What Every Kentucky School Board Candidate Should Know

In Kentucky, school board members work as a team to govern the activities of their school district by setting policy and providing resources to help every student learn. The focus of every decision or action of the board should reflect commitment to improving student achievement in the district.

Leadership – Schools and the Community

- Local boards of education represent their community in overseeing local schools as part of the state system of public elementary and secondary education.
- Local boards of education are governmental bodies and subject to both federal and state constitutions, laws and regulations.

Kentucky School Board Structure

- In general, boards of education in Kentucky consist of five members.
- Members are elected on a nonpartisan ballot in even-numbered years.
- Members serve four-year terms – staggered so that the terms of not more than three members of a local board expire at the same time.
- Independent school districts elect board members at large; county school districts elect board members from divisions.

Job Profile of a School Board Member – Knowledge, Skills, Traits

A Kentucky school board member should:

- Be knowledgeable or willing to learn more about public education, the local district, student achievement, and board member roles and responsibilities.
- Have the skills to analyze, collaborate, communicate and thick critically.
- Understand how to deal with the media and be willing to work with them.
- Know how to work as a team: how to listen, agreeable disagree, manage change and solve problems.
- Be creative, dependable, honest, humble, respectful, supportive, understanding and visionary.

For a more detailed description of the job of a Kentucky school board member and the tasks involved, please go to www.ksba.org and click on IMPORTANT BOOKMARKS.

Leadership Roles of the School Board

- Set clear expectations
- Provide support for the work
- Hold the system accountable
- Engage the community
- Learn as a team

Responsibilities

- District leadership, fiscal management, district policies, community engagement
- Comply with Kentucky laws such as:
  - Adopt the school calendar – Kentucky Revised Statutes 158.070(2)
  - Set graduation requirements – KRS 158.140(2)
  - Adopt a discipline code for all students – KRS 158.148(4)
  - Expel students – KRS 158.150(5)
  - Exercise "corporate" powers – KRS 160.160(1) and KRS 160.290
  - Appoint the superintendent – KRS 160.292 and KRS 160.350
  - Set qualifications, duties, and compensation of positions – KRS 160.290
  - Generate various reports and adopt various policies – KRS 160.340
  - Adopt a policy for implementing school-based decision making – KRS 160.345(2)
  - Allocate adequate resources to each school – KRS 160.345(2)(g)
  - Levy taxes – KRS 160.460
  - Hold demotion hearings from administrators – KRS 161.765(2)(d)
  - Grant leaves of absence to employees – KRS 161.770

Code of Ethics

Kentucky school board member are expected to act morally and ethically as they carry out their duties to represent the community and improve public education as they:

- Govern effectively and with integrity
- Prepare for and participate in board meetings
- Serve as an advocate for all children, keeping the best interests of all children in mind
- Uphold the laws and regulations of the state and country
- Avoid conflicts of interest

A School Board Code of Ethics may be found in the district or at www.ksba.org.

Eligibility

To serve on a local board of education a person must meet the following qualifications:

- Be at least 24 years old.
- Have been a citizen of Kentucky for at least three years preceding his/her election and be a voter of the district to which he/she is elected.
- Have completed at least the 12th grade, been issued a GED certificate or been elected prior to July 14, 1990 with no lapse in service.
- Have signed an affidavit under penalty of perjury certifying completion of the 12th grade or the equivalent as determined by passage of the 12th grade equivalency examination held under regulations adopted by the state board of education, and have filed an affidavit with the nominating petition required by KRS 118.315.
- Does not hold a state office requiring the constitutional oath and is not a member of the General Assembly.
- Does not hold or discharge the duties of any civil or political office, deputyship, or agency under city or county government; is not an officer or employee of a city or county.
- Is not, at the time of his/her election, directly or indirectly involved in the sale to the board of books, stationery, or any other property, material, supplies, equipment, or services for which school funds are expended.
- Has not been removed from membership on a board of education for cause.
- Does not have a father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law employed by the school district. (This does not apply to a board member holding office on July 13, 1990 whose relative was not initially hired by the district during the tenure of the board member.)
- Meet in-service requirements as specified in KRS 160.180.

