

September
2008

Provided by
**Illinois
Association
of School
Boards**

School Board Election Tips

**A suggested
communications
program for the 2009
school board election**

The biennial school board election presents a good opportunity to establish communications with school district constituents because elections are newsworthy in themselves and because you can set some very clear goals. For example, you may wish to:

- Recruit some strong candidates where incumbents plan to retire. Some school boards have built special reputations for quality and public respect, because those boards traditionally take it upon themselves to seek out qualified successors when a member decides to retire.
- Build recognition for the office of school board members and reinforce community support for effective school board principles and practices.
- Provide all candidates with equal access to accurate information and valid insights. This should help avoid the misinformation that comes out of some election campaigns and avert the public relations problems for boards and candidates that sometimes result. Keep campaigns constructive.
- If you're going to get some new school board members this year, help them begin preparing for the job even before the election. The more help you provide, the sooner new members can begin pulling their weight.
- Call attention to the school board

election and promote voter turnout. Large turnouts lend legitimacy to an election and blunt the impact of single-interest groups.

To help you, IASB has compiled some materials that your board can obtain at **no charge**. The material deals with: 1) recruiting board candidates and 2) orientation programs for board candidates.

Part One—Recruiting School Board Candidates

Goals:

- Help your board recruit candidates if incumbents plan to retire.
- Build recognition for the importance of an effective school board.

Projects:

- Use news releases, district newsletters, speeches, and the grapevine to publicize the potential impact of the board election in your school district. How many seats will expire? Have any incumbents made firm decisions to run again or to retire?
- Distribute the IASB booklet "Your

School Board and You" as widely as possible to voters. Use mass communications materials to publicize the availability of the booklet and to convey the message that the school board performs a vital public service.

- Plan a candidate orientation workshop to be held in February or March (see Part Two) and announce it early.
- Distribute the IASB "School Board Election Calendar" to news media and make them available to community groups and interested citizens.
- Publicize the procedures and time period for filing school board nominations.
- Issue news releases and district newsletter articles announcing the election, terms expiring, and petition filing information.

Materials available from IASB:

- "Tips on Recruiting School Board Candidates" and sample news releases.
- "Your School Board and You" booklet is available in bulk quantities at no charge.

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Part Two—Orientation Programs For Board Candidates

Goals:

- Encourage school board candidates to conduct constructive election campaigns based on accurate information.
- Reach the public with information about board services that will help build support for the work of the board.

Projects:

- Hold one or more orientation workshops for school board candidates. Invite the public.

- Invite candidates to visit the schools or school office or to meet individually or in groups with the superintendent or board president.
- Invite candidates to attend special sessions for candidates that will be featured at spring dinner meetings of some IASB divisions.
- When candidates file their nominations, present them with such material as:
 - a congratulatory letter
 - copy of “Your School Board and You”
 - a School Board Election Calendar

- invitation to any orientation sessions that you’ve planned
- a “Candidates Kit” available from IASB (see order form)

Materials available from IASB:

- “A Guide to Planning Workshops for Candidates and New Members,” and sample news releases.
- Feel free to consult with IASB Field Services staff in Springfield (217/528-9688) or Lombard (630/629-3776).