



School Board RECOGNITION MONTH 2019

www.ossba.org/recognition2019

January 2019

TO: Superintendents and School Public Relations Specialists
RE: January is School Board Recognition Month
DATE: December 2018

In salute and gratitude to the more than 2,700 Oklahoma school board members, January 2019 is designated as **School Board Recognition Month**. This is your opportunity to build community awareness and understanding about the crucial role an elected board member assumes in a representative democracy. Their commitment to service and public education affects the present and future lives of our children and our communities.

School Board Recognition Month honors the efforts of thousands of men and women who help to shape the direction of Oklahoma public education and their collective focus on student achievement. School board members voluntarily tackle the enormous job of governing school districts while preserving the core of our democratic values. This observance offers you an opportunity to build a stronger relationship between your school board members and the community.

We hope you will take the opportunity to help acknowledge thousands of public servants who make the time to share their vision and voice for the future of Oklahoma's children. Use this time as an opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of your local board. Encourage community leaders, business partners and local civic groups to join in your recognition efforts. Take advantage of January's "School Board Recognition Month" to assure that these dedicated people are recognized for their work on behalf of children, youth and families.

The following materials are enclosed to help organize activities:

- Instruction sheet
- Tips sheet of suggested activities for the month
- News release for local media
- Letter to the editor
- Public service announcement
- Sample article for district newsletters and other publications
- Education quotes sheet
- Certificates for district presentation to trustees are available from OSSBA

Instruction Sheet

Activities & Tips Sheet:

Here you'll find dozens of ideas that may be used to celebrate School Board Recognition Month. Don't let this opportunity slip by without some sort of thanks and recognition for your school board members.

News Release:

Copy and paste the news release on district letterhead and submit it to the local media. A news release should address the questions of who, what, when, where, why and how. Be sure to add information about special ceremonies or events you are planning for your board members. You may want to include an accompanying "fact sheet" about your district and/or board members. Include photos, if available. After your release appears in your local publication, please send a copy to Kelly Ross at OSSBA, fax 405-528-5695 or email kellyr@ossba.org

Letter to the Editor:

The "Letters to the Editor" section is one of the best-read parts of your newspaper. In a short cover memo, tell the editor you'd like your letter to be considered for publication in the "Letters to the Editor" section of your newspaper. Send your request at least two weeks in advance of your requested publication date. Use the enclosed sample letter to let readers know it's School Board Recognition Month and to send a positive message about public education and your district's accomplishments. Ask a parent, booster, or business partner to sign the letter.

Sample Article:

The article can be adapted for use in your district newsletter, as an article in your local newspaper, as a letter to the editor, or as the foundation of a speech.

Education Quotes Sheet:

The enclosed quotes, from a variety of sources, may be used in preparing remarks or gifts for School Board Recognition Month. A few ideas for using the quotes are included on the tips sheet.

Sample News Release

For Immediate Release

For Further Information Contact: (Your Name & Title)
(Your School District) (Your Phone Number)

SCHOOL BOARD LEADERS HONORED IN JANUARY

January is School Board Recognition Month and an opportunity for local schools and communities to honor Oklahoma's more than 2,700 elected school board members for their dedication to children and schools.

"Providing our community's children with a solid education is the most important investment we can make," said **(name of superintendent), (title)**. "We're proud of our district, and School Board Recognition Month is the time to say thank you and celebrate the accomplishments of our elected board members."

In **(your district's name)**, school board members must develop policies and make tough decisions on complex educational and social issues impacting the entire community. They bear responsibility for an annual budget of \$_____ million, _____ students, _____ employees and _____ buildings.

"School board members make critical decisions that affect Oklahoma children and oversee billions in educational expenditures," notes **(last name of superintendent)**. "They preserve the core of our democracy—public education."

(Add a paragraph listing ways you will honor board members in your district during January.) More information is posted on the **(your district's name)** web site at **(your district's web address)**.

The men and women serving **(your district's name)** and their years of service are **(list names of board members and years of service)**.

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Activities and Tips Sheet

Here's a list of special activities you might wish to plan for your local school board members.

- 1) Reach out to everyone in your community—clergy, business partners, civic organizations and other elected officials.
- 2) Plan gifts and special presentations at the January board meeting.
- 3) Involve the media.

1) Reach out to everyone in your community:

- Plan a special reception at the January board meeting. Invite students and community members, as well as the media, city council members, Jaycees, Rotary, etc.
- Ask local restaurants and grocery stores to help host the event.
- Promote the event at all sporting and school events.
- Hang invitations to the January board meeting (event) in bowling alleys, fitness clubs, malls, grocery stores, public buildings, church lobbies, restaurants, children's play areas — anywhere you can reach a cross-section of your community.
- Place messages on school marquees.
- Seek endorsement and recognition of the school board from the chamber of commerce. The chamber is a leader in economic development and knows the value of a strong education system in attracting new industry and providing educated, skilled employees.
- Encourage the city council, local chamber of commerce or PTA to pass a local "School Board Recognition" proclamation.
- Invite legislators to attend a reception and "say a few words" in appreciation.
- Publish a brochure with photographs of board members outlining their background, years of service, committee assignments, accomplishments, etc. for distribution at civic meetings.
- Ask your community's civic and business clubs (Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Jaycees, Chamber of Commerce) to host your board at a breakfast or lunch.
- Arrange a speaking engagement at a local service or civic club to explain the school board's role and how public education is governed.
- Ask the PTA or students to place a "thank you" ad in the local newspaper.
- Invite community members to serve on event planning committees.
- Ask schools to "adopt a board member" and sponsor events for the adoptee throughout the month or year.
- Ask faith organizations to put an announcement in their bulletins, newsletters, etc. and to send a news release.
- Use your district's social media to show appreciation and share information about how board members serve your district.

