

LRSD School Board Candidate Guide

School Board Service

The decision to run for your local school board is one to which much thought and consideration must be given. Serving as a board member is one of the most important responsibilities that a citizen can undertake. If elected, the education standards which you, together with your fellow board members, establish will affect the future of the students, the community, and society.

Being a board member is a complex and varied position, and often is frustrating as you struggle long hours with difficult choices; however, it is also rewarding, as you watch students succeed and go on to lead productive lives as the result of educational opportunities you helped to create.

There are certain implications in being on the team responsible for the entire district, which you may want to consider. Decisions need to reflect what is in the best interest of all students and all citizens; this demands constant effort and a strong, unselfish commitment to serving other people.

- It takes a lot of time and hard work to be an effective board member;
- There is a great deal to learn – about legal responsibilities, curriculum, budgets, facilities, negotiations, and other facets of governing a school system;
- Most issues are more complicated than you thought;
- You will not be able to please all of your constituents all of the time; and
- You will not be able to shop in town without people stopping to talk to you about school issues.

If you are willing to devote your time and talents to meeting these challenges, the Arkansas School Boards Association and the Little Rock School District applauds your decision to run for election and wishes you the best of luck.

(ASBA “Running for School Board” document with bullet points added.)

Board Member Qualification

To be eligible to run for a school board position, you must be a qualified voter residing in the school district, and in the respective election zone. You may not be an employee of the district (a family member who is an employee of the district does not disqualify you from running for office).

School Board Candidate Qualifications

- Must be a U.S. citizen. Amendment 51, § 6
- Must be an Arkansas resident. Amendment 51, § 6
- Must be a resident of the district and respective electoral zone if elected from zones. ACA § 6-13-631
- Must not be an employee of the school district served. ACA § 6-13-616
- Must not claim a right to vote in another county or state. Amendment 51, § 6
- Must not presently be adjudged mentally incompetent by a court of competent jurisdiction. Amendment 51, § 6
- Must never have been convicted of embezzlement of public money, bribery, forgery, or other infamous crime. Article 5, § 9

Filing for Election

A candidate for a position on the LRSD school board will need to file a political practices pledge, an affidavit of eligibility, and a petition which contains the names of at least twenty (20) registered voters who are residents of the school district and the electoral zone for the position.

You may visit the Pulaski County Clerk's office to request materials about running for office. The "2020 Running for Public Office Handbook" is available on the Secretary of State webpage.

(<https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/information-for-candidates>)

LRSD Board Member Term of Office

The District has nine (9) Board of Directors. Each member is elected for a three (3) year term of service. Members may be re-elected to serve consecutive terms so long as the member continues to meet the eligibility requirements for board service. (LRSD Board Policy 1.19)

<https://www.lrsd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=4718&dataid=4476&FileName=LRSD%20Section%201%20-%20BOARD%20GOVERNANCE.pdf>

LRSD Board Member Election Zones

Please see: <https://www.lrsd.org/domain/1350>

Election Dates and Timelines

May 3, 2020 – August 1, 2020 – Petitions for candidates for School Board

- A candidate for a position on the board of directors of a school district may qualify for the ballot by filing a political practices pledge, an affidavit of eligibility, and either:
 - A petition; or
 - A notice of write-in candidacy
- The petition shall be directed to the county clerk and shall contain the names of at least twenty (20) registered voters who are residents of the school district and, if applicable, the electoral zone for the position.
- Candidates may begin circulating petitions not earlier than ninety (90) days before the filing deadline. (ACA §6-14-111)
- Candidates may submit the political practices pledge, affidavit of eligibility, and petition/notice of write-in candidacy during a one week filing period that ends at noon on August 1.

October 14, 2020 – Notice of School Election (ACA § 6-14-109)

The county board of election commissioners (CBEC) shall give notice of all school elections under § 7-5-202.

October 19, 2020 – November 2, 2020 - Early voting (ACA § 7-5-418)

November 3, 2020 - Annual School Election: hours are continuous from 7:30am until 7:30pm. (ACA §7-5-304 and §6-14-102)

December 1, 2020 - Runoff Elections (ACA § 6-14-121)

- Whenever there are more than two (2) candidates for election to any position on a board of directors at any election held in this state and whenever no candidate for any school district position receives a majority of the votes cast for the office or whenever there is a tie vote, there shall be a runoff election held in the district.

