



# PARENT TOOLKIT

*Advocating for Quality Curriculum*

## RUNNING AS A CANDIDATE FOR YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD

You do not need a background in public education or public policy to run for a school board position. Although it differs from state to state, there are some common qualifications that most states have to be eligible to be a candidate for a school board election. Check with your local school board to see your specific requirements. The most common candidate requirements:

1. Be a registered voter.
2. Be a resident of the district that he or she is running in.
3. Have at least a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency.
4. Have no felonies.
5. Not be a current employee of the district and/or be related to a current employee in that district.

***Some states require candidates to file a petition to run for a school board position.*** These petitions require a certain number of valid signatures and sometimes a small filing fee. Check with your county election commission or district superintendent's office to determine your exact local requirements.

Becoming a school board member is a significant commitment. It takes time and dedication to be an influential member. Candidates may run for a school board seat because they have a child in the district and want to impact education or because they want to serve and support the district.

***To find out information about your next local school board election, you can visit the district website.*** If you cannot find this information on the website, you can call the district or the superintendent's office for more details.



## Running for School Board Position:

To bring awareness of your interest in serving on the school board, a good start is to share information with the community. Candidates can reach out and connect with thousands of voters through social media platforms for little to no cost. Here are some suggestions on how to begin a campaign after you have filed your paperwork for candidacy.

1. **Create a Facebook page, Instagram account, and Twitter account** to promote your campaign. These accounts are usually free and can be easily accessed and shared by friends, family, and supporters. These accounts should be updated frequently and be used to reach your constituents daily. For extra amplification, you could use the promotional features offered by the platforms to reach more viewers. Make sure you are only advertising to people in your district and eligible to vote for you.
2. **Utilize your church community** for support and awareness. Your church community is a great ally. Many families are eager to volunteer and rally behind your cause.
3. **Knock on doors** in your community and introduce yourself to your neighbors. Your volunteers from church or social clubs could also help knock on doors on your behalf. Face-to-face interactions are important to help your community get to know you better and remind them of the upcoming election. Make sure to have a pamphlet or palm card to leave with potential voters.
4. **Make use of yard signs** to increase name recognition and serve as a reminder of upcoming elections. These signs should feature your name and what position you are running for in big, bold, and easy-to-read font.
5. **Host meet the candidate events** in local public venues. It can be as simple as hosting an event in a neighborhood park, inviting friends and neighbors, and asking them to invite a few friends themselves. If permissible, you can also organize an ice cream truck to meet you in a local neighborhood for a casual ice cream social or host an event in your local public library. These events should be simple, cost-effective, and give the community a chance to speak with you one-on-one.
6. **Recruit volunteers** to help you make phone calls, knock on doors, organize events, and educate the public on your campaign. Volunteers should be local community members, including members of the youth community. Colleges and universities often have clubs and organizations of students that love to get involved.
7. **Build a campaign website** to present information about yourself and the issues that are important to you. Keep the website updated with news and events to make it easy for voters to view your position on current events on education. You can also include a campaign press kit for voters and local media. The kit can include a candidate



biography, cover letter describing yourself and the campaign, digital copies of brochures and flyers, headshots or photographs, and a frequently asked questions document on the major issues facing the candidate.

8. **Local media**, including newspapers, radio, and TV, are a great way to gain name recognition while advocating for issues that are important to you. Send short and simple press releases announcing your candidacy and what your vision is for the district. Keep them under half a page, and make sure to include your district, name, campaign contact information, and webpage.
9. **Do not be afraid to fundraise**. Fundraising is often an intimidating part of campaigning but don't let it scare you! Fundraising can be done through in-person asks or on your digital platforms. Before making any asks, make sure you familiarize yourself with campaign finance laws (these are state-specific and can be found on your Secretary of State webpage). And remember, by donating to you, people are investing in the future of their child's education. A thank you note is customary when someone gives a donation or lends a helping hand in a local election.
10. **Seek endorsements** early on from trusted officials and leaders in your community and state. This will boost your name recognition along with voters' confidence in you as a candidate.

## **What is the time commitment to be on the school board?**

While school boards typically meet only a few times a month, the time commitment to be an effective school board member is considerable. Ahead of meetings, you will need to study materials to make the best possible decisions, ask questions, and do your research on issues you do not fully understand. Beyond board meetings, meetings, work sessions, and district events will require your time and attention.

## **What is the compensation for a School Board Member?**

Most of the time, serving as a school board member is voluntary and unpaid. Some states ban school districts from paying school board members, while others pay their school board members' salaries. This is different in each state, and it is important to look at your state's website to determine more information.

