



Niskayuna Central School District

An Overview of Serving as a Board of Education Member

2016 Budget Vote and Annual Election Dates

Board nominating petitions available in the district office:	February 8, 2016
Board nominating petitions due in the business office:	April 18, 2016 by 5:00 p.m.
Drawing of names for position on ballot:	April 19, 2016
Public Hearing on Budget:	May 10, 2016 7:00 p.m.
Meet the Candidates Night (<i>Van Antwerp Auditorium</i>):	May 9, 2016 7:00 p.m.
Annual Budget Vote and Election (<i>High School</i>)	May 17, 2016 7 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Interest in Being a Board of Education Member

Thank you for your potential interest in serving as a board member on the Niskayuna School District Board of Education. Although the legal requirements for becoming a board member in New York State are not difficult, possessing the characteristics that make someone a functioning and productive member of a legislative body is very important. According to the New York State School Boards Association, the following attributes are helpful:

Effective Communicator – Can describe what he or she wants and describe what others want; a good listener.

Consensus Builder – Capable of working toward decisions that all can support and willing to compromise to achieve that goal.

Community Participant – Enjoys meeting a variety of people, can identify the community's key communicators and reaches out to fellow citizens.

Decision Maker – Knows his or her own decision-making style and that of others, supports group decision-making.

Information Processor – Can organize priorities and schedules to handle large quantities of verbal and written information.

Leader – Willing to take risks, supportive of board colleagues, district staff and community.

Team Player – Helps promote the board’s vision and goals.

About our School District

The Niskayuna School district enjoys an outstanding reputation for a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum. With a tradition 94-96% of students attending college, the *Albany Business Review* regularly rates Niskayuna as one of the top school districts among the nearly 90 districts in the Capital Region. The Niskayuna School District is comprised of five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Enrollment is approximately 4,100. The district employs approximately 700 full and part-time employees including about 350 teachers. The district has a school budget of over \$78 million and represents one of the largest employers in Schenectady County.

Board Meetings

The Board of Education usually meets on the *first and third Tuesday* of every month at 6:00 p.m. During *late February and most of March*, board meetings are often scheduled more frequently due to budget development for the next fiscal year. Over the summer months, one meeting is held in July and one meeting is held in August. Consistent board member attendance at meetings is important.

Preparation for Board of Education Meetings

On the Wednesday prior to each board meeting, materials are posted in BoardDocs for board members to review. BoardDocs includes the agenda of the meeting and the attachments associated with each planned board action. Board members are encouraged to follow-up with the administration prior to the meeting with questions about the agenda items.

Typical Board Meeting Agenda

Board meeting agendas are collaboratively developed in advance between the Superintendent of Schools and the Board officers (president and vice president). Meeting agenda items typically include:

- a) District update by superintendent
- b) Comment from individual board members regarding events attended

- c) Student and community comments
- d) Special presentations and/or recognitions
- e) Consent agenda including:
 - a. Review, discussion and approval of financial information
 - b. Review, discussion and approval of personnel changes
 - c. Review, discussion and approval of student placements
- f) Instruction information
- g) Business information
- h) General discussion
- i) Policy review
- j) Executive Session (private without public - to discuss specific special education matters, personnel issues, contract negotiations, real estate matters, etc.)
- k) Public session to take any actions resulting from Executive Session
- l) Adjournment

Liaisons and Committees

Each board member serves as the Board Liaison for a specific school in the district. The Board also has liaisons to parent/support organizations such as the Booster Club and Friends of Music and official committees like the Health Advisory Committee. If possible, board liaisons attend the PTO meetings of the school. In addition, all board members are encouraged to attend other school events.

NYSSBA and CAPSBA

The Niskayuna school board is a member of the New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA). In addition to participating in periodic workshops and training board members often attend the annual state conference held in a major city.

Our local school board also holds membership in the Capital Area School Boards Association which holds six-seven dinner meetings annually which include a program of interest. These are not mandatory but are encouraged.

