Let's Run for School Board

A candidate’s guide and manual
How to run for School Board

2017 Edition | Release 4

By the author of How to Run for Local School Council in Chicago
Author of the Thew Neighborhood Block Club Manual
Dan Kleinman
Table of Contents

Let's run for School Board

✦ Section 1: Introducing your school board
✦ Section 2: Why run for school board
✦ Section 3: Filing your candidacy
✦ Section 4: Building your campaign
✦ Section 5: Your budget
✦ Section 6: Your materials (coming soon…)
✦ Section 7: Talking to voters (coming soon…)
✦ Section 8: Election Day (coming soon…)
Section 1
Introducing Your School Board

Before you decide to run for School Board, be sure you are familiar with the rules, expectations, and eligibility requirements that apply to your district’s School Board, sometimes referred to as the Board of Education.

One great way to learn about your school board is to attend a few school board meetings. Research online is also very helpful. This section explores some important questions to understand before deciding to run for school board.
What is a School Board?

A School Board or Board of Education is the governing body of a school district. The purpose of a School Board is to promote the best learning environment possible for the students of the district.

Not every school district has an elected school board, like Chicago Public Schools. However, Chicago has elections for Local School Councils held at each school individually.

According to a 2010 research study published by the National School Board Association, “14,000 school boards are responsible for the well-being of 52 million children, the expenditure of $600 billion per year, and the supervision of six million employees.”

Here is a checklist of questions to ask about the school board before making up your mind to run.
Questions about the School Board:

☐ What are the powers of the School Board? Does the school board oversee financial policy, academic policy, or contractual policy, for example?

☐ How many members serve on the school board? How many seats are up for election?

☐ Who is eligible to serve and how does a candidate file? What are the requirements for running for office?

☐ How long is a term? How long does a member serve before they are up for election again?

☐ When are the meetings? How often does the school board meet?

☐ Are members compensated? Is it a volunteer role?

☐ What are the responsibilities? What are members’ roles, expectations, and duties?
How to find the answers:

☐ Attend a meeting
Often school board meetings are required by law to be open to the public. Attending a meeting and watching the school board in action is a great way to learn.

☐ Research online
Often school boards are required to publish many of their documents and many do so on the internet. Search online for your school board’s webpage and review things like past minutes (meeting notes), motions (actions of the board), and roll calls (voting records).

☐ Reach out
Talking with and listening to former school board members or other elected officials who are involved in the school board can offer great insight into the inner-workings of the school board.
LSC eligibility is largely fulfilled by identifying as a type of stakeholder, such as a parent or a neighbor.

Parent Representatives are a parent or legal guardian of a student currently enrolled in that school.

Community Representatives reside in the attendance area or voting district of that school and do not qualify as a Parent Representative and are 18 years of age or older.

Teacher Representatives are employed full-time as teachers. A majority of their employment duties are performed at the school.

Non-Teacher Representatives are employed full-time as staff other than teachers. A majority of their employment duties are performed at the school.

The Student Representative is a full-time high school student at the high school.
Section 2
Why Run For School Board

Before you decide to run for School Board, be sure you are familiar with your reasons for wanting to serve. Understanding why you want to serve will not only make you a better candidate, but a better school board member too.

Learning your motivations is a personal process with no one right answer. This section explores some important questions and techniques to determine your own candidacy for school board.
Serving on a school board can be rewarding experience. It can also be a challenging commitment.

According to the 2010 study, school boards of large districts may require 40 hours per month, while smaller school district may only require 15 hours per month.

School board members advocate and advance through their vote specific initiatives to promote operational policies to better the school district.

Sometimes this can include funding policies, like more or less fees, or student policies like uniforms or major developments like opening and closing schools or buildings.

Here is a checklist of questions to ask yourself before making up your mind to run for school board.

Why run for School Board?
Questions about Running:

☐ I agree with these previous actions of the school board:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

☐ I disagree with these previous actions of the school board:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

☐ Some voters in my school district are satisfied with the school board because:

_________________________________________________________________

☐ Some voters in my school district are dissatisfied with the school board because:

_________________________________________________________________

☐ My three main goals if serving on the school board would be to:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

☐ I have the time and capacity to commit to serving well.
How to form your answers:

☐ What matters to you
  Use the exercise-questions on the previous page to understand what matters to you and to your voters.

☐ Write your reason
  Hi, my name is _______________ and I am running for our school board because I agree/disagree that our school board has done _________________ and together we can accomplish _________________.

☐ Practice your reason
  Practice saying this reason script in the mirror. Listening and watching yourself can help build comfort and confidence, and can help identify needed changes. Practice in front of a friend or family member who will provide constructive feedback with what you are saying and how you are saying it.

