



# VSBA

**Virginia School Boards Association**

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

## **School Board Appreciation Month**

February 2023

*Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas and resources for implementation. Member school boards may choose not to participate locally.*

## **FEBRUARY IS “SCHOOL BOARD APPRECIATION” MONTH**

Salute the service of the almost 850 school board members in Virginia in February 2023 during School Board Appreciation Month. The theme — *Rising to the Challenge* — reflects the partnership of the Virginia School Boards Association with local school board members as they serve their local divisions and advocate for public education with local, state, and federal leaders on behalf of all students.

The month-long observance is an opportunity for your school division and community to build a stronger understanding of the crucial role school boards assume in a constitutional republic. School boards voluntarily tackle the enormous job of governing multi-million-dollar public school divisions, while preserving the core of our democratic values.

Use the month to highlight the accomplishments of your local board. Encourage community leaders, business partners and local civic groups to join in your recognition efforts. This kit was developed to assist you in these efforts and includes:

- Kit content and instructions sheet
- