Honoring School Board Recognition Month

JANUARY 2018

THANK YOU SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS!
TO: Superintendents and School PR Specialists
FROM: Michigan Association of School Boards
RE: January is School Board Recognition Month
DATE: December 2017

In recognition of the dedication of Michigan’s 3,900 school board members, January 2018 is School Board Recognition Month. This is your opportunity to build community awareness and understanding about the crucial role an elected board of trustees 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 reflects the efforts of thousands of men and women who help to shape the direction of Michigan public education. Recognizing board members for this commitment takes a combined effort on the part of all they serve: administrators, school staff, students and the community. Although we encourage you to show appreciation throughout the year, taking advantage of School Board Recognition Month assures that these important people receive the thanks they deserve.

We hope you will take this opportunity to help acknowledge thousands of public servants who make the time to share their vision and voice about the future of Michigan’s children. Use the 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.

The following materials are enclosed to help organize activities:
• Overview of the toolkit
• Checklist of suggested activities and events for the month
• News release for local media
• Letter to the editor
• Sample article for district newsletters and other publications
• Community letter and social media samples
• Sample marquee messages and education quotes
• Sample poster and certificate available
• Gift order form

Thank you for your support in making School Board Recognition Month a success! Please contact Stacy Washington at 517.327.5936 or swashington@masb.org with any questions. An electronic evaluation will be emailed in February.
Toolkit Overview

The School Board Recognition Month Toolkit is designed to help you run a successful campaign to build community awareness and understanding about the crucial role an elected board of trustees assumes in a representative democracy. Below is a list of the resources available in this packet and online at www.masb.org/school-board-recognition-month.aspx.

Activities & Events Checklist:
Here you’ll find dozens of ideas that may be used to celebrate School Board Recognition Month. Some of the newer ideas incorporate using your website and email. Don’t let this opportunity slip by without some sort of thanks and recognition for your school board members.

Sample Marquee Messages & Quotes:
Posting “thank you” messages to your school board members on your school marquee is a great way to let the public know how much you appreciate the dedication of your school trustees. Education quotes can be a powerful reminder of the important role your school trustees serve in your community.

News Release:
Retype the news release on district letterhead and submit it to the local media, or go to www.masb.org/school-board-recognition-month.aspx for an electronic version of the text. 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, as well as photos, if available.

Letter to the Editor:
The “Letters to the Editor” section is one of the best-read parts of your newspaper. In a brief 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/Blog:
This 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 material for a blog or other online posting.

Community Letter & Social Media:
Direct contact with members of your community can be the most effective way of promoting all your initiatives. The community letter can be personalized for individual community groups and service clubs on your district letterhead. Localize by adding information about your school board members, details of how they will be honored and examples of ways your board has improved education for students in your district. Social media posts allow you personal access to members of your community and an opportunity to deliver all your messages by directing them to your district website.

Sample Poster: AVAILABLE ONLINE
Customize the sample poster to thank your school board. Be creative, add their names in large letters and display at a board meeting. Put them up around your schools and community, or have staff and students sign them as thank you cards.
Activities & Events Checklist

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

1. Organize community outreach.
2. Plan district events and recognition.
3. Utilize social media.

2. Plan District Events and Recognition

- 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/PTO 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.
- Send a news release and ask other organizations to put an announcement in their bulletins, newsletters, etc.
- Visit your board members’ place of employment and publicly thank them for their service. Also, be sure to thank their employer for supporting their work as a school board trustee.
- Purchase and present token gifts of appreciation. Consider the School Board Recognition Month umbrella (order form included in kit).
- Download the School Board Recognition Month logo to customize printed materials, T-shirts, sweatshirts, school website, etc.
- Present board members with coupons for a “Free School Lunch.” Have them sit with members of student congress or some other student group.
- Present board members with a free pass to school activities 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, email 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.

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2. Plan District Events and Recognition (continued)

- 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 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 handwritten 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 included).
- Send a letter to the editor (sample included).
- Ask your local radio station to run a public service announcement.
- Encourage your local news media (newspapers, radio 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.

