



WISCONSIN
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL BOARDS

*Supporting, Promoting &
Advancing Public Education*

On-Boarding New School Board Members



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Goals of Today's Session

1. Understand the importance of new board member on-boarding
2. Understand the three stages of on-boarding
3. Go back to your district with at least one new on-boarding idea

What makes a great school board member?

- ❖ Works collaboratively with other board members and the superintendent, allowing for respectful disagreement
 - ❖ Has a passion to serve
 - ❖ Stays informed
 - ❖ Is prepared
- ❖ Helps set district vision and goals
 - ❖ Measures the success of the district and superintendent against the goals
 - ❖ Advocates for the district and its students within the community

Informal learning “on the job” or structured on-boarding?

- ▶ Many boards are experiencing less long-term continuity.
- ▶ The job of school board member is important and complex. Being new to the job is hard.
- ▶ Establish a process for all newly elected board members that creates conditions for success.
- ▶ Successful on-boarding can minimize transition challenges and keep the entire board moving in a productive direction.
- ▶ View on-boarding as a long-term, intentional process.
- ▶ Boards benefit from a specific plan that covers the who, what, when, and how of the on-boarding process.

Three Stages of On-Boarding

Pre-
election

Post-
election

On-going
orientation

Pre-Election On-Boarding



- ▶ Can be very context dependent
- ▶ Should contested elections be treated different from uncontested elections?
- ▶ Most of the contact with candidates and potential candidates will occur through the staff person assisting the clerk
- ▶ The superintendent should be willing to take calls and emails from candidates and potential candidates
- ▶ Treat candidates and potential candidates even-handedly

Options for Post-Election On-Boarding

Meeting with the Board Chair and Superintendent

- ▶ Initial contact to congratulate/welcome
- ▶ Roles and responsibilities of board members
- ▶ Current board goals and norms
- ▶ Meeting processes and procedures; creating meeting agendas
- ▶ Committee assignments
- ▶ Requests for information/records
- ▶ Communicating with the community

Options for Post-Election On-Boarding

**Introduce key documents through which
the board governs**

- ▶ Strategic plan
- ▶ Annual Budget
- ▶ School board policies
- ▶ Meeting packets and
agendas/notices
- ▶ Minutes of past
meetings
- ▶ Superintendent
evaluation



Options for Post-Election On-Boarding



Meeting with other administrative staff

- ▶ Provides an overview of key programs, departments, and operations
- ▶ Creates the start of a relationship among the leadership team

General “set-up”

- ▶ Update district web pages that identify board members
- ▶ Establish a district email account; configure any district-provided electronic device
- ▶ Other online access (electronic meeting applications, state association member access, etc.)
- ▶ Meeting with district technology staff as needed
- ▶ Payroll/declining compensation

Additional opportunities to learn

- ▶ VSBA programs, including New Board Member trainings



Post-Election On-Boarding

Board member expenses for training, development activities, board duties

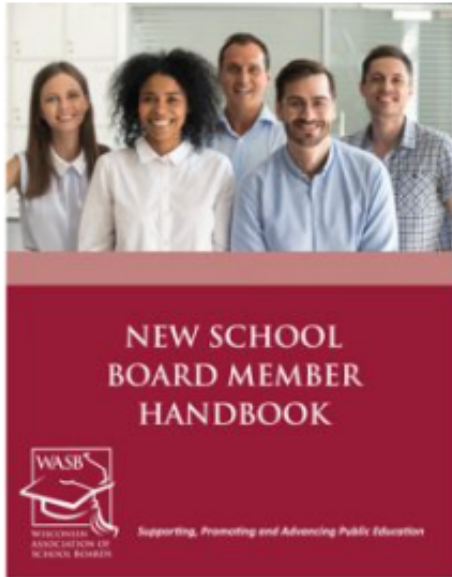
- ▶ Inform new board members of relevant procedures, forms, and limitations.

Ongoing Orientation

- ▶ Board mentors?
 - Designating a mentor is NOT a substitute for an on-boarding process.
- ▶ Regular conversations with the superintendent
 - For example, bi-weekly
 - Clarifications/ Q & A
- ▶ Guidance through at least an entire annual cycle of board business
- ▶ Full-board development sessions
 - Organized board learning
 - Board retreats



WASB New Board Member Handbook



Drawing on the deep well of knowledge and expertise of the WASB, the New School Board Member Handbook provides information about the basics of school board service and answers questions commonly asked by new board members.

We hope you find the handbook a helpful reference as you begin your school board service. The online version (pdf and html) includes dozens of embedded links to the referenced statutes, WASB resources and other guidance. Some WASB resources may be password protected for members only. Contact us if you are a member and need assistance logging in.

Hard copies may be requested by sending an email to info@wasb.org.

Are you onboarding a new member? Listen to the **WASB April 2020 podcast** for tips.

New Board Member Handbook (Download this file to print or search the handbook.)

WASB New Board Member Handbook



<https://wasb.org/legal-human-resources-services/basic-resources/new-school-board-member-handbook/>

- ▶ [Chapter 1: Beginning Your School Board Service](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 2: Can We Talk?](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 3: Time for Meetings](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 4: Working With the Board](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 5: Building a Relationship With the Superintendent](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 6: Basics of School Law and Budgeting](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 7: Doing Your Homework](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 8: Community Connections](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 9: A Glossary of Education Terms](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 10: Common Acronyms](#)
- ▶ [Chapter 11: Acronyms of Well-Known Organizations](#)

One idea at the core of on-boarding and board development activities:

You and your board are modeling the professional and ethical standards the board expects district staff, students, and other stakeholders to follow/uphold.



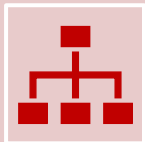
Board Chair Selection Considerations

- ▶ The board chair is a district leadership position.
- ▶ Who is best qualified to take on that role in terms of knowledge, experience, integrity and leadership qualities?
- ▶ Is it best to elect the newest member as chair of the board?
- ▶ Who is the best builder of culture?
- ▶ (Desire) Wanting the position doesn't qualify a person for leadership.
- ▶ The board chair is a political position.
- ▶ Who has the best people skills/soft skills?
- ▶ Who is willing, has the time, and the savvy to get involved with political advocacy for the district?
- ▶ Who is trusted to promote the district while representing all district populations?

Closing - To help ensure success for new members . . .



Plan for new board member orientation with purpose



Once board members are elected, conduct on-boarding consistently



Continue learning both as a board and as individual members of the board

Thank you for your time
and service to your district
and community!

Are there any questions?



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