Required Training

All newly elected board members are required to participate in a six-hour fiscal oversight training workshop. Board members usually have the option of attending a full day, two part-days, or participating on-line. There is no cost to the Board members for this training.

District Initiatives

The Board of Education is responsible for the annual evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools based on progress toward district goals and initiatives. Goals and initiatives are developed annually with input from the board and often represent multi-year activities.

Term of Office

The term of office is three years, beginning on July 1 and ending June 30. Board members run at-large, which means that each of the seven members represent the whole community and not specific geographic areas. There are normally either two or three seats that are open annually. The candidates with the highest votes earn the open seats.

Campaign Expenses

Per Education Law, board candidates must file a statement with both the school district clerk and the commissioner of education if their campaign expenditures exceed \$500. If campaign expenses are less than \$500, the statement must be submitted only to the clerk. If the expenses exceed \$500, a detailed listing of expenses shall be furnished to both the clerk and commissioner of education. Regardless of campaign expenditure amount, a preliminary statement must be filed with the clerk at least ten days before the election and a final statement no more than twenty days after the date of election.

Examples of Roles of a School Board Member

- Annually evaluate the performance of the superintendent
- Participate in and help establish goals and initiatives for the school district regarding student and district performance and ways to measure and monitor progress
- Help formulate and support a shared vision of the school district
- Provide oversight and periodic review of school curriculum and programs
- Provide oversight of fiscal management, documentation and adequate fiscal security and integrity
- Review, develop and adopt the annual budget
- Encourage and connect with various constituencies of the school district in building partnerships for the schools
- Ensure that the district is meeting the health, safety and security needs of the students and staff
- Regularly review, update and adopt board policies that help guide the school district
- Adequately review and prepare in advance for each board meeting

- Notify and direct all questions and concerns about the school district to the superintendent
- Continuously read, study and understand the many aspects of teaching and learning
- Participate in confidential discussions regarding staffing and students and maintain confidentiality at all times
- Visit the school buildings, attend school events and evening activities to best understand the district and needs
- Demonstrate ethics and a high degree of ethics

Steps to Become a Board Candidate

Niskayuna school board members are community volunteers who receive no pay for their service. Candidates must be at least 18 years old, qualified voters in the school district and able to read and write. They must be residents of their districts continuously for one year before the election. They cannot be employed by the board on which they serve nor live in the same household with a family member who is also a member of the same school board. State law requires school board and budget elections to be held on the third Tuesday in May. In order to declare candidacy, a nominating petition provided by the district clerk of the school district must be submitted.

Procedures for Filing Nominating Petitions

Candidates must submit a nominating petition to the school district clerk. The petition must be signed by at least 25 qualified district voters or 2 percent of the number of those who voted in the previous annual election, whichever number is greater. The district clerk calculates this number which usually is 2% of the total who voted in the last election. The petition must include the candidate's name and residence, and the vacancy in question. For more information or to obtain a copy of a board nominating petition, please contact the district clerk at (518) 377-4666, extension 50712.

Board of Education Policy

The school district is guided by a comprehensive set of policies known as Board of Education policy. These policies range from providing guidance on student residency to prevention of harassment in the schools. Newly developed policies and those under consideration are usually placed on the district web site. Policy approval requires two readings prior to final approval.

The superintendent where appropriate, develops administrative regulations to implement board policies. These regulations are specific steps or procedures to enforce and support board policy.

Meet the Candidates

The Niskayuna Parent Teacher Organization Council annually hosts a Meet the Candidates evening. Candidates for the Board of Education are invited to sit in a panel format and respond to a series of questions through a moderator. This is an excellent opportunity for candidates to interact with the public on a wide range of educational issues.

For More Information

Anyone interested in running for a Board of Education seat is encouraged to contact board members or the superintendent for more information. The superintendent can be reached at (518) 377-4666, extension 50706. Nominating petitions are available by contacting the clerk of the board at (518) 377-4666, extension 50712. For more information, please feel to visit the web addresses listed below:

<http://www.nyssba.org/>

<http://www.niskyschools.org/>

<http://www.capsba.net/>