



Key Reasons for School Board Member Advocacy

Advocacy is an important responsibility for school board members. In fact, it is included in the oath of office that all Illinois school board members take: *"I shall serve as education's key advocate on behalf of students and our community's school (or schools) to advance the vision for (name of school district)."*

There are numerous ways for your board to advocate for your district and your students. Regardless of if you have everyone engage in advocacy, or identify a few board members to take the lead in these efforts, school board member advocacy ensures that local voices have a significant influence on decisions that impact education on the local, state, and federal levels.

Below are key reasons why school board members should engage in advocacy:



Support Student Success. Using specific stories and data from your district, you champion policies that address disparities and ensure equal opportunities for all students. Advocacy ensures that every student has access to quality education. Your voice helps shape policies that remove barriers and create opportunities for students.



Influence Policy Decisions. Your voice and stories help shape laws and regulations by sharing local, specific insights with state and federal policymakers. Decisions about curriculum standards, teacher recruitment, and student programs are made at the state and federal levels. Those decisions may impact various parts of the state differently, and it is important for voices statewide to be heard. Without your voice, those decisions may not reflect the realities and needs of your schools.



Secure Funding. By sharing specific examples, you can advocate for funding and other resources that directly impact student success. State budgets and grant programs often hinge on legislative priorities. Your advocacy can mean the difference between fully funded programs and painful cuts.



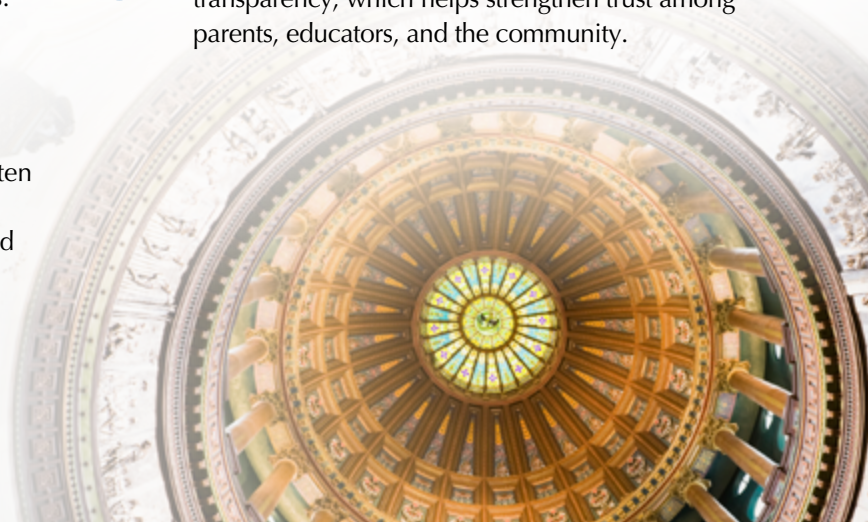
Give Legislators Needed Input. Not all lawmakers are education experts. They rely on you to explain how policies play out in the classrooms and schools in your district. If you don't provide that perspective, someone else, with potentially very different priorities, will.



Protect Local Control. Through your advocacy, you help to maintain decision-making authority at the local level and prevent restrictive mandates that may not serve your students. When you engage with legislators, they hear directly from people who are the decision-makers elected by their local communities to serve students. This helps prevent one-size-fits-all mandates that don't work for your communities.



Build Public Trust and Awareness. Advocacy demonstrates your leadership and transparency, which helps strengthen trust among parents, educators, and the community.



Advocacy is Grounded in IASB's Advocacy Core Values and Resolutions

IASB's advocacy work ensures a strong collective voice on the highest priority issues and concerns. This is reflected in IASB's Position Statements and Advocacy Core Values, which guide this work by advocating for legislation that supports the physical and emotional well-being of students and staff, promotes educational equity for all students, and provides the tools to enhance advocacy efforts.

Over the years, school board members have advocated for and passed resolutions to encourage:

- **3.01 Board Member Involvement** – Guiding board members in their efforts to seek public support of legislation essential to good school government.
- **3.02 Candidate Support** – Encouraging and assisting school board members to effectively evaluate positions of legislative candidates relative to public education and support those who will ensure the best education for public school students in Illinois.
- **3.07 Local Legislative Visits** – Encourage each local board of education throughout the state to make a “good faith” effort to initiate, undertake, and make an in-person visit with their local legislators in order to discuss specific issues and proposed legislation affecting local school districts.

“A crucial part of being a school board member is advocating: For your community, your students and the district team members. Much of the time, this advocacy is local in your meetings and discussions. You need to take a stand on important decisions that advance great public education. It's equally important to advocate for your community, district, and students at the state and federal levels. You know the needs of your district like no one else, and you can share real, personal stories with lawmakers. Your stories can help illustrate how legislation can have an impact — for good or ill — on the future.”

— **Mary Kay Baldino, Board Member,
THSD 214, Arlington Heights**

“School board members are uniquely positioned to aid the general public and elected leaders with understanding the needs and challenges in K-12 education. Through sharing experiences, we build trust in the education provided and build support for educational needs. School board members have an obligation to advocate for their individual school and the strength of public education in Illinois and beyond.”

— **Amy Roser, Board Member, McLean Co Unit District 5**