

## The Importance of School Boards in South Dakota

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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.

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School board members in South Dakota serve as locally elected state officials, joining the 845 women and men from 147 school districts in guiding a statewide public school system.

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South Dakota schools employ more than 9,000 certified employees to provide education for more than 135,000 students. Your reward is tendering an indispensable public service.

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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)

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## So You Want To Become A School Board Member

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A guide for school board candidates  
2026



## Becoming A Candidate For School Board

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Serving as a school board member is a challenging job that requires leadership, vision and dedication—it's one of the most important responsibilities a citizen can undertake. If elected, you and your fellow board members will shape the future of your community and society by establishing educational goals that help students reach high levels of achievement.

School board members in South Dakota are elected officials. School boards consist of five, seven, or nine members whose terms are from one to three years initially, and three years thereafter.

### **RUNNING FOR OFFICE**

To become a school board candidate, you must first pick up a nominating petition from the school business office. Next, have it signed by at least 20 qualified voters of the school district. The last step is to return the nominating petition to the school district business office or by registered mail no later than five p.m. on the Tuesday seventy days before the date of the election.

School board elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June or the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Each local school board sets the date for the district's election.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

To be eligible serve on a South Dakota school board, one must be:

- At least 18 years old.
- A resident of the school district.
- Eligible voter of the district or representative area.

## What Does a Board Member Do?

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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 attending ASBSD's GAVEL training. Visit <http://asbsd.org/index.php/latestevents/>.

## School Board Duties

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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, Goal Setting and Evaluation
- Maintaining fiscal responsibility
- Providing safe and secure school facilities
- Open, honest communication