

1. A. Preparing for Your School Board Position

Before your first meeting

Know your principles – write them down, refer to them.

As an elected representative, people will attempt to sway your opinion/vote.

Clearly understanding and expressing your core values/principles will make difficult votes much easier. Get to know the US Constitution (Moms for America Cottage meetings online, Institute On The Constitution courses online, Hillsdale courses online, National Center for Constitutional Studies courses online) are very good resources. Get to know your state constitution. Use them to reference why you voted the way you did.

Example:

Good Board Principles

1. [Community name] is a great community of talented people that support our schools. We appreciate the tens of millions of dollars the community provides to operate our schools. Community members are not anti-school if they believe the school district should live within its means. Everyone is participating in funding our school, even renters.
2. Purchase and support local businesses whenever possible, support those who support us without bias.
3. Value honesty and frank discussions.
4. Parents are the ultimate authority over their children. Schools shouldn't try to take on that responsibility. We must assist parents in recognizing their responsibility.
5. The board policy manual is the rule book. It has been neglected and often written by politically motivated organizations; we will be working to update it.
6. The school district provides students with the opportunity for an education. Students and parents must take the ultimate responsibility for each student's education and be involved in the decision making.
7. Treat community members with respect. It's not schools vs. community; it's schools AND community. It is not anti-school to disagree with the board, administration, or teachers on any matter including school funding.
8. Schools work for the community and answer to it.
9. Become active in state policy making. Engage our state reps.

10. Be sensitive to the economic conditions. Let's get through downturns together not at the expense of each other.
11. Require parent and community participation; the best decisions occur when many points of view are considered.

Additionally:

1. Think through your goals for the next four years – write them down.
Take advantage of being a board member-elect, you are not subject to open meetings law until the official start date. Meet and strategize with other board members, discuss your goals and theirs, discover common ground.
2. Meet with administrators, find out what they believe are important issues.
3. Read your District's by-laws and Policies
Bylaws govern the conduct of the Board
Policies govern the conduct of the school district
4. Familiarize yourself with Robert's Rules of Order.
5. Ask your district Treasurer to purchase,
"Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, In Brief" by Henry M Robert III, et al.

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Standing for your principles:

Kelly Kohls, former school board member, describes what she experienced as a new school board member, how some of our problems in education developed, and what we can do now.