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# I N S I G H T S

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FOR FAMILIES



## Connecting with school board members



- ❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Written by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant.

Many people wait to connect with their school board members until something goes wrong and they want to complain. We want you to connect with your school board while things are going right so that there is a good working relationship between the board, parents and other members of our community.

School board members are just like you, except they spend literally hundreds of hours making important decisions that affect our children. They are responsible for establishing policies and programs that keep the school district's buildings and grounds in good shape, balance what is usually a multi-million-dollar budget, protect the district's legal interests and determine what is taught in the classroom – and by whom.

School board members represent you. Through them you control our local schools, thus they must reflect our community's unique problems, values and culture. That's why it's important that your school board members know what you think. Here are some ways to connect:

- ❖ Let your board members know when they've done something with which you agree or disagree.
- ❖ Step up and volunteer when the board asks for community representatives on study committees.
- ❖ Attend a school board meeting occasionally. Most meetings offer an opportunity for you to speak to the board briefly, and all meetings provide a valuable insight into the operation and management of your public schools.
- ❖ Invite school board members to attend school functions or simply to take a tour of your children's schools.
- ❖ Remember that school board members can't (and should not) "fix" a local school problem. That's the principal's job. If the principal doesn't resolve an issue to your satisfaction, take it to someone in the district office. The school board is the court of last resort.
- ❖ Send board members copies of articles that might provide them with insights or assistance in dealing with a particular issue.
- ❖ Encourage the parent groups from your children's schools to send representatives to school board meetings.
- ❖ Keep up with school board activities by reading reports in your school or district newsletter or community newspaper.
- ❖ Organize a "Meet Your School Board Member" gathering in your home or children's schools for an evening of casual conversation.

School board members are volunteers who have your children's educational needs at heart. The decisions they make are complex and often difficult. They make these decisions based on the best information they have before them. By connecting with your school board before a problem arises, you can be sure that your insights and wisdom are folded into their decisions.