

# SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

## A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

### Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has operated a system of elementary, secondary and higher education since 1872. These church schools are based on scripture.

The mission of Adventist schools is to provide opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of preaching the gospel to all the world. The education program is based on the belief that each student is unique and of inestimable value, and on the importance of the development of the whole person. Students are educated to accept service as a way of life, to be sensitive to the needs of people in the home and society, and to become active church members.

The church operates a school system to provide children and youth with a balanced physical, mental, spiritual, social, and vocational education, with God as the source of all moral value and truth. The stated interest of the church is the restoration of man in the image of his Maker, resulting in the optimum development of the whole person for both this life and the life hereafter.

The church conducts its own schools, kindergarten through university, for the purpose of transmitting to children and youth its own ideals, beliefs, attitudes, values, habits, and customs. Secular schools seek to prepare patriotic and law-abiding citizens, and teach certain values; Adventist schools, in addition, aim at developing loyal, conscientious Seventh-day Adventist Christians. A true knowledge of God, fellowship and companionship with Him in study and service, likeness to Him in character development, are the source, the means, and the aim of Seventh-day Adventist education.

Adventist schools emphasize the upholding of health and temperance principles, the command of fundamental learning processes, vocational skills, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical maturity. Adventist schools aim to reach objectives of spiritual dedication, self-realization, social adjustment, civic responsibility, world mission and service, and economic sufficiency through high quality, Christ-centered teaching.

### Duties of the School Board

The school board has authority only when it functions as a group in official meetings. Individual members do not speak for the board. The following functions of the school board outline the duties of a school board member:

1. The local school board cooperates with the conference board of education, in counsel with the superintendent of schools, in the employment of certified teaching and administrative personnel. The local conference board of education, K-12 is the employer of administrative and instructional personnel. The local school board employs outright "classified" personnel, such as secretaries, custodians, and bus drivers, and appoints with conference approval substitute teachers, teacher aides and part-time teachers.
2. The board has a duty to implement the policies and plans of the union and local conference offices of education.
3. The board may develop policies in areas of local concern, such as: use of school property, bus schedules and routes, purchasing procedures, tuition and other methods of funding, admission requirements (in accordance with conference and state or provincial guidelines), equipment and maintenance of the school physical plant, textbook purchases, master planning, curriculum development (beyond what is required by union and local conference policies).
4. The board advises and supports the principal or head teacher in the administration of the school program, including the implementation of school board decisions.

5. In elementary schools and junior academies the board considers recommendations of the principal or head teacher in serious disciplinary cases. The school board determines the dismissal of students in consultation with the principal.
6. The board supports a Home and School Association.
7. Official minutes must be kept of each meeting of the school board and its subcommittees, and a copy filed with the local conference office of education.
8. Consider appeals and answer questions regarding the operation of the school.
9. Participate in the process of school evaluation as scheduled by the conference office of education or regional accrediting agencies.
10. Cooperate with the conference office of education in providing release time for in-service education and teachers' conventions.
11. Consider, in counsel with the superintendent of schools, a proposed plan of school organization including a constitution and bylaws.
12. Implement the recommended conference-wide school calendar. Any modification or contemplated change must receive prior approval from the conference office of education.
13. Authorize the preparation of a school bulletin and/or handbook which shall include the following items:
  - Philosophy and objectives of school.
  - Financial information.
  - School regulations.
  - School calendar.
  - Course offerings.
  - Code for student conduct.
  - Statement of non-discriminatory policies for admission.
14. Assure responsibility for the planning and funding of an annual operating budget which will include:
  - Capital expenditures.
  - Operating expenses.
  - Curriculum materials.
  - Play equipment.
  - Media center materials and equipment.
  - School supplies.
  - Insurance.
  - Indebtedness.
  - Other items at the option of the school board.
15. Assume responsibility for collecting and forwarding to the conference office of education the conference assessment for the support of the school.
16. Assume responsibility for planning and funding a capital budget.
17. Cooperate with the union and conference offices of education in matters of curriculum development.
18. See that meetings are conducted in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedures as specified in the school constitution.
19. Support the teaching staff. It is the responsibility of the school board to support and uphold the teaching staff in the organization and administration of the school. The board shall make clear to all patrons of the school that no one has the prerogative of visiting the school for the purpose of questioning teacher professionalism either before the students or otherwise. The board shall stand ready to hear legitimate school concerns of patrons, after counseling with the superintendent of schools, if calm, personal discussion of the problem between the teacher(s) and the patron fail to clear up the matter in question.

20. Plan the opening of school. It is the responsibility of the school board to see that the school building and grounds are adequately prepared and equipped for the beginning of school, including making adequate provision for janitorial services.
21. Visit the school in session. It is desirable for the members of the school board to visit the school occasionally to encourage the teachers and as a means of becoming personally acquainted with the school, its work, and its needs. This is not a time for evaluation of the teacher(s) or the teaching process. Teacher evaluation is the responsibility of the principal and the superintendent of schools. The relationship between the school board and the teachers should be friendly and on a basis of mutual confidence and respect.
22. Plan for additions or new buildings. When a new school building or extensive additions or alterations are being planned, the chairman of the school board should early seek the counsel of the conference superintendent of schools, who will acquaint the board with the approved specifications for such buildings and rooms, as well as with conference policies affecting such projects.
23. Act on pupil application. All applications are to be made through the principals office and acted upon by the school board or by an admissions committee authorized by the school board. Following registration day, the school board or admissions committee should meet to consider all applications for admission to the school. No pupil's registration is final until it has been approved by the school board or the admissions committee.
24. Provide for a census. The school board shall arrange for a census of all children of preschool and school age in the area served by the school and initiate plans to secure the attendance of the largest possible number of those eligible for school attendance.
25. Provide an open policy of admission in the school. It is the official policy of the North American Division Office of Education that all schools be open to Seventh-day Adventist children and youth without regard to race, color, gender, or national origin, and that integration should take place on all levels.
26. Implement conference board of education guidelines for the admission of non-Seventh-day Adventist pupils.
27. Appoint subcommittees as needed such as personnel and finance.
  - It shall be the duty of the personnel committee
    - To review and prepare recommendations for the full board concerning the employment of classified (non-teaching) staff.
    - The superintendent/or designee is the chair of school personnel committees.
  - It shall be the duty of the finance committee
    - To conduct preliminary preparations of the annual budget.
    - To monitor the monthly financial operation of the school.
    - To recommend tuition and subsidy rates for the year.
    - To make recommendations regarding delinquent accounts.
28. Promote Christian education.

## **Resource Materials**

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling *AdventSource* (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

*How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus*, by Donna Habenicht. A child development specialist explains how children develop spiritually and offers practical suggestions on how you can help children establish a lasting friendship with God.

*It Takes a Church: Every Members Guide to Keeping Young People Safe and Sound*, by Gary I. Hopkins and Joyce W. Hopp. Here is the information and the inspiration to transform your church into the caring community our young people so urgently need.

Visit *AdventSource* On-Line at [www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org) for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at [www.plusline.org](http://www.plusline.org).