



Get Involved In Your Local School Board Elections

School board members might not often get much attention, but they have one of the most important jobs in our community: running our local schools. School board members set policy, manage the district budget, and work with the superintendent and district administrators to ensure all children receive a quality education.

Many county school board members will be elected this November. Parents for Public Schools (PPS) is committed to giving all parents a voice in the work of their school boards. In areas where school board members are elected, PPS works with parents to raise public awareness of these important elections, and provides information to help foster informed discussion of the issues.

If you want to help shape the policies of your school district, you may want to consider organizing a public meeting so school board candidates can discuss the issues in your area. Here are some tips to make your event a success:

- First and foremost, PPS builds awareness that serving on a school board is an important job. Voters need to hear from the candidates. Most candidates will welcome the opportunity to share why they are running.
- Find out who is running and in what district the election will be held. You can find out if there is a school board election where you live by calling your county Circuit Clerk or your School Superintendent's office. Since there are different districts and staggered terms on the board, be sure to confirm who actually will get to vote in this year's election.
- Organize a group of interested citizens. These may be an informal group of parents, PTA or PTO chapters, neighbors or church members, or business leaders. Candidates will be more likely to come if they know a group will be present. One of these groups may offer to host the event at their regular meeting, giving you a ready-made audience.
- A fair and open forum will not support any particular candidate. To have credibility with the candidates and the public, avoid any appearance of bias. Supporters of candidates are welcome to attend, but they are not organizing the event.
- Set a time and place for a public meeting. Possible locations: school board meeting room or local library. Depending on the size of your event, you may need to make arrangements for chairs or a microphone.
- Invite all candidates. Be sure to allow time to accommodate scheduling conflicts.
- Be sure to publicize your event. If people don't know about the event they won't come. Get your event listed in the newspaper's local community calendar of events.
- After you have invited the candidates and set a time/place, notify your local newspaper and ask them to cover the event. A public meeting on an important election is news!
- Choose a moderator who is even-handed and fair.

- Decide on a format. Encourage open discussion where possible. You may want to invite other speakers to discuss other education issues not related to the election. PPS can help you with ideas.

In addition to this brief overview, Parents for Public Schools can provide a basic “how to” guide on sponsoring a public forum, as well as information on basic school board management issues and questions to help discussion. PPS does not endorse any candidates for any public office.

Your school board will be stronger with more involvement from active parents who care about the schools in their community. We encourage every parent to pay attention to these important elections this year.