

# WNY Students First



## Board of Education Activation Meeting

November 10th, 2021

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# Introductions

- Who are we?
  - Parents, educators, community members
- What are our goals?
  - Advocate for students **first**.
  - Empower (and support) parents to be more involved.
  - Partner with districts to bring positive change.
  - Engage community members to restore democracy to the public education system.



# Why get involved?

- Education was the **#1 issue** nationally in the most recent elections
- COVID has underscored the importance of local Boards of Education.
- In most districts, turnout is 3-6% of eligible voters each year.
- NYSUT and local teachers unions are highly organized in endorsing, funding, and electing their candidates.

**You're good enough, you're smart enough,  
and doggone it, people like you.**



# What does a Board of Education do?

- Set policy for the entire district
- Hire + guide the superintendent
- Develop the budget + employment contracts
- Handle hiring/firing, appointments, leases, contracts
- Hold the superintendent accountable for district performance



# Who sits on Boards of Education?

- Almost all boards in the region are primarily made up of teachers or the parent/spouse of teachers.
- It is the goal of NYSUT to control Boards of Education, select the superintendent, and establish their conditions of work.



# What does it take?

What is involved in being on the Board of Education?

- Large time commitment (20-40 hours a month)
- Mandatory training
- Meetings in the evenings, during the day, and on weekends.
- Responsible for communication outside of meeting hours.



# What does it take?

What skills do you need to sit on a Board of Education?

- Communication + negotiation
- Teamwork + leadership
- Budgets + projections
- Human resources issues, regulations

Good candidates

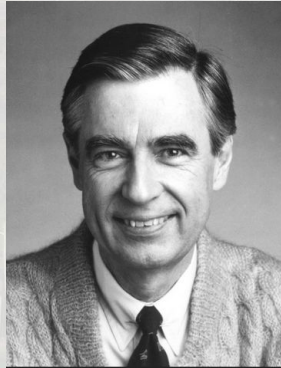
- PTA/PTO/PTSA leaders
- Retired teachers
- Businesspeople
- Community leaders



# How to choose candidates

A good candidate is:

- Involved
- Capable
- Experienced
- Representative of the whole community
- Electable





# Issues

- Academic achievement/learning loss (NYS Score Card)
- Masking
- Transparency + accountability
- Diversity
- Critical Race Theory
- Budgets
  - Transportation
  - Technology
  - Music + athletics

Every district is different. Choose issues relevant to your community



# Building a team

1. Find 3-5 dedicated parents willing to be put in 3-5 hours a week.
2. Find 10-15 parents willing to put in 2-3 hours a week.
3. Find 20-30 parents willing to put in ½ hour a week.
4. Find a few thousand voters willing to show up.
  - Meet once a month from Nov-March.
  - Meet twice a month from March-May.
  - Be inclusive of all voices, work together, compromise.
  - No one is an expert, no one is "in charge."



# Finding a team

The best place to find volunteers is in people already volunteering:

- PTAs
- Present to local political parties
- Put out the word on social media
- Set up open-invite coffee events
- Leverage Students First

1 hour spent off of Facebook is worth 10 hours on Facebook



# How many votes do you need?

- You can call your district or Erie County Elections (858-8891)
- Look at numbers for the last several years
- Compare with total eligible voters, and set a target for new voters
- Teachers unions are not very popular with teachers right now, many of them will vote for community-driven candidates



# What do you need to do

- Signs
  - 50-200 (at least one per 250 eligible voters), 5-10 larger
  - Simple, legible, clear
- Fliers
  - Glossy cardstock ½ page
  - Go door to door (no mailboxes) - Have a script
  - Distribute at farmer's markets, after school, other community events
- Outreach
  - Churches and 501c3s must be apolitical, but can get out the vote.



# How much funding do you need?

- 100 signs is \$300-500.
- A district-wide mailer could cost thousands of dollars.
- Fliers, meet and greets, etc.

Expect to spend at least \$500 per candidate, more in larger districts, more in closer races, and more if you are short on volunteers.



# How to get Funding

- Fundraisers/Signs/Tee Shirts
- Individual donors
  - Request lists of donors to local/national political campaigns
  - Active community members/volunteers
  - Former volunteers or student advocates
- WNY Students First
  - Ongoing fundraising efforts
  - We can assist with digital funding (venmo, square, etc)

## **FUNDING REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**



# Campaigning

- Door to door
  - Have a script ready on multiple issues
  - Be kind + courteous
  - Emphasize the importance of voting
  - Share exactly when and where to vote
  - Leave them a flier (not in their mailbox!)
- Host meet + greets
  - Public places, parks, homes, virtual
  - Share facts
  - Welcome questioning
  - Learn





# Campaigning (cont'd)

- Endorsements
  - Local community leaders
  - Local teachers' unions
- Multi Level Marketing
  - You tell 5 friends
  - They tell 5 friends
  - We're all rich!
- Cross-district support/encouragement
  - We are all in this together



# What can go wrong?

- Volunteers flake out
- Candidates don't work together
- Unions will campaign hard against your candidates
- Rumors, or falsehoods may be spread

**WORST OF ALL: VOTERS STAY HOME**



# Election day

- Have 20-25 signs ready to put up around/in front of voting location (100' from voting place).
- Have fliers ready.
- Sell your candidate ("Why would I vote for Fred Rogers?"). A script helps.
- Be gracious! We are building a community.



# Election day (cont'd)

- Bring water, umbrellas, sunscreen, hat and gloves. This is Buffalo.
- Print tee shirts if you have the funding.
- Support your candidate
  - You will need a team of 5-15 people for three important voting blocks (6-9am, 11-1pm, 3-6pm)

A loss isn't a loss. We are standing up for democracy, for public education, for parents, and most importantly for students.

But losing really sucks.



# Additional Resources

- NYSSBA Links

[https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba\\_pdf/Brochure/running-for-sb-2022-06292021.pdf](https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/Brochure/running-for-sb-2022-06292021.pdf)  
<https://www.nyssba.org/about-nyssba/running-for-the-school-board/>

- Current/former Board of Education members
- Erie Niagara School Superintendents Association (February)
- WNY Students First



# Closing

- We are here for informational, organizational, or emotional support
- We are not experts, we are always growing, and there will always be more work to do

Questions and Answers?

