

# STUDENT SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER TOOLKIT



Special Section: For School  
Board Members

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The logo for Reaching Higher NH features a white silhouette of a hand reaching upwards, holding a red apple with a green leaf. The text "a project of" is positioned above the hand, and "REACHING HIGHER NH" is written in a bold, sans-serif font below the hand.

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## FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

### Value of a Student Board Member

- The student member will provide a student perspective of school activities, culture, and issues to inform your decisions.
- Mutual learning: You and the student member(s) will both learn from each other during this process.

### What Are Your Responsibilities?

- Solicit input from your student member(s) by asking specific questions at intervals during every meeting.
- Include student members in the formal “board comment and discussion” section of every meeting.
- Develop rapport with the student member by including them in board team-building and social activities, such as the annual board retreat.

- Assign a board member to mentor the student member and develop expectations for that mentor.



- Develop district policy around the roles and responsibilities of the student member.
- Treat the student board member with the same respect as any other board member.
- Respect the perspectives and unique experiences of the student board member.

### **Key Tips for Success**

- Allow student board members an equal opportunity to comment during the discussion phase of motions and agenda items before the school board. For example, actively solicit student opinion frequently during meetings. Ask specific questions to elicit specific feedback.
- Ask student members to comment on more than the activities taking place at schools; involve them equally in questions of policy.
- Make board meetings accessible.

### **Additional Resources**

- School Board Member Readiness Checklist: page 51
- School Reform Initiative Protocols:  
[Schoolreforminitiative.org/protocols/](http://Schoolreforminitiative.org/protocols/)



## Readiness Checklist for School Boards and Administrators

- How can the board ensure that it has the time and resources to make a commitment to effective and meaningful youth participation/representation?
- What are the by-laws and policies that the board has, or needs, to ensure that young people are meaningfully and effectively represented?
- What are the board's vision and goals for youth participation?
- How can the board reflect on its current climate and identify ways to make board participation more inclusive to youth?
- Has the board defined a selection process? If appropriate, has the board outlined recruitment criteria for new representatives? (e.g., motivation, diversity, competence, quality of past experiences, etc.)
- Is there a mentor or coaching system in place?
- Does the board have a system in place for youth representatives to train new youth representatives?
- Are young people included in all decisions, not just those affecting their age group?
- Does the board's culture promote open discussion?  
Is there time for all representatives (including youth) to speak at meetings?
- Are young people's terms of office consistent with those of adults?
- Can your youth representative substantially influence governance of the organization?
- Do young people have access to the resources and technology needed to participate in your board's work?
- Is there informal time to network and build relationships with other representatives?
- Are young people encouraged to keep in touch with their peers about their governance role?
- Is there a place where young people can voice their concerns outside the meeting environment?
- Do adults ask the youth representative(s) how they can better work together and take these recommendations seriously?
- If youth are confused about an issue, how does the board respond and guide them to the information they need?
- Is equal weight given to youth representative opinions?
- Do board representatives take the initiative to get to know all the representatives (including youth) of your board on a personal level?

- Does the board provide support for young people on speaking up in adult groups?
- Do you offer training for young people and adults in governance skills and board work?
- Are youth representatives briefed ahead of time on how to read financial statements?
- Are meetings accessible to students (time, location, seat at the table, etc.)?
- Are there adequate precautions and protocols to ensure that student board members are safe and protected at all times?