☐ The Smile Test
  Can you state your reason while smiling? Smiling can be a good way to convey a positive message to voters.
I am asking for your support in my effort to join the Local School Council of Nicholas Senn High School because I have the passion to put safety first, value our diversity, and improve our school.”
Section 3
Filing Your Candidacy

Once you have decide to run for School Board, be sure to follow the official election guidelines and candidate rules. It may be easy to be disqualified if an election form is missing or not properly completed. This section explores some important questions and techniques to official file your candidacy for school board.
What is filing for School Board?

**Filing for your candidacy** may take a few steps or a few forms.

It is imperative to understand how to file your candidacy or else your name may not appear on the ballot on election day.

Sometimes these forms include personal statements, economic statements, or criminal-background statements.

There may also be a filing deadline. This means that a candidate must submit their appropriate paperwork, or pay their appropriate fees, or attend the appropriate trainings, before a specific date in order to qualify.

According to the 2010 study, “44 percent of board members describe their most recent election as “very easy,” while just 5.8 percent describe it as “very difficult.”
Filing forms Checklist:

☐ The following forms are required:


☐ The above forms are due on what date and time:


☐ The above forms are due at what location:


☐ A filing fee is:


☐ I have completed the forms.

☐ I have submitted the forms.

☐ I have filed the appropriate fee.

☐ I have received confirmation of my candidacy.

www.howtorunforschoolboard.org
Example: Chicago's Local School Council

Chicago Public Schools – 2016 Local School Council Election
Form 1-16
LSC Candidate Nomination Form
This form and its accompanying documents must be filed in the school in which the candidate is running by 6 p.m., March 4, 2016 or in the Office of Local School Councils on or before May 2, 2016. MAILED, E-MAILED, FAXED OR CD-ROM FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. (Please read all instructions.)

School Name: ____________________________
Network: ____________________________

Candidate Type: ☐ Parent/Legal Guardian; ☐ Community Resident; ☐ Teacher; ☐ Non-Teacher Staff; ☐ Student

Candidate Name: ____________________________

Home Address: ____________________________
City: ____________________________ State: ____________________________ Zip Code: ____________________________

Date of Birth: __/__/____ Email: ____________________________

NOTE: Community member candidates must provide proof of current residence within the school's attendance area or voting district. Under state law, the names and addresses of local school council members are matters of public record.

This section to be completed by candidates for parent representative:

Name of one child who attends this school: ____________________________
Grade: ____________________________

Identification Required:

Indicate which two (2) of the following identification forms were presented, photocopied, and attached to this form.

☐ Current Driver’s License
☐ Student ID
☐ Current Utility Bill
☐ Student’s Birth Certificate
☐ Public Library Card
☐ Photographic Identity
☐ Illinois Resident Card
☐ Other Current ID ____________

List the type of identification and the ID numbers for two (2) of the above if a photocopier machine is not available.

Disclosure of Economic Interests

If elected or appointed, candidates MUST submit a complete statement of economic interests within 7 days of taking office.

Are you related to the principal? __ Yes __ No
If YES, you cannot serve on this LSC.

Do you, your spouse, relatives or your company do any business with the Board of Education, the school or the LSC where you are running? __ Yes __ No
If YES, explain: ____________________________

Statement of Verification and Acknowledgement

I verify that the information contained in this Candidate Nomination Form and all related Candidate forms is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I acknowledge that I must complete and submit a Criminal Conviction Disclosure Form (Form 2-16) or be subject to disqualification for failure to disclose an arrest for which a conviction was not entered. I must complete a fingerprint-based Criminal Background Investigation and must complete sixteen (16) hours of training within six (6) months of taking office: I will be subject to removal from office for noncompliance with the referenced requirements.

Candidate’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Nomination Form Receipt

Received by: ____________________________ Date: __/__/____
School Name: ____________________________ Candidate’s Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________ Network: ____________________________

Please provide two forms of identification provided:

Yes: ______ No: ______

Non-Nomination Forms Complete: ______

Nomination Forms Incomplete: ______

Form Name: ____________________________ Form Number: ____________ Received: No: ______ Yes: ______

Chicago Public Schools – 2016 Local School Council Election
Form 3-16
LSC Candidate

Telephone Number Disclosure Form
This form must be filed in the school in which the candidate is running by 6 p.m., March 4, 2016 or in the Office of Local School Councils on or before May 2, 2016. MAILED, E-MAILED, FAXED OR CD-ROM FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

If you do not have a telephone, please list the phone number of a neighbor, relative or friend who will accept important messages for you and be sure to relay the message to you.

Your telephone information will be used only by the Board of Education and will not be disclosed to the public.