2) Plan gifts and special presentations at the January board meeting:

- Ask the superintendent to present to each board member a certificate of appreciation. As a service to our members, personalized certificates may be requested from the OSSBA by completing the form at www.ossba.org/recognition2019
- Invite board members to lunch. Have them sit with teachers or a student group.

- Present board members with a free pass to school activities occurring throughout the month of January.
- Hang a "School Board Recognition Month" banner and/or poster in public places.
- Ask elementary children or high school graphic design students to color and decorate "School Board Recognition Month" posters for downtown store windows.
- Every day for the first week of January, e-mail an inspirational education-related quote, using the enclosed education quotes.
- Introduce a student and a staff member from each grade or department who represents a different culture in your community.
- Ask staff to say a few words on behalf of their work group—teachers, cooks, bus drivers, school secretaries, etc.
- Ask student athletic team captains to invite board members to "toss the first ball" or "blow the first whistle" at a home sporting event or to kick off a competitive academic event.
- Hold student contests to design a recognition month logo or flag.
- Decorate entrances to school buildings.
- Hang student drawings or self-portraits in the boardroom.
- Ask students to write hand written notes of appreciation.
- Feature student entertainment at the board meeting.
- Ask each school in your district to be responsible for doing something special for one of your board members.
- Donate a book or set of books to the school library, dedicated to the board, and include board members' names and dates of service on a recognition label within each book.
- Plan for a school board commendation at a staff in-service meeting or meeting of school and district administrators.
- Hold mock school board meetings and elections in high school government and speech/debate classes. Invite board members.
- Give special recognition to school board members with lengthy service records.

3) Involve the media:

- Send a press release on School Board Recognition Month (sample enclosed).
- Send a letter to the editor (sample enclosed).
- Ask a student or the school webmaster to design a School Board Recognition Month ad for your district's web page.
- Encourage your local news media (newspapers, radio stations and television stations) to interview school board members.
- Provide media representatives with information about what the board does, the major decisions facing your board, important actions the board has taken and the tremendous amount of time each board member devotes to your public schools.
- Schools with access to a district cable TV channel can use their time to conduct interviews with school board members and have informal talks on board service. Utilize students as interviewers and technical help.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Date

Dear Editor:

The month of January marks the annual observance of School Board Recognition Month—a time to salute the important role and dedication of board members in their volunteer work and celebrate public education.

In **(your district's name)**, school board members must develop policies and make tough decisions on complex educational and social issues impacting the entire community. They bear responsibility for an annual budget of \$_____ million, _____ students, _____ employees and _____ buildings. They carry out the truest form of representative government in our democracy — volunteer public service — and they preserve the core of our democratic land, public education.

We don't always recognize the dedication and hard work of these public servants elected to represent us and the interest of our children. Invite them out for coffee. Ask how you might help support your local neighborhood schools. Drop off cookies at January's board meeting. Write your school board members a thank you note. Let them know you appreciate what they do for kids in **(your district's name)**.

The men and women serving **(school district's name)** and their years of service are: **(list names of board members and years of service)**

Sincerely,

(Name of Superintendent)

(Name of School District)

Sample Article

The following article can be adapted for use in your district newsletter, as an article in your local newspaper, as a letter to the editor or as the foundation of a speech. Localize the article by adding information about your school's board members, details of how board members will be honored during January and examples of ways your board has improved education for the students in your district.

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; and a host of difficult decisions to make.

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

Although they wear many 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—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 and hundreds of hours each year leading their districts. 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.

The time spent in board meetings represents just a small fraction of the hours school board members spend leading their districts. They also work hard at 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.

In recognition of their dedicated service, January is designated School Board Recognition Month. This is a time to show appreciation and begin to better understand how local trustees work together to provide a better future for our children. In January, join with others from throughout our district and state to salute the men and women who provide grassroots governance of public schools. Make a special effort to tell each school board member that his or her hard work has been noticed and is truly appreciated.

Education Quotes to Use During School Board Recognition Month

“Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.”
—Robert Frost

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”
—William Butler Yeats

“Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”
—Malcolm Forbes

“There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny... It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape.”
—Tom Brokaw

“Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.”
—John F. Kennedy

“As a product of the public education system, I want all American students to have what I had—access to a quality education that enables them to pursue any career they wish, and take on any challenge they choose. Giving our students the best education in the world is a moral imperative and, especially, an economic necessity.”
—Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”
—Margaret Meade

“If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.”
—Chinese proverb

“A man with little learning is like the frog who thinks its puddle a great sea.”
Burmese proverb

“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”
—B.B. King

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”
—Gandhi

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”
—Malcolm X