

Your Question:

You asked for information about state policies requiring state and local school board members to meet education and/or professional criteria.

Our Response:

State board of education eligibility requirements. The National Association of State Boards of Education updates its [State Education Governance Matrix](#) each January. Included in the information on the matrix are examples of state board member qualifications.¹ Some states highlighted in the matrix, for which I've added details from the relevant statute, include:²

- **Arizona's** state board of education is composed of:
 - The superintendent of public instruction
 - The president of a state university or a state college
 - Four lay members
 - A president or chancellor of a community college district
 - A person who is an owner or administrator of a charter school
 - A superintendent of a high school district
 - A classroom teacher
 - A county school superintendent (Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-201)
- **Connecticut's** state board of education consists of 14 members:
 - At least two of whom have experience in manufacturing or a trade offered at the technical high schools or be alumni of or have served as educators at a technical high school
 - At least one of whom has experience in agriculture or be an alumni of or have served as an educator at a regional agricultural science and technology education center
 - Two of whom are nonvoting student members (Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 10-1)
- **Delaware's** state board are appointed "solely because of their character and fitness" subject to the specified qualifications including:
 - At least two have had prior experience on a local board of education
 - No more than four belong to the same political party
 - All members must have been residents of the state for least five years
 - Board members cannot be subject to board authority in any way (Del. Code Ann. tit. 14, § 104)

¹ The matrix includes information about state boards of education including:

- Method of selection (elected, appointed, etc.)
- Number of voting members
- Length of term
- Whether the state board is established in statute or constitution
- Selection of chair/president
- Which entity has authority for teacher licensure
- Which entity has authority to adopt standards
- Other information including state board member and CCSSO qualifications

² Please note this list may not be all-inclusive

- **Indiana's** state board is comprised of eight members appointed by the governor at least six of whom have professional experience in the field of education. Pursuant to state law, an individual is considered to have professional experience in the field of education if he or she has teaching or leadership experience at a postsecondary educational institution or is currently employed as, or is retired from a position as a teacher, a principal, an assistant superintendent, a superintendent. (Ind. Code Ann. § 20-19-2-2.2)
- To serve on **Kentucky's** state board of education, a member must:
 - Be at least 30 years old
 - Have at least an associate degree or its equivalent
 - Have been a resident of the state for at least three years
 - Not hold a state office requiring the constitutional oath
 - Not be a member of the General Assembly
 - Not hold or discharge the duties of any civil or political office, deputyship, or agency under the city or county of residence
 - Not be directly or indirectly interested in the sale to the Kentucky Board of Education or the Department of Education of books, stationery, or any other property, materials, supplies, equipment, or services for which board or department funds are expended
 - Not have a relative who is employed by the Department of Education
 - Not have been removed from the board for cause
 - Not be engaged as an elementary or secondary education professional educator (Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 156.040)
- **Nebraska's** statute pertaining to qualifications to serve on the state board does not address qualifications, rather it enumerates who may *not* serve:
 - Persons who are actively engaged in the teaching profession may not serve
 - Anyone who is a holder of any state office or a member of a state board or commission unless the board or commission is limited to an advisory capacity may not serve (Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 79-313)

Local board of education eligibility requirements. A Westlaw search turned up a few states with statutes in place laying out qualifications for membership on local boards of education. While this list is not exhaustive, it does provide a number of examples:

- **Alabama's** law specifies that a person is eligible for election or appointment to a county board of education if he or she:
 - Is a person of good moral character
 - Has obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent
 - Is not employed by that county board of education
 - Is not serving on the governing board of a private elementary or secondary educational institution
 - Is not on the National Sex Offender Registry or the state sex offender registry
 - Has not been convicted of a felony (Ala. Code § 16-8-1)
- In **Kentucky**, a local school board member must:
 - Be at least 24 years old
 - Have been a citizen of Kentucky for at least three years
 - Have completed at least the 12th grade or been issued a GED or received a high school diploma through participation in the external diploma program
 - Not hold a state office requiring the constitutional oath or be a member of the General Assembly;

- Not holds or discharges the duties of any civil or political office, deputyship, or agency under the city or county of his or her residence
 - Not be directly or indirectly interested in the sale to the board of books, stationery, or any other property, materials, supplies, equipment, or services for which school funds are expended
 - Not have been removed from membership on a board of education for cause
 - Not have a relative employed by the school district (Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 160.180)
- **Tennessee** requires that members of local boards of education:
 - Be residents and voters of the county in which they are elected and be citizens of recognized integrity, intelligence and ability to administer the duties of the office
 - Not be a member of the county legislative body nor be a county official
 - Be a bona fide resident of the county and have filed with the county election commission proof of high school graduation receipt of a GED
 - Be properly trained during their service on the board of education pursuant to minimum requirements for training established by the state board of education (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-2-202)
 - In **West Virginia**, a member of a county board:
 - Must be a citizen and resident in the county in which he or she serves on the county board
 - May not be employed by the county board on which he or she serves, including employment as a teacher or service person
 - Adhere to the statute delineating which political activities he or she may and may not engage in
 - Must possess at least a high school diploma or a GED.
 - Must attend and complete a course of orientation relating to boardsmanship and governance effectiveness
 - Must receive annual training in areas relating to boardsmanship, governance effectiveness, and school performance issues including, but not limited to, pertinent state and federal statutes (W. Va. Code Ann. § 18-5-1a)

Other considerations. Also of note is legislation in recent years requiring training for local school board members. In addition to the requirements noted above for Tennessee and West Virginia, several other states (including Mississippi) require similar training. For example:

- **Alabama** requires local board members to participate in orientation and ongoing training. (Ala. Code §§ 16-1-41 and 16-1-41.1)
- **Louisiana** requires that members of local school boards receive annual training and instruction and further allows board members to receive the designation of “Distinguished School Board Member” by receiving additional training and instruction in their first year of service. (La. Stat. Ann. § 17:53)
- **Oklahoma** requires new board members to complete at least 12 hours of instruction on education issues including, but not limited to school finance, legal issues, special education, and ethics. The state also requires board members to attend continuing education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, and/or conventions. (Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 70, §§ 5-110 and 5-110.1)

- **Rhode Island** law requires professional development for school committee members, which must include instruction in labor and labor relations, negotiating collective bargaining agreements, employee contract analysis, school finance, school law, duties and responsibilities of the committee, duties and responsibilities of the superintendent, ethics, the requirements of the open meetings law, student achievement, strategic planning, educational standards, student assessment, school accountability, data interpretation and analysis, collaboration building, advocacy, annual performance evaluation of the school superintendent and the local school committee, and any other topics as the Rhode Island association of school committees may deem to be necessary. (16 R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 16-2-5.1)

Additional data & links

- Education Commission of the States' [state policy database](#) contains summaries of enacted legislative in all 50 states and DC. While it is very comprehensive, it should not be considered all-inclusive as we do occasionally miss a bill. Pages of interest might include [Governance—School Boards](#), [Governance—School Boards—Training](#), and [Governance—State Boards/Chiefs/Agencies](#). You are likely to find additional examples on these pages.
- ECS' [50-State Comparison on K-12 Governance Structures contains](#) information on governors' and legislatures' roles in education, chief state school officers, state boards, regional and local boards, regional and local superintendents, schools, and collective bargaining agreements.
- ECS' report on [state education governance models](#).