

As elected officials, school board members also receive training on the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Each year, the school board president must announce in a board meeting which trustees have and have not met their annual training requirements. This announcement occurs during the last regular board meeting in the month before a school board election would be held.

When are school board members elected?

School board elections must be held only on the first Saturday in May or first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Special elections to fill the unexpired term in the event of a board vacancy must also be held on a uniform election date.

How are school board members elected?

School district trustees are elected by popular vote. Whether an election is by majority or plurality vote is a matter of local policy. Trustees serve for either three- or four-year terms. Trustees serve staggered terms so that not all of the board is up for election at the same time.

Can citizens attend school board meetings?

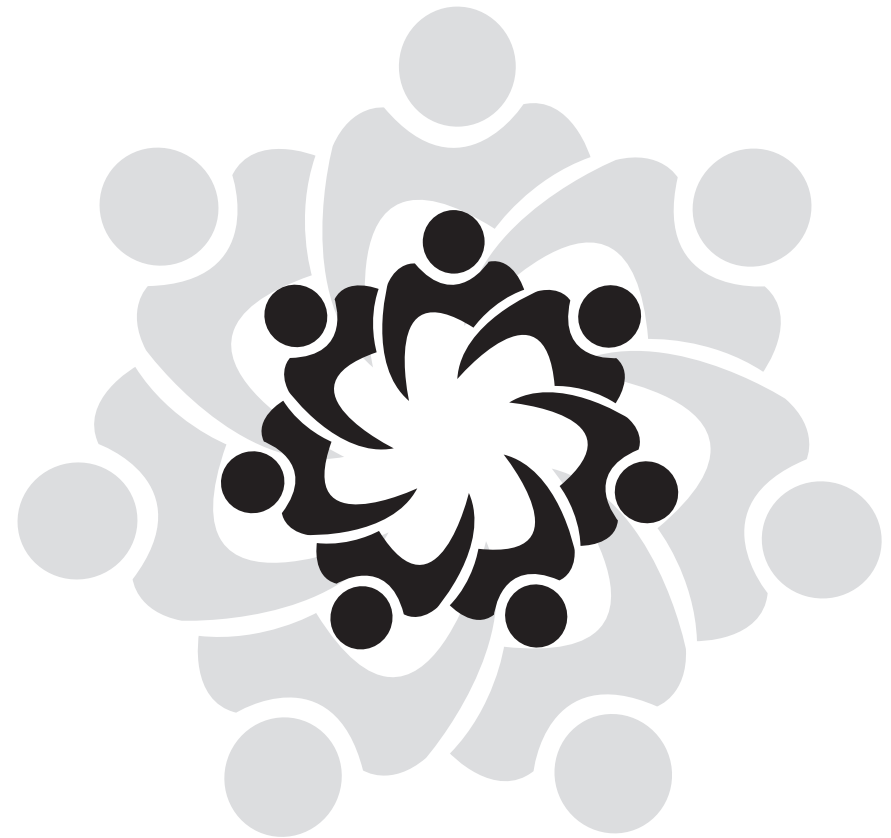
Yes. School boards must meet in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and make public records available pursuant to the Texas Public Information Act. Citizens are welcome at all school board meetings, except in a few legally specified circumstances permitting closed meetings.

Most school boards allow citizen participation and have policies communicating how and when citizens can contribute their input. Generally, boards set aside a portion of the regular meeting for public comment and limit each speaker's comments to three or five minutes. This is a chance for citizens to give input while allowing adequate time for other important board business.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHOOL BOARD



Texas Association of School Boards

Who is responsible for public education in Texas?

The commissioner of education, State Board of Education (SBOE), and Texas Education Agency (TEA) guide and monitor public education in Texas. SBOE provides leadership and state-level administration as prescribed by law, and the commissioner and TEA staff implement state education policy. Texas has delegated much of the responsibility for education to the local school board. Locally elected school boards are political subdivisions carrying out a state function. Despite increasingly prescriptive state and federal laws and SBOE and commissioner's rules, local school districts have significant latitude in governing the schools.

Why are local school boards needed?

The U.S. Supreme Court has said education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Our system of local school districts and boards of education epitomizes participatory government—citizens elected from their community making decisions about educational programs based on community needs, values, and expectations. School boards are entrusted by the public to translate the needs of students into policies, plans, and goals that will be supported by the community.

What is the primary function of the board and its members?

Governing the school district is the primary role of a school board. School board members are guardians of the public trust and, through the policies they make, are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of local public education. These policies dictate the standards and philosophy by which schools are run and the criteria used to judge whether they are being run well. The board serves as the advocate for educational excellence for the community's youth and puts those interests first.

This responsibility often entails difficult choices, self-sacrifice, and exposure to public criticism. However, it also brings a great deal of personal satisfaction in sharing with parents, staff, and students their academic successes. This crucial responsibility and the closeness of trustees to the voters make the local school board the purest example of democracy our society presents.

What are some of the key roles and responsibilities of a school board?

In 2017, Senate Bill 1566 emphasized the school board's role for overseeing student achievement. Research suggests that school boards can

support student achievement when they focus their energy and attention on a few critical activities:

- Set clear expectations by creating a vision and goals for the district that are focused on student learning.
- Monitor progress toward the goals and hold the system accountable for that progress.
- Create conditions for district success. This includes hiring a superintendent to serve as the chief executive officer of the district, adopting policies to inform district actions, and approving an annual budget consistent with the district's vision.
- Create the public will to succeed by engaging the community and communicating the district's vision and successes.
- Learn as a board-superintendent team. Research suggests that good governance is not intuitive, so a governance team that continually learns together will lead better together as well.

How do school boards make decisions?

A school board is a local governmental body that can take action only by a majority vote at a legally called public meeting. The individual board member's major responsibility is to study issues facing the district, evaluate needs and resources, and, after due consideration, vote in the best interest of all students at such a meeting. A trustee who attempts—without board authorization—to speak for the whole board, direct school staff members, or make other individual decisions is exceeding his or her authority.

Who is eligible to serve as a school board member?

There are a number of requirements to be eligible for election. Among them, a local school board candidate must be (1) a qualified/registered voter, (2) a resident of the district he or she desires to represent for six months before the filing deadline, and (3) a resident of the state for 12 months before the deadline.

Is there special training involved in being a school trustee?

Trustees are required by Texas law and SBOE rules to participate in four types of continuing education: (1) orientation to local district policy and to the laws affecting public education in Texas, (2) an annual team-building activity completed as a full board-superintendent team, (3) a specified number of hours each year in areas of special need, and (4) training every two years on evaluating student academic performance.