



# Welcome to the School Board Table

## Guidance for Student Representatives to the School Board



### Welcome to the Table

We are glad you are here to learn about the role of a student representative on the school board! As a student board member or representative, you will bring student voice to your school district's governance team, and the governance team elevates student perspectives on education policy decisions. By meaningfully participating in the governance process of your district, you can learn essential democratic skills while representing and advocating for your peers.

As a student school board member or representative, you will participate in discussions of the school district's values, purpose, and goals and the policies that support them. You will serve as a liaison between students and the board, representing a variety of interests and backgrounds and advocating for the positions and needs of your peers. This guidance will help you prepare for the valuable experience of service to your school community.





## Are We Ready?

Consider these questions as you prepare to do the work of school board service.

### Student Representative Self-Assessment

- Am I aware of my job description and what the board expects of me?
- Do I understand the role of a school board member in Illinois?
- Has the board communicated the specific objectives it has for me as a student representative?
- Have I identified or been assigned a mentor for my role on the board?
- Am I willing to share my voice and make ongoing contributions to the board?
- Am I aware of the board meeting schedule, the agenda, and flow of the board's meetings?
- Am I aware of the needs, public positions, perspectives, and opinions of the students I represent?
- Do I have, or can I learn, the ability and knowledge to correspond about governance activities with my community and the group(s) I represent?
- Do I have, or can I gain, the knowledge to take leadership roles on committees and/or the board?
- Am I willing to reflect on what I want to get out of this experience and share it with the rest of the board?
- Am I willing to ask questions that give me a better understanding of board activities?
- When receiving feedback, information, and answers to questions, do I recognize the expertise and experience of the adults on my board?
- Am I willing to give my time and attention to all board issues rather than just the ones that affect me and those I represent?
- Am I mentoring other potential student representatives who may replace me?

### Expectations for the Student Board Representatives

While individual board expectations for their student members may vary, this list serves as general guidance on expectations of student board representatives in Illinois.

- Represent the views of the student body.
- Attendance at all regularly scheduled board meetings. Always communicate with the board president (or your board mentor) when extenuating circumstances affect your attendance.
- Attend board workshops, training, conferences, and other activities.





- Follow Robert's Rules of Order and other board protocols and norms.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Report to peers following each school board meeting:
  - Present to the student council(s) within the district.
  - Write a statement for student announcements that includes school board information of interest to students.
  - Be available to discuss school board issues.
  - Encourage students to attend live or watch recorded school board meetings.



## Guidance for Student Board Representatives

- Have confidence in yourself. It will take a few months to feel comfortable in your role as the student representative. Focus on listening, observing how the board works, and asking questions to strengthen your knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of school board members.
- Work with a mentor. The school board should appoint a mentor for you who can support you in your learning. Meet with your mentor on a regular basis, especially in the first three months of your board service.



- Be prepared. Board members are provided with a copy of the meeting agenda and other documents a few days prior to the meeting. All board members, including the student representative, are responsible for reading and reviewing all materials before the meeting. If you have questions about any agenda item, contact your mentor, board president, or superintendent and ask for clarification.
- Stay engaged and interested. Not all board responsibilities are exciting or interesting. The board is responsible for approving payment of bills, approving contracts, and other tasks. Remain engaged even during the more mundane activities of the board.
- Attend all meetings. Make sure you receive a listing of all regularly scheduled board meetings and other events where board members are usually in attendance. It is critical that you attend these meetings and to be on time.
- Share your voice. The board has added a student representative to the board because it wants to hear from you. While the board makes the final decisions, it is important for you to appropriately share your viewpoints.
- Be a leader. You are now in a leadership role – use this opportunity to advance the fact that youth are capable, intelligent, and mature. People are watching you, and you are now seen as an example of all students.
- Take action. Be open to taking on tasks or projects that may assist the board in understanding an issue or making a decision. You may also be asked by the board to serve on a special committee.
- Think about what you want to get out of the experience. Board membership should benefit you individually just as much as it benefits the board. Make sure to communicate your individual wants and needs prior to starting your service, to ensure that they are on the board's radar and are possible for them to help you accomplish. Examples include the development of public speaking, leadership skills and training, and references for college or jobs.

### Acknowledgments

- Association of Alaska School Boards
- Missouri School Board Association
- Vermont School Board Association

