
STUDENT SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER TOOLKIT



Special Section: For Prospective
Student Board Members

a project of
**REACHING
HIGHER NH**

The logo for Reaching Higher NH, featuring a white hand reaching up to hold a red apple.

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FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS

Why Serve as a Student Board Member?

- Personal growth: You will develop leadership skills through public speaking and working with adults in positions of power.
- Underrepresented points of view: As a student, you have a unique perspective on what happens in schools that is often not heard at the board level.
- Civics education: Serving on a school board is a great way to learn about local government.

What Are Your Responsibilities?

- Attend all meetings and read all materials beforehand.
- Gather information and opinions from the student body and report them to the board.
- Report on board activity to the student body and be accessible for input.
- Offer opinions and ask questions during board meetings.
- Build working relationships with board members and administrators.
- Respect the perspectives and experiences of board members.



Allison Shelley/the Verbatim Agency for EDUImages

Key Tips for Success

- **Preparation:** Always attend meetings prepared, whether that includes reading over the board packet ahead of time, meeting with a mentor/assigned board member, or coming prepared to ask questions and contribute thoughts. Preparedness ensures you can actively participate and collaborate.
- **Communication with the Student Body:** Make students aware of the board activities and solicit their opinions. (It may be useful to collaborate on this with a principal or teacher):
 - Make morning announcements after board meetings.
 - Send out surveys asking questions about relevant issues.
 - Talk to students at lunchtimes.
 - Hold periodic town hall-style meetings for students to express opinions.
- **Running for Student Board Member:**
 - Speak with a teacher or principal to learn about how to run for student board member. Acquire any necessary nominations and/or signatures, and fill out any application materials.
 - Talk to students about why you want to be a student board member.
 - Focus on the policies you want to advocate for or change as a student member. As much as possible, make the election about policy and not popularity.
- **Making Change as a Student Board Member:** Think about the aspects of your school experience that could be improved, and talk to other students about their concerns. Bring the issues to the board and work with the board to find potential solutions. Consider joining a committee to get involved with policy making.



Advice from Former Student Board Members

"Leverage the fact that you're the youngest person in the room... Don't be afraid to lean into the fact that you're a student." - Ninah Jackson, MD

"Don't be afraid to speak up or even to question the system that's set up for you as the student rep." - Alice Richards, NH

"Speak your opinion [even though] it can be intimidating." -Juliet Chehade, NH

"Find one member who is always willing to hear your ideas out, to work with you, and to answer your questions when they come up." - Sean Simonini, MA

"Reach out to individual members of the board and get to know them as people. A lot of the time, the board members admired the dedication of student board members, and getting to know them personally will make a huge difference in the board's treatment towards you!" - Prescott Herzog, NH

Readiness Checklist for Student Board Members

- Am I aware of my job description and what the board expects of me?
- Am I aware of the roles this board plays?
- Has the board communicated the specific objectives they have for me as a youth member?
- Have I identified or been assigned a mentor for my role on the board?
- Do I have the abilities, and knowledge necessary to make ongoing contributions to the board?
- Do I work to know individual board members outside of board meetings?
- Am I aware of the written and unwritten agenda and flow of the board's meetings?
- Am I willing to learn through open and positive conversations about my performance?
- Am I aware of the needs, public positions, and opinions of the youth I represent?
- Do I have the abilities and knowledge to correspond about my governance activities with my community and the group(s) I represent?
- Do I have the abilities, and 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 am willing to 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?
- Do the adult members of the board hold any stereotypes about young people?
- Do I hold any stereotypes about adult board members?
- Have the adult board members received training that allows them to consider their assumptions about "kids these days?"
- Does the board show its appreciation for the good work that I am doing and have done?
- Am I mentoring other potential youth representatives who may replace me?