

GET INVOLVED IN SCHOOL BOARD SERVICE



Make a difference
in local education,
in your community,
& around the World.

School Board members take on the critical responsibility of improving education for all children....locally in the state and nationally.



Community leaders who become members of local school boards direct our largest and most important government service.

Everyone Can Do Something.

There are many ways you can help to improve education on the local level. Every citizen can take Pledge 1, and, as this brochure explains, many can take Pledge 2 or even Pledge 3.



Pledge 1

I will demonstrate that I care about education and make a difference by passing this brochure to community members who may be interested in Board Service.

Pledge 2

I will demonstrate I care about education and make a difference by giving of my time and energy and talents to support a school board candidate.

Pledge 3

I will demonstrate I care about education, and make a difference by seriously considering running as a candidate for my local school board.

How Do School Boards Actually Help The School System?



Fairplay School, around 1940



School Boards date back to more than 200 years to the original colonies. The school board is a uniquely American institution that grew out of the town meeting. Times have changed, but the basic function of the school boards today remains the same...to provide local, citizen-based direction of public education.

The School Board is a corporate body. The authority of a board member includes expressing an opinion and casting a vote at any official, public meeting of the board. Outside board meetings, board members have no authority over school matters.

The school board is a policy-making body. This means that the board speaks through policies that it has adopted. These policies are legally binding.



What Do School Boards Do?

- Establish a vision for the community's schools and participate in strategic planning.
- Develop effective policies and review them periodically.
- Provide accountability to the community on student achievement.
- Advocate for the needs of all students at the local, state, and national levels.
- Attend several meetings per month (20+ hours per week).
- Hire Superintendent and negotiate contract.
- Evaluate the Superintendent annually.
- Conduct student and employee appeals.
- Approve or reject program proposals.
- Develop, approve, and manage budget.
- Adopt school calendar.



What Do Actual School Board Members Say About Service?

There is no doubt that running for a school board position requires an unusual degree of leadership, inventiveness, and fortitude. It is challenging, time consuming, and often a controversial job that requires both vision and dedication. Yet all communities need and deserve the best possible representation on their elected school boards.



Experienced board members across the state say the rewards of service lie in feeling that they are meeting a vital need in their communities. By providing leadership to school districts, they feel they are able to make a positive difference in the lives of children and, by extension, in the life of the whole community.



“If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.”

Bernadette Wagner
Current Board Member



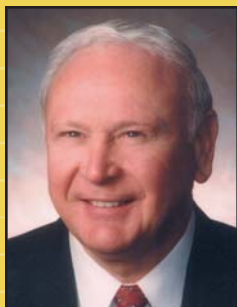
Serving on a
Board of
Education is a
crucial part of
the grass roots
of democracy.



Board Service:



**A vital link to
school excellence
and student
achievement.**



"Public education is the foundation of American democracy. As a Board Member, I was honored to be a part of a team that helps determine the strengths of our school community."

J. Herbert Hardin
Washington County School Board Member
(1998-2002)

School Boards play a critical role in the community.



"If you have the right to complain, you have the responsibility to try and fix it."

Cliff Metger
Washington County School Board Member
(1978-1984)



"In a less than perfect world, School Board Service is a perfect opportunity to make a difference."

Linda Irvin-Craig
Washington County School Board Member
(1982-1986)

The quality of the School Board directly affects the quality of the schools.



"Board members touch the future."

Marie Byers
Washington County School Board Member
(1970-2000)

How Can I Help A School Board Member If I Don't Want To Be A Candidate?

Many people who are not able to run for their local School Board still want to improve education in their community. If you are one of those people, there is a world of support you can provide, meeting needs both before and after school board elections.

What Can You Do?

