and retreats.***
- Attending other venues ie...community groups, booster clubs, parent groups, community forums.***
- Attending student performances, art shows, athletic events and public hearings .***
- Attending staff and student celebrations and recognitions such as graduation, end of year banquets, retirement events.***
- Attending professional development programs through Erie County Association of School Boards, New York State School Boards Associations, and other***

*organizations.*

### How Do I Get Started?

*- Nominating Petitions will be obtained by the District Clerk. District clerks will provide you with guiding documents which will outline the number of signatures required as well as important dates.*

*- Petition must be filed on time. For 20\_\_ the deadline is \_\_\_\_\_ (month) \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ pm.*

*- Only district residents may sign your petition.*

*- Ballot petitions is based on a lottery the day after petitions are due.*

*- Keep track of all expenses and report them on the appropriate forms:*

*- 30 days before the vote.*

*- 5 days before the vote.*

*- 20 days after the vote (even if you don't win).*

*\*Expenses in excess of \$500 must be reported to the Commissioner of Education at the State Education Department.*

### Is Serving On a Board of Education Right For Me?

*Serving on a board means working as part of a team. As a board member you will be responsible for conducting all the district's business, not just on one or two issues that you may have campaigned for. Additionally, you should ask yourself the following questions:*

*- Am I a life long learner?*

*- Am I willing to keep an open mind and listen to all viewpoints?*

*- Am I able to maintain confidentiality? Failure to do so could result in you being sued in a court of law as an individual.*

*- Can I support Board decisions even though I may be in the minority?*

*- Am I good listener and good communicator?*

*- Am I able to follow rules and policies.*

*- Can I support what is best for children at all times?*

### Resources Available to You As A Board Member:

*The following resources are available to you as a board member, and may assist you in getting to know the District that you are hoping to serve:*

- **District Website**
- **District Vision and Mission Statements**
- **Board of Education Policy Manual**
- **Board meeting agendas and minutes**
- **District mailings, Budget Newsletter,**
- **District Code of Conduct**
- **New York State Education Law Book**
- **Erie County Association of School Boards resources: (library, website, etc.)**
- **New York State School Board Association resources**

### **Be Aware:**

**Once you are elected to serve on the School Board, you will have up to 1 year to complete your 6 hour mandated training course in Governance Training and 6 hour mandated training in Fiscal Oversight Responsibility Training. Failure to complete the training will result in your inability to serve on the Board of Education .**

### **Campaigning for The School Board:**

- **Prepare a brief bio and have picture available for district newsletter and/ or local newspaper as well as for any flyers you may produce.**
- **Establish a budget for both your time and money. Save all receipts.**
- **Be wary of social media.**
- **Be cautious about making campaign promises you may not be able to keep because you are not familiar with the policies, procedures, your role as a board member or the laws.**
- **Decide on whether you will see endorsements .**
- **Be aware of electioneering. You may not have signs or solicit votes within 100 feet of the polling locations. You may not use district communication channels (includes PTSA organizations to distribute campaign materials.**
- **Be available for “Meet the Candidate Nights”.**
- **Be respectful of returning calls in a timely fashion to your constituents, the media, and the clerk of the board.**

- For additional resources and information, contact your district clerk or Erie County Association of School Boards.
- 2/15/2021