Pursuant to the Illinois School Code, LSC members’ names and addresses are available to the public.

Please print all information

Candidate Type: ☐ Parent/Legal Guardian; ☐ Community Resident; ☐ Teacher; ☐ Non-Teacher Staff; ☐ Student

School Name: ____________________________ Date: __/__/____

Teacher and Non-Teacher Staff Candidates, please provide:

CPS Employee ID Number: ____________________________
Note: the name used must match the name associated with the Employee ID.

All Candidates must answer the following questions:

1. Have you served on an LSC in the past? __ Yes __ No
2. If Yes, what was the last year you served? __ 19 __ 20 __
3. If elected or appointed, will you complete the 16 hours of mandatory training by January 1, 2017? __ Yes __ No

First Name: ____________________________ Last Name: ____________________________
Home Address: ____________________________ City: ____________________________ Zip Code: ____________________________

Home Phone Number: ____________________________ Cellular Phone Number: ____________________________

Work Phone Number: ____________________________ E-mail Address: ____________________________

www.howtorunforschoolboard.org
Section 4
Building Your Campaign

Now that you have filed your candidacy for School Board, it is time to build your campaign.

This section explores some important best practices that a candidate for school board may find helpful during the early stages of campaigning.
Running your campaign can be thrilling, and it can also require a large commitment of time and energy.

The National School Board Association study shows that “73.9 percent of elected board members report that their campaign spent less than $1,000 in their most recent election, and 87 percent spent less than $5,000.”

In running a race there are two main resources: time and money. Talking to and meeting with voters requires time, and the more voters there are to persuade, the more time it may take. These efforts may also require money. Reaching voters may require printing flyers, for example.
Starting the campaign Checklist:

☐ How many days until the election:

________________________________________________________________________.

☐ How many votes do I need to win:

________________________________________________________________________.

☐ Do I have to file additional forms if/when I receive of spend money:

________________________________________________________________________.
Starting the campaign answers:

- **How many days until E-Day**
  Always have a good understanding of how many days you have left to earn votes.

- **How many votes are usually cast**
  Try not to guess. Voting records are public documents. Call the school district or visit their website to find out how many votes were cast for that same seat in previous elections. Sometimes, these records are kept by the local Board of Elections.

- **Your Win Number**
  This is the number of votes needed to win. Sometimes this is 50 percent of the likely number of votes cast plus 1. In other words, sometimes a candidate needs a majority of votes to win. In other elections, candidates must win a plurality of votes, which means they must be among the top vote getters, even if a single candidate does not earn a majority of votes individually.
Section 5
Building your budget

Now that we have established how many days until election and how many votes are needed, it is a good idea to establish a budget that is realistic in means, but also effective in potential. This section explores some important best practices that a candidate for school board may find helpful setting up the campaign budget.
Effective campaign financing keeps the effort going. If a candidate can not afford to get their message out, then voters will not be able to recognize the candidate in the voting booth. Therefore, along with time time, money is one of the two critical resources of the campaign.

As previously mentioned, The National School Board Association study shows that most elected board members spent less than $1,000 in their most recent campaign.

Effective budgets are individualized. They reflect the specific campaign needs. The budget should cover the costs of resources for the allotted time of the campaign.
Starting the budget
Sample Checklist:

☐ How many clipboards will I need? _____
  ☐ How much does a clipboard cost: $__________.

☐ Will I pay for printed postcards or flyers? ______
  ☐ How much does it cost to print one: $__.
  ☐ How many are needed: ________.

☐ Will I pay for a website? ________.
  ☐ How much will it cost: $__________.

☐ Will I host any volunteer appreciation or voter engagement events? ________.
  ☐ How much does the venue and menu cost per event? $__________.

Add up the amounts for each category for a sample budget!
Starting the budget tips and tricks:

☐ How many clipboards?
Clipboards are useful for holding flyers in an easy to reach way, while also holding a surface to write on. This is useful for signing up supporters! Each volunteer talking to voters should have a clipboard. *Protip: clipboards are easily lost. Extras come in handy.

☐ Pay for flyers?
If printing hundreds, or thousands, of flyers, it is cheaper to have them professionally printed than to print them on a personal printer. *Protip: hiring a local printing company can add a nice local touch to your campaign!

☐ Pay for volunteers?
Volunteers are your most loyal supporters. They are so confident in your candidacy that they are spending their own time and resources to help you. Showing appreciation is not only a good thing to do, but it can help retain good volunteers who can continue to drive your campaign forward. *Protip: Even a box of donuts and a pot of coffee is a nice gesture to your volunteers. Campaigns can provide simple snacks at each volunteer gathering.