Election Rules and Regulations

- Candidates for school board must obtain from the local county clerk's office the following forms: affidavit, the nominating petition, appointment of campaign treasurer and optional request for reporting exemption.
- Candidates must file the completed forms with the local county clerk's office prior to 4 p.m. local time on the second Tuesday in August.
- Candidates for local school boards are subject to the Kentucky campaign finance laws, KRS Chapter 121.
- KRS 161.164 prohibits school district employees from participating in specified political activities involving school board elections, including taking part in the management of any political campaign for school board.
- School board candidates may not solicit or accept any political assessment, subscription, contribution, or service of any employee of the local school district.
- Local school district employees may have limited participation in board candidate campaigns such as placing signs on their own property, putting bumper stickers on their own vehicles or engaging in general discussion about the election.
- Election finance materials and guidelines may be obtained from www.kref.ky.gov.

Training Requirements

KSBA is the recognized provider of 8 hours of in-service training for board members who are required to obtain 12 hours annually. The annual in-service requirements for all school board members are:

- 12 hours of training for board members with zero to three years of experience
- 8 hours of training for school board members with four to seven years of experience
- 4 hours of training for school board members with eight or more years of experience
- New, inexperienced board members must acquire training hours from among the following topics: school law, school finance, community relations, policy development, personnel relations, instructional programs, superintendent/board relations, goal setting/decision making, employment and evaluation of the superintendent, and educational services provided for the gifted and other special population children.

Compensation

- Board members may receive a per diem of $75 and actual expenses for each regular or special meeting attended.
- Board members may also receive this same per diem for training that is required by law.
- Expenses incurred within the district may not exceed more than $3,000 per board member in any one calendar year and per diems may not exceed more than $3,000 in any one calendar year.

Are you thinking of running for election? If so, Kentucky law requires you to file a nomination petition with the office of the county clerk. As stated above, nomination petitions are available from the county clerk's office and must be filed, along with a $20 filing fee, no later than 4 p.m. local time on the second Tuesday in August.

At the time of your filing, the clerk will provide additional information, forms and requirements, but in the meantime, check out the **Frequently Asked Questions** on the back of this page to get a feel for what other potential candidates just like you have wanted to know when considering a run for this office.

Frequently Asked Questions

If I am elected to the school board, how do I ensure that we hire the best new math teachers at the middle school and new basketball coach at the high school?
While the school board does create general job descriptions, you may not be involved in hiring teachers or other staff. Kentucky law (KRS 160.170, KRS 160.180) strictly prohibits school board members from any role in such hiring decisions. If a board member attempts to influence an employment decision, he or she may be removed from office. By law, the board can only hire or appoint the superintendent, board attorney, board secretary, and board treasurer.

When in the local grocery store, I tell my constituents that the district will build a new football field if I am elected. What authority do I have as an individual board member to get things like this done in my district?
In a word, none. Board members have no authority as an individual board member. Their only authority comes as a member of the board team and acting in a legally called board meeting.

Who is responsible for paying for the board member training that is required by state regulations?
The district. The local school district generally budgets and pays for the expenses incurred as board members obtain their required board training hours.

My experience is in education; if elected, should I spend a lot of time in the schools managing the day to day teaching and learning?
No, the local school board is a policy making board responsible for governance of the district. The superintendent is the administrator responsible for the day to day management of the district. The board governs and the administrators – superintendent, principals, staff – administer. However, board members may visit schools provided they follow established district guidelines.

Can the board discuss issues that may become controversial behind closed doors?
No, board members are required by law to hold most all discussions of board business in an open session at an announced meeting. The few exceptions to the open meetings law may be found in KRS 61.805-61.850.

All five board members show up at the district high school baseball game. Is it acceptable to sit together?
Yes. Board members may gather in the same location as long as board business is not being discussed or board action being taken. All board business must be discussed at a legally called board meeting.

Several teachers have offered to help in my campaign. May I send an e-mail to a teacher list requesting their help in my election?
No. School board candidates may not solicit political support from district employees.

How much time does it take to be a good school board member?
It's hard to give an exact time requirement but it is more than just one board meeting a month. Research shows that effective board members not only prepare for and attend meetings, but they seek opportunities to grow as an individual board member and as a team member through workshops, seminars and conferences. School board members also maintain an appropriate level of visibility in the schools, the district and the community.