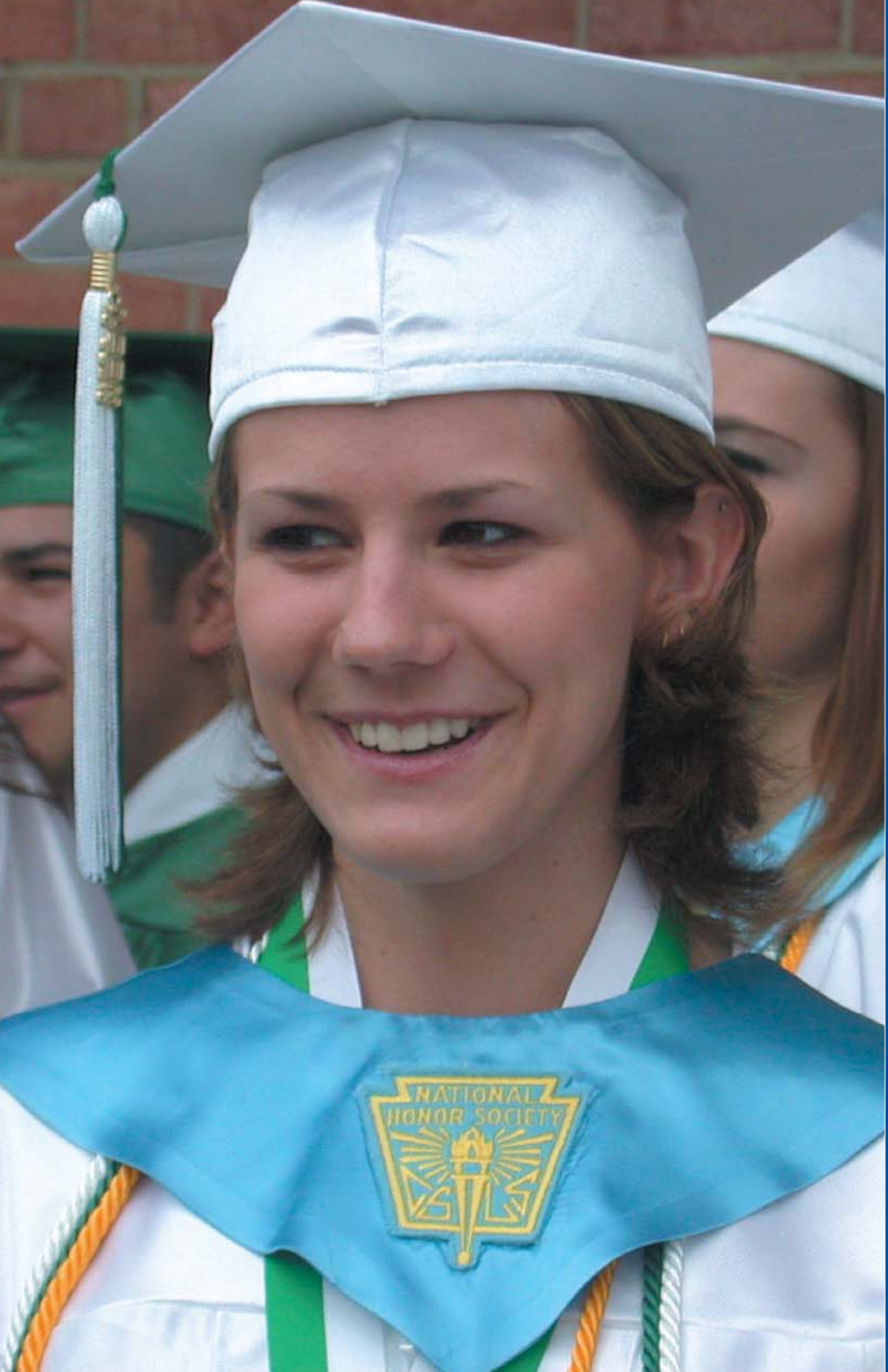
- Advocate during budget hearings.
- Coach a candidate in your field of expertise.
- Work with a group in your community to coordinate, and organize the election campaign for a candidate.
- Volunteer for school or board committees.

How Can Employers Help?

Company owners live up to their corporate citizenship mission when they assist employees in fulfilling their school board duties.

- Encourage employees to run for school board positions.
- Provide extra time off for school board work.
- Allow small group meetings about board issues at the work site.
- Publicly commend employees for school board service.
- Advocate for full funding of the school budget.





You can play a vital role by shouldering the many responsibilities:

- Change the big picture and form a group to support excellence in school service in your area.
- Educate people about the responsibilities and authority of school boards through media, presentations, and public discussions, cultivating greater support for school board members.
- Host “how to” sessions encouraging a broad diverse group of capable community leaders to run for a school board seats.
- Hold a brainstorming meeting of concerned citizens to discuss ways to encourage good school board candidates.

How Do I Run For A School Board Position?

Running for the local school board has very few prerequisites. To be a candidate for election you must:

- Be willing to serve a four year term.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Be a citizen and registered voter in Washington County.



Listed below are some qualities of an effective board member:

- Attentive Listener.
- Interested in youth development and educational matters.
- Creative problem solver.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.





The 2003 Board of Education of Washington County

Acknowledgements

Roxanne Ober and **Bernadette Wagner**, current School Board members, produced this guide in the belief that a greater understanding of school board service will encourage more citizens to step forward and accept the challenge to shape the education of their community's future leaders. We recommend you visit a local school board meeting to get a clearer picture of the scope of school board duties and operations.



For more information on School Board Service contact:

Maryland Association of Boards of Education

mabe@mabe.org or call 410-841-5414

or

National School Board Association

www.nsba.org or call 703-838-6722

Other resources:

www.wcboe.k12.md.us

WC School Board Handbook • School Board Candidate's Guide