November 5, 2020 -November 18, 2020 - CBEC Certification

- The timeframe in which the CBEC must ascertain and declare results for the Annual School Election and file certification of election with the county clerk is no earlier than forty-eight (48) hours and no later than the 15th calendar day after the Annual School Election. (ACA § 6-14-115 (a))

November 5, 2020 - November 28, 2020 - Oath of Office

Board members who are elected to an initial or noncontinuous term are required to receive and submit proof to the county clerk of having received the board member oath of office within ten (10) days following the certification of the election by the CBEC. The board member must submit proof of the receipt of the oath to the county clerk and the board member's term starts as soon as the receipt of the proof of the oath of office is certified by the county clerk. A.C.A. § 6-13-617

More information on the dates of election can be located at

https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/uploads/2020_Election_Calendar_7-29-19.pdf

Duties of School Board Members

School boards are most effective when members focus on the big picture; making policy, setting goals and engaging stakeholders, all with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. When boards focus too heavily on administrative issues, children suffer. Divided boards lead to a divided community.

Legally defined duties of a school board are:

- ◇ Make, enforce and obey district policy
- ◇ Hire and evaluate the superintendent
- ◇ Set the district's vision, mission and direction
- ◇ Oversee district finances and budget
- ◇ Approve the employment of staff
- ◇ Attend legally convened board meetings
- ◇ Conduct hearings
- ◇ Visit schools annually when students are present
- ◇ Receive training and profession development
- ◇ Follow federal laws and regulations, state laws and rules, and the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education rules governing public schools, including the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

Qualities that make a good board member

Outstanding school board members share common traits. A board member has no individual authority; an effective board acts as a whole and respects the expertise of the district's staff. Most good board members develop and strengthen skills over time through experience and continued training. Board members who run on a single issue or for personal gain often create discord in a school district.

Outstanding school board members are:

- ◇ Motivated by the best interest of all kids
- ◇ Passionate about public education
- ◇ Share responsibility for fiscal accountability, facilities and student academic achievement
- ◇ Willing to follow high ethical standards
- ◇ Strong communicators, willing to listen
- ◇ Ready to rely on facts and weigh all sides of an issue before making a decision
- ◇ Well informed about current issues in public education
- ◇ Supports ~~of~~ the democratic process and accept the will of the majority
- ◇ Willing to spend time and energy on board business

- ◇ Committed to learning by participating in on-going training
- ◇ Collaborative and able to function as part of a team
- ◇ Willing to exercise power only at legally held meetings.

Once Elected to a School Board

Training

Board members who are elected to an initial or nonconsecutive term are required to receive a minimum of nine (9) hours of training by December 31 of the year after the year the board member was elected. These initial nine (9) hours are required to include training on:

- How to read and interpret an audit report; and
- Information regarding school safety and student discipline.

Board members who have served on the board for twelve (12) or more consecutive months are required to obtain a minimum of six (6) hours of training by December 31st of each calendar year. A board member who fails to receive training will be removed from office. See LRSD Policy 1.11 and 1.2. (ACA § 6-13-611 and 6-13-629) DESE Rules Governing Training for School Board Members

Statement of Financial Interest

A person who is an elected member of a school board or who is a candidate for a position on a school board shall file a written statement of financial interest with the Pulaski County Clerk (ACA § 21-8-701 & ACA § 21-8-703)

This form is available at <http://www.pulaskiclerk.com/en/services/administration> or <http://www.arkansasethics.com/>

School Board Code of Ethics

As a member of the board, I shall promote the best interests of the school district as a whole, and to that end, I shall adhere to the following educational and ethical standards:

1. Bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, State Board of Education rules, and court orders pertaining to schools.
2. Make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of all children in the district, regardless of ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.
3. Recognize that decisions must be made by the board as a whole, make no personal promise and not take private action that may compromise the board.
4. Focus board action on policymaking, goal setting, planning, and evaluation. Insist on regular and impartial evaluation of all staff.
5. Support and protect school personnel in the proper performance of their duties.
6. Vote to appoint the best qualified personnel in the proper performance of their duties.
7. Hold confidential all matters pertaining to schools that, if disclosed, may needlessly injure individuals or the schools. Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law.
8. Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.
9. Delegate authority for the administration of the school to the superintendent.
10. Endeavor to make policy decisions only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings. Render all decisions based on the available facts and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special groups.
11. Encourage the free expression of opinion by all board members and seek systematic communications between the board and students, staff, and all elements of the community.

