

As citizen leaders, individual school board members face complex and demanding challenges. Yet few people fully understand the scope and far-reaching implications of board members' responsibilities. All Oklahoma citizens should recognize the vital contributions of these men and women and focus attention on the crucial role these elected public officials play in the education of our children.

Their job is to establish a vision for the education program, design a structure to achieve that vision, ensure schools are accountable to the community, and strongly advocate continuous improvement in student learning. That job entails many meetings; numerous school functions to attend; reams of reports, agendas, proposals, and other information to read and study; plus a host of difficult decisions to make.

School board members come from all walks of life. They are farmers, secretaries, doctors, lawyers, homemakers, engineers, pilots, professors, business owners and real estate agents, to name a few.

Although they wear different hats in the workday world, school board members put on a collective hat when they get down to the business of leading their school districts. Board members must pull together as a team toward a common goal of helping students achieve. Though they may individually disagree on certain issues, their role as a board is to consistently strive toward that goal.

Board members contribute hundreds of hours each year leading their districts, and in Bartlesville they hold elected positions without monetary compensation. Whether it be crafting policies, hiring top-notch administrators, listening to staff and student concerns, or recognizing outstanding programs, board members always keep their eyes on the goal of student achievement.

Board meetings are only a portion of the time commitment for board members, who also attend seminars and training sessions to keep abreast of the latest trends in educational leadership, are deeply involved in community activities, and spend many hours in the schools and at extracurricular events. Their love for learning, and concern and caring for students, staff and community, drives board members' desire to lead so students can achieve.

The men and women serving the Bartlesville Public School District and their years of service are: Scott Billger, President, 7 years and 10 months; Rick Boswell, Vice-President, 7 years and 3 months; Nikki Benson, Clerk, 7 years and 5 months; Randy Herren, 4 years and 11 months; Alison Clark, 4 years and 2 months; Tyler Vaclaw, 2 years and 7 months; Kevin Sitton, 1 year and 5 months.

In recognition of their dedicated service, January is designated School Board Recognition Month. This is a time to show appreciation and better understand how these local trustees work together to provide a better future for our children. In January, please join with me in saluting the men and women who provide grassroots governance of public schools. I hope you will make the effort to tell our school board members that their hard work has been noticed and is truly appreciated.

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one." –Malcolm Forbes

Go Bruins!

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This column is online at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rQTUdcxUD1eEQR3g3IG5hQeMOKRI0ydx1nC2tfhrsq4/edit?usp=sharing>

