

Chalkboard

By

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Have you ever wondered what the role of a school board member is? Arkansas Code 6-13-620 spells out the legal duties of school board members and I have copied it below.

“(1) Have the care and custody of the schoolhouse, grounds, and other property belonging to the district and shall keep it in good repair and in sanitary and sightly condition;

(2) Lease sixteenth section lands located in the school district, individually or in conjunction with the other boards of directors of other school districts interested in the sixteenth section, as the case may be;

(3) Purchase buildings or rent schoolhouses and sites therefore and sell, rent, or exchange the sites or schoolhouses;

(4)(A) Employ teachers and other employees necessary for the proper conduct of the public schools of the district and make written contracts with teachers and all other employees in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

(5) See that all subjects for study prescribed by the state board or by law for all grades of schools in their district are taught;

(6) Visit classrooms frequently, but no less than annually, in the schools in their district while children are present, see to the welfare of the pupils, encourage them in their studies, and assist the teachers in the work so far as they can;

(7) Prepare and publish the district's budget for the ensuing year, in accordance with § 6-13-622;

(8) Issue warrants on the county treasurer, when the county treasurer serves as treasurer of the school district, in accordance with the provisions of this act for the payment of salaries due teachers and other employees and for any other lawful purposes and state in the warrants the consideration for which each is drawn, provided that the issuance of the warrants for the purposes set out in subdivision (10) of this section shall be governed by the penalty therein set out. The warrant shall be in the form approved by the state board;

(9) Obtain from the county collector and county treasurer information from time to time as to the state of finances of their school district and keep their expenditures safely within the means of the district;

(10)(A) Buy and pay for out of district school funds supplies such as fuel, crayons, charts, globes, dictionaries, etc. which may be necessary for the efficient operation of the schools, provided, no warrants shall be issued by any school board for the payment of the supplies or services set out in this subdivision (10) until the supplies or services shall have been delivered to the school. (B) If any school board or any part of the directors of any school board in the State of Arkansas shall issue warrants in payment of supplies or services prior to the delivery of the supplies or services to the school and if the school district suffers any loss because of the failure of the seller to deliver the supplies or services or because of the defective quality of the supplies or services or for any other reason, then the directors shall be personally liable to the school district for the total amount of loss suffered by the district;

(11)(A) If in any school district it should be apparent that the schools cannot be operated for the remainder of the school year without incurring more indebtedness than that represented by outstanding bonds and those that may be issued for buildings, equipment for the school buildings, purchasing sites, and repairing school buildings or the improvement of sites, it shall be the duty of the school board to close the school and cease paying the teachers for the remainder of that fiscal year. Each contract made with the teachers shall be subject to that contingency, and the district shall not be liable for teachers' salaries for the time the school is so closed. so funded shall not be considered in determining the maximum amount of nonbonded indebtedness during the preceding fiscal year;

(12) Do all other things necessary and lawful for the conduct of efficient free public schools in the district;

(13) Publish on the district's website if the district has a website: (A) Minutes of regular and special meetings of the school board; (B) The budget for the ensuing year; (C) Financial breakdown of monthly expenses of the district; (D) Salary schedule for all employees; (E) The school district's yearly audit; and (F) The annual statistical report"

So where does it say that a school board member has to cook breakfast in the school cafeteria for the students? Or drive a bus? Or mop the halls? Or write a lesson plan? Obviously these are delegated functions and are performed by the employees the board hires as prescribed in 4(A) above.

Equally obvious is the fact that school board members cannot personally be on campus daily to monitor that the duties they have delegated to the employees are being satisfactorily performed; they have lives and

careers of their own. Bridging that gap between the board and employees is Arkansas Code Annotated 6-13-109 that states, “ (a) The public school districts in the state shall each employ a superintendent of schools, whose qualifications and duties shall be prescribed by the General Assembly and the State Board of Education. (b) "Superintendent of schools" is defined as the executive officer of a school district board of directors directing the affairs of the school district and teaching not more than one-half (1/2) of the time in the school day.” That chain continues with Arkansas laws prescribing the duties of the school principals who report to the superintendent, and to the teachers who report to the principal.

During the last fourteen years I have had the privilege to work with the following individuals – Jim Ward, Phagan Shelley, Judy Reams, Peggy Dillahunty, Brad DeZurik, Fred Rosborough, Jerry Harris, Jo Ellen Martin, John Trumble, Dr. Jim Snow, Kevin Martin, and your present slate of members – Keith Harper, Ted Dorn, Jim Barnes, Tom Dillard, Brenda Willett, Merrill Reynolds, and the board’s newest member, Le’Ann Watanabe. They were and are unique, self-directed individuals whose binding resolve was and is to provide the best education possible for your children.

It’s a tough role. Imagine having a job where you have to answer to your constituents who elected you, have a tremendous responsibility, but have no direct, day-to-day functioning in the organization you have been elected to direct.

It’s worthy to note that the only pay they receive is a word of “Thanks” from you.