The Importance of School Boards in South Dakota

Here are just a few facts and figures that stress the importance of board leadership.

There is no greater honor that can be bestowed upon a citizen than being elected to a local school board. The citizens in your district have entrusted you with the enormous responsibility of overseeing the education of their students.

School board members in South Dakota serve as locally elected state officials, joining more than 850 women and men from 149 school districts in guiding a statewide public school system.

South Dakota schools employ about 9,500 certified employees to provide education for approximately 136,000 children. Your reward is tendering an indispensable public service.

South Dakotans overwhelmingly trust local school boards to make decisions that impact K-12 public schools in their communities. About 75 percent of South Dakotans polled showed more confidence in local school boards compared to the policy making branches of state government in making decisions effecting public education. (2010 ASBSD/ZOGBY Poll of South Dakota voters)
What Does a Board Member Do?

The job of a school board is complex, but can be simplified in one phrase: A school board’s primary function is provide local leadership that improves student achievement. A focused, effective school board can provide the leadership, direction and oversight necessary to provide students and the community with the best possible schools.

As a school board member, your role is to act as part of a governance leadership team that can leverage the board’s unique role in improving student achievement. The most effective boards focus their efforts into five areas.

**SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS**
The most effective boards understand that learning is job one. Using their policy-making and appropriations authority, boards consider and evaluate how the district’s actions are contributing to student learning – the core work of schools.

**ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO NEEDS**
Effective school boards recognize that students walk through the door with different needs. School boards must allocate resources – time, money and personnel – in a way that makes the greatest impact for every student.

**HOLDING THE SYSTEM ACCOUNTABLE**
It’s important to set meaningful goals for the school system, and it’s just as important that the board works with the school staff and community to measure whether progress is being made and that the district is making the best use of the district’s financial resources.

**BUILDING THE PUBLIC WILL**
Effective boards look for ways to spur involvement from parents and the community. The most successful public schools are responsive to the local community and actively involve a broad range of stakeholders in developing and furthering the district’s goals.

**LEARNING AS A BOARD TEAM**
Effective school boards recognize the importance of their work and focus on learning and operating as a board team. That means the board and administration are committed to using evidence to support the work being done and continually evaluating results based on the ultimate goal – student learning.

If elected, learn more about your roles and responsibilities as a board member by participating in board training hosted by ASBSD. Learn more here: http://asbsd.org/index.php/services/board-training/.

School Board Duties

If elected, some of your most important duties on the school board will be:

- Advocating on behalf of all students
- Policy-making
- Hiring & Evaluating the Superintendent
- Planning and Goal Setting for and Evaluation of the school district
- Maintaining fiscal responsibility
- Providing safe and secure school facilities
- Open, honest communication