4. Utilize Social Media

- Ask a student or the school Webmaster to design a School Board Recognition Month ad for your district’s website (visit www.masb.org/school-board-recognition-month.aspx for artwork).
- Launch a blog on your district’s website for School Board Recognition Month.
- Feature your school board trustees in brief profiles on your website.
- Reach out to your Facebook and Twitter friends and followers with information on upcoming events, and link back to features on your website.
- Watch MASB’s Facebook and Twitter accounts for School Board Recognition Month updates and features. (Connect with us at: facebook.com/MISchoolBoards and twitter.com/MASB.)
- Invite your community to share their thanks and appreciation through emails, social media posts, shares and re-tweets.
- Tag your tweets and follow the hashtag #SchoolBoardMonth to see what your peers around the state are doing.

Connect with MASB’s social media accounts by visiting www.masb.org or scanning here with your smartphone:
Ask businesses in your community that have reader boards to use these signs to thank trustees for their selfless service to your schools and community. Also use these samples for your school district marquees. Education quotes can be used in a wide variety of places to promote general education messages.

Quotes

“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

“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

“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

Sponsored by:
For Immediate Release

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

(DISTRICT NAME) CELEBRATES OUR SCHOOL BOARD LEADERS THIS JANUARY

“School Boards Lead”

January is School Board Recognition Month and (your district's name) is joining 541 local and 56 intermediate school districts across the state to thank these community volunteers for their untiring dedication to public education.

“We proudly join educators and community members in saluting these education advocates as they provide vision and leadership for student achievement, academic programs, district funding and school facilities,” (last name of superintendent) said. “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) website 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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Sample Letter to the Editor

Whether it’s in print, online or both, the “Letters to the Editor” section is one of the best-read parts of your newspaper. Once published, your letter can be promoted online by linking to it through your social media channels.

Dear Editor:

January is School Board Recognition Month—a time to salute the work of our volunteer school board members and to celebrate public education.

This special recognition of School Board members reflects our combined commitment to leadership and accountability assuring that ALL children succeed.

It’s an exciting and challenging time in public education. School board members in (your district’s name) develop policies and make tough decisions that help shape the future of our education system. They bear responsibility for an annual budget of $________ million, ________ students, ________ employees and ________ buildings. They are citizens whose decisions affect our children and build our communities.

Our board of education, and the hundreds like it across the state, preserve the core of our democracy—public education. They ensure that decisions on school programming are made by people we’ve elected to represent our community’s values, culture and circumstances.

Showing appreciation for the important work of school boards should be a year-round process, but too often we neglect to recognize the dedication and hard work of these men and women who represent us. This January, the staff and students of our district are asking all members of the community to take a moment and thank a school board member.

Thank you to the men and women who dedicate countless personal hours to ensure the needs of our community are met by our public schools. We salute the public servants of (your district’s name) whose dedication and civic responsibility make local control of public schools in our community possible. We applaud them for their vision and voice to prepare today’s students to be tomorrow’s leaders.

The men and women serving (your 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)

School Board Recognition Month is celebrated by more than 590 school districts in Michigan in January, honoring 3,900+ elected school board members for untiring dedication to school governance.
As citizen leaders, individual school board members face complex and demanding challenges. They are alternately described as having the most important volunteer jobs in the country and facing the toughest challenge in elected American government. Yet school board members are just ordinary citizens with extraordinary dedication to our nation’s public schools. All Michigan citizens should recognize the vital contributions of these men and women and the crucial role they play in the education of our children.

Public education is the backbone of American society, and local school boards are deeply rooted in U.S. tradition. It’s the foundation on which our democracy was built. Today local school boards continue to do the most important work of their communities—that of educating our youth.

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 for continuous improvement in student learning. The job of a school board member is tough, the hours long and the thanks few and far between. Too often we’re quick to criticize school board members without really understanding the complex nature of their decisions. Now’s the time to thank them for their untiring efforts.

