

BULLETIN BOARD

Filling Your Soon-to-be Vacant Seats

Recruiting school board candidates can be a delicate balancing act. How do you find the right fit? How do you know who will take the job seriously? It's important for you to look for different skill sets depending upon the leadership position, the organization's

status and timing. So what should you be seeking in a candidate? Recruiting civic-minded, student-focused individuals to run for board of education seats is imperative to the success of public education in Michigan and to your local community.

The first step is making people aware of **when the election will take place**. Now is a great time to be letting people know about upcoming vacancies on the board. People need time to learn about the school board and give the idea full consideration before the July 24 filing deadline. Announce/post via the media, district website and newsletters, etc.

Use a wide lens when looking for prospects. Graduates, parents, grandparents, community leaders, former staff members and business owners can all be excellent additions to your board. Think broadly! Your next great board member might come from citizen work groups, including advisory committees, councils and task forces, members of professional and trade associations related to public education, donors, strong school financial supporters, local business owners, school volunteers, alumni and so on.

Create opportunities for prospects to learn about school board work. This may include a work session, town hall meeting or informational brochure. Expose them to the work prior to the filing deadline. Some boards have citizen advisory committees, councils or task forces that provide advice and research when needed. This type of work enables the existing board to see potential candidates in action and, at the same time, exposes them to the concept of the board's work.

Encourage people from a variety of backgrounds. Consider the expertise and background of your current board members and seek prospects who can round out and deepen your bench. If you want to bring in new perspectives and voices, think about whether your board composition really reflects the community it represents. If you're representing the whole community, it's only reasonable to have representation from across the community.

Identify what you enjoy about the work. Reflect on what gives you satisfaction and pleasure in your work as a board member. Be able to articulate what you enjoy about serving and why it has meaning to you. Share these feelings with potential candidates so that they get a good understanding of the positive aspects of board service. Once you have identified a few people who you believe would be good additions to your board, talk with them. Explore their feelings about your school district and their beliefs about



service. If you find them to be a potentially good fit for your board, personally encourage them. Individual invitations will go a long way!

Finally, **offer information and support about the election process.** Running a campaign and following the election rules can be very daunting. Your support as an experienced board member will be very helpful!

The goal of the school board should be to seek candidates with a deep commitment to public education and to all of the children in the district, not someone who's interested in bolstering his or her own status, image and agenda. After all, if administrators are expected to do a good job of selecting staff members for employment, the board should do a good job of identifying and encouraging a potential board member.

*Additional resources for your recruitment efforts are available at:
getonboardmi.masb.org*

Ideal Characteristics

- A thoughtful, sincere and deliberate approach to the position
- A constructive attitude toward teamwork
- The willingness to spend the time necessary to be well-informed on the issues
- The ability to represent the entire community
- The temperament to respond accordingly and appropriately through challenging events
- The willingness to listen thoughtfully to others
- The willingness to express one's own opinion and participate in discussions openly and honestly
- The maturity to respect the confidentiality of privileged information
- The willingness to model continuous learning
- The willingness to abide by and support the board operating procedures
- The ability to identify, recommend and encourage prospective candidates

