

Running for School Board: What You Need to Know

Before filing as a candidate and campaigning for your local school board, find out the questions you need to ask yourself as a potential school board member. Then, get answers to your questions about launching your school board campaign.

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School board members play an important role in their communities because the decisions they make impact students. If you're considering a run for your local school board, it's important to understand the role of a trustee, the board, and the commitment you'd be making to your school district and community.

Why Run for a Seat on the School Board?

The reasons to run for office are varied. Many trustees run because they care about children and want to ensure the best educational outcomes for all students. Some may have students attending school in a district, others might be grandparents, and still others may find it rewarding to give back to their community.

How Do I Learn More About Campaigning and Board Membership?

[TASB's Guide for School Board Candidates](#), available in the TASB store, offers insights into how a school board works, provides information about ethical campaigning, and summarizes election laws.

It also includes resources and detailed information about:

- Campaign finance
- Reporting requirements
- Election advertising guidelines

Where Can I Get Information About My Local Board?

Your local superintendent can answer questions about how schools operate as well as questions about school district policies. The superintendent is usually responsible for maintaining the official district board policy manual. The superintendent will also know if there are any candidate workshops available.

Board officers and experienced trustees can also answer questions about how schools operate and can help you understand the inner workings of a school board.

The district policy manual is a key tool in understanding the requirements imposed by law upon the school district, as well as the paths the board of trustees has chosen within the discretion permitted to the board by state and federal law and regulation. You may wish to contact your superintendent's office to request a copy of the policy manual or to gain access to the online policy.

School districts and regional education service centers offer candidate workshops that give you an opportunity to ask questions of local school trustees and superintendents about school board service.

Can I Commit the Time to Run for, and Serve on, the School Board?

Running for school board can be exciting. It's an opportunity to get out into your community and connect with people to learn what matters to them. But campaigning also takes time. The amount of time you commit will vary depending on factors such as the size of the district and the number of candidates running for the same seat. Before running for office, consider your commitments and whether you have the time to be an effective member of your local school board.

How Can I Campaign Effectively?

To make the most of your campaign, you need to consider who your constituents are and what they care about. Taking the time to get out and talk with people in your school community may be one of

the most important things you do during your campaign. Taking the time to listen to your community while understanding the role of a board member will create the conditions for a successful term in office should you be elected.

Can I Make Campaign Promises?

While it is common for candidates to run for a seat on the board with the goal of making changes in the district, board members are limited by what they can and cannot do. It is important to [understand the school board's roles and responsibilities](#) before deciding to run for trustee.

For example, individual trustees have no official authority outside of a legally called board meeting, and the board cannot commit to actions that are not passed by a majority of those present at a legally called meeting. If a board candidate makes campaign promises, they are unable to keep — if elected — this may not only lead to an embarrassing situation for the trustee, but it may also lead to negative reactions from constituents.

Candidates for the school board [should understand the basics](#) of running a legal and ethical campaign for school board.

How Do I Run an Ethical Campaign?

Candidates should seek to maintain high ethical standards while campaigning. Each board may have its own code of ethics, but to better understand the bar that is set for trustees, it's a good idea to review the [Code of Ethics for School Board Members](#) and understand [nepotism and conflicts of interest](#).

What Are Key Filing Deadlines for the May 2025 Election?

Candidates must file their applications for a place on the ballot by 5 p.m. on the 78th day before the May and November general elections.

In many districts, the superintendent's secretary is the designated filing authority charged with receiving such applications. Be sure to determine who the filing authority is for your district. Filing deadlines for 2025 are as follows:

- First day to file for May 3 election: January 15, 2025
- Last day to file for May 3 election: February 14, 2025

What Are Some Best Practices for Campaigning?

To ensure you are conducting an ethical campaign, consider these general practices:

- Focus attention on issues and avoid attacking or finding fault in opponents and district employees.
- Become familiar with specific issues in your district.
- Always share accurate information during your campaign.
- Keep your focus on what you would like to see happen in your district.

Running an ethical campaign demonstrates your leadership. It helps you establish a positive foundation for working with the board and administrators if you do get elected.

Where Can I Learn More About Campaign Finance and Ethics?

The following state agencies provide information and publications with details about campaign laws and regulations, including campaign finance and advertising:

- [Secretary of State, Elections Division](#)
- [Election Forms Index at the Secretary of State](#), Elections Division
- [Texas Ethics Commission](#)

How Can I Prepare for Board Membership?

If you plan to run for school board but have never attended a board meeting, you should check one out. Because a board agenda may include action items, discussion, presentations, and time for public comment, it is not unusual for meetings to be lengthy. And that doesn't include the time you'll need to read, research, and prepare in advance of board meetings.

As a new board member — and even as a veteran — there is a lot to learn and to stay up to date with as laws and policies can change year-to-year. And trustees are required by law to take classes to ensure they fully understand policy and procedures. Being an effective board member means being informed and educated about what's going on in your district.

What Will I Need to Learn the First Year?

Preparing and getting up to speed on district projects and policies are a big part of the first year on the board. During that initial year of board service, you'll learn about a wide variety of topics including:

- District priorities
- The state accountability system
- District budgeting
- The difference between open and closed meetings
- Superintendent Evaluation Instrument

If you're elected, TASB offers a variety of training opportunities throughout the year held around the state, in your district, and [even online](#).

What Can I Expect from Board Membership?

When you run for a seat on the board, you'll want to consider how you'd be an asset to the board and your local school community. It may be helpful to assess the knowledge and skills you offer that could be beneficial to your school board.

As a trustee, you'll need to:

- Attend meetings regularly
- Learn about new and sometimes complex issues
- Interact with a variety of community members
- Problem-solve

What Do Successful Trustees Do?

No matter their background or experience, what makes board members successful is their ability to:

- Work as a team to create a vision for the district and set measurable goals to achieve that vision.
- Understand finances and budgets and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the district.
- Focus on student achievement and implementing policies that ensure success for all students.
- Inform the public regularly on the district's progress and challenges.
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- Advocate on behalf of your local school district.

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