School board members come from a variety of backgrounds, yet they share a common goal—helping students achieve in school and life. As a state, Michigan has faced many challenges, but the key to a brighter future is a strong public education system.

We often forget about the personal sacrifices school board members make. Board members contribute hundreds and hundreds of hours each year leading their districts. The time spent in board meetings represents just a small fraction of the hours school board members spend leading their districts. Collectively, they spend more than 7,500 hours on professional development to keep abreast of the latest trends in educational leadership, are deeply involved in community activities and spend many hours at extracurricular events. They continually advocate for the children of our state, and in the past year school board members made more than 1,100 passionate pleas to legislators, speaking out against budget cuts and pushing for smart reforms.

The month of January marks the annual observance of School Board Recognition Month. This is a time to show our appreciation and begin to better understand how local trustees work together to prepare today’s students to be tomorrow’s leaders. In January, join with others from throughout our district and state to salute the men and women who provide grassroots governance of public schools.
Letters can be personalized for individual community groups and service clubs on your district letterhead. Localize by adding information about your school board members and details of planned events and recognition. Social media allows you the opportunity to reach a wider audience, as well as keep connected to current contacts with frequent updates, reminders and calls to action.

Dear (insert name),

I’m excited to report that January 2018 is School Board Recognition Month, and we’re planning a number of activities to honor our school board members. I’d like to personally invite (name of group) to join us in this celebration.

A couple of events we’ve planned are: __________________________________________

If you’re interested, I have some suggestions for things you might do to honor the board. You might:

• Sponsor a public service announcement.
• Invite board members to your January meeting to recognize their efforts.
• Feature the board in your January newsletter.
• Sponsor a newspaper ad thanking the board for its dedication and service.
• Host a fun event for the board and their families.
• Send each board member a certificate for a free cup of coffee from a local coffee shop.
  Accompany it with a note that says, “You deserve a break!”
• Sponsor signs to be distributed to local businesses.

Please contact me at (phone number and/or email) to discuss how we can work together to honor the dedication of our locally elected school board members. Thank you very much for your support in this deserved recognition.

Sincerely,
(Name of Superintendent)
(Name of District)

Sample Social Media

Status Update/Event Notification for Facebook:
“Did you know January is School Board Recognition Month? Help us honor our school board trustees for their dedicated service at tonight’s board meeting, 7 p.m. in room 125 of the District Office, 350 Main Street, Downtown. (link to event details)”

General Tweet With Link to More Information:
“Jan. is School Board Recognition Month! Help show appreciation for our trustees: (link to event details)”

Share and Retweet MASB Updates
You can also share and retweet social media posts from the MASB. Connect with us at facebook.com/MiSchoolBoards and twitter.com/MASB.
Our poster will be available for download on the MASB website at www.masb.org. Be creative, add their names in large letters and display at a board meeting. Also available is a certificate that you can place into a Word document and customized for each of your board members.
Thank your school board members with this black cooler bag to hold lunch, snacks or whatever they may take with them in their travels.

The cost is just $15, with minimal shipping fees according to the chart below.

*While supplies last; quantities limited.

Quantity ordered: ________________
Cost (@ $15 each): ________________
Shipping: _______________________
   (see chart)
Total Enclosed: ________________

Shipping Charges:
Up to 7 lunch bags........ $11
Each additional ........ $2.00

Make checks payable to: Michigan Association of School Boards

O Visa
O MasterCard

Name: _______________________
Card #: _______________________
Exp. Date: ____________________
Signature: ____________________

Ship To:
Name: _______________________
District/Organization: ___________
Address: _______________________
City: ___________________ State: _______ Zip: ____________
Phone: ___________________ Fax: ______________

To ensure 2017 shipment please place orders by 12/20. Orders placed after 12/20 will be shipped early 2018.

Mail to: MASB; Attn: Stacy Washington;
1001 Centennial Way, Ste. 400; Lansing, MI 48917-8249
or fax to 517.327.0775.

Questions? Contact Stacy Washington, 517.327.5936 or swashington@masb.org.