



RUNNING FOR SCHOOL BOARD

A Candidate Guide from the Arkansas School Boards Association

Fundamental roles of school boards

Vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, conduct, ethics

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 policies
- 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 professional development
- Follow state and federal laws and Arkansas Department of Education rules governing public schools, including the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act

Additional roles of school board members include:

- Monitor and advocate for student achievement and district progress
- Advocate student needs to lawmakers and stakeholders
- Collaborate with community partners
- Ensure facilities are safe and adequate
- Align resources with goals

What qualities make a good board member?

Integrity, commitment, vision, courage, respect

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
- Willing to 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 education
- Supporters 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 ongoing training
- Collaborative and able to function as part of a team
- Willing to exercise power only at legally held meetings



Is there information on the Internet to help me understand the process?

Yes, the publication, "Running for Public Office," published by the State of Arkansas contains information about petitions, certifying as a candidate, campaign contributions, financial statements, and other important facts; access the publication at:

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

Who is eligible and what is required to run for a school board position?

- Must be a qualified voter residing in the school district - and in the respective zone if members are elected from zones
- Must not be an employee of the district (a family member employed by the district does not disqualify you from running for office)

School Boards put the Public in Education

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 educational standards which you, together with your fellow board members, establish will affect the future of the students, the community, and society.

Additional Sources of Information

Handbook for Arkansas School Board Members & Basics for New School Board Members

<https://www.arsba.org/page/handbooks>

ASBA Board Candidates & Elections Webpage

<https://www.arsba.org/page/board-candidates>



How do I get started?

Visit your county clerk's office to request materials about running for office.

School board candidates circulate petitions to gather signatures of at least 20 qualified residents of the district (and electoral zone if school board members are elected from zones). Act 503 of 2025 mandates that school board elections will be held only in **even years** on the date of the **preferential primary election**. Election timelines are listed below.

Spring 2026 Election Timeline

August 14, 2025:

Candidate Petition Circulation Period Opens

November 3, 2025:

Candidate Filing Period Opens at Noon

November 12, 2025:

Candidate Filing Period Closes at Noon (Nov. 11 is Veterans Day, so the deadline falls to the next business day, per A.C.A. § 7-1-108.)

December 22, 2025:

Deadline for School District to Submit Millage Information to County Clerk

January 1, 2026:

Deadline for School District to Publish Proposed Budget

February 2, 2026:

Deadline to Register to Vote

February 17, 2026:

Early Voting Opens (Feb. 16 is Presidents Day, so the deadline falls to the next business day, per A.C.A. § 7-1-108.)

March 3, 2026:

Election Day

November 3, 2026:

Run-Off Election

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