12. Communicate to board members and the superintendent at appropriate times expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs.
13. Inform myself about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by my state and national school boards associations.
14. Refrain from using my board position for personal or partisan gain.
15. Make certain the board remains responsive to the community.
16. Remember always that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare and academic performance of all the students attending the public schools.

https://arsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Code_of_Ethics.pdf

Conflict of Interest

Election to public office brings both restrictions and responsibilities. Those contemplating running for office or those elected to office should consult state law and school district policy to become knowledgeable of what can and cannot be done as a school board member. Below is a link to the Arkansas Ethics Commission and the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education rules governing ethical guidelines and prohibitions.

<http://www.arkansasethics.com/rules/2017%20draft%20rules/FINAL%20Rules%20on%20Conflicts%20-%202017.pdf>

http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/rules/Current/2016/Ethical_Guidelines_and_Prohibitions_2016_rv.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Do school board members get paid for their services?*

School board members are not paid for their service. Board members shall be reimbursed, from school funds, for expenses relating to training and Board members shall be paid a per diem stipend for days necessary to attend such training with the amount of such stipend to be determined by the Board in July of each year.

2. *Who votes for an elected school board member?*

Qualified electors residing in the school district election zone of the individual candidate.

3. *May a board member's spouse be employed with the school district in which he or she serves on the board?*

A board member's family member may not be initially employed by the public educational entity the member serves during the member's tenure of service on the local board for compensation in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) unless the Commissioner issues a letter of exemption and approves the employment contract based on unusual and limited circumstances. The family member of a board member who was employed by the district prior to the board member's election may continue to be employed by the district.

4. *Can a board member be removed from office prior to his or her term of office expiring?*

Yes, a board member may be removed from office if he or she: moves their permanent residence to be outside the boundaries of the district, fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular meetings, fails to attend six (6) regular meetings in a calendar year, fails to receive the mandatory training hours, or is convicted of a felony. See A.C.A. § 6-13-611 or LRSD policy 1.2 for a full list.

5. *Is attendance at board meetings mandatory?*
Board members are expected to be present and actively participate in school board meetings. Except under specific circumstances, LRSD policy deems a board member's seat on the board vacated if he or she fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular board meetings and if he or she fails to physically attend six (6) regular meetings in a calendar year.
6. *Who serves as Chairperson of the Board?*
The school board elects the officers of the board at the first regular meeting after the certification of the annual school board election (or the certification of the run-off election if there is a run-off election). Officers will serve one-year terms and will perform those duties as prescribed by board policy. A.C.A. § 6-13-618
7. *May an employee of a school district serve as a board member?*
No. An employee may not be an employee and serve on the school board for which the individual is employed.
8. *May a school board member provide services for the district individually or as an independent contractor or sell or lease personal property to the district?*
Generally prohibited except as otherwise provided, it is a breach of ethical standards for a board member to contract with the public educational entity the member serves if the board member has knowledge that he or she is directly or indirectly interested in the contract.
9. *Can school employees participate in the campaign process?*
School employees are prohibited from participating in the campaign process during normal work hours; this prohibition specifically includes circulating petitions, distributing campaign literature, and making calls or sending emails on behalf of a campaign. School employees are not prohibited from participating in campaign activities during their own personal time after work hours.

Helpful Links for Additional Information

Local

LRSD Website <http://www.lrsd.org>

LRSD Policy Manual <https://www.lrsd.org/domain/211>

Pulaski County Clerk <http://www.pulaskiclerk.com/en/news-events>

Pulaski County Election Commission <https://www.votepulaski.net>

State

Arkansas School Board Association Website <http://www.arsba.org>

A Handbook for Arkansas School Board Members <http://www.arsba.org/resources/asba-handbook/>

Arkansas Department of Education <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov>

Secretary of State <https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections>

Arkansas Ethics Commission <http://www.arkansasethics.com>

National

National School Board Association <http://www.nsba.org>

Key Work of School Boards <http://www.nsba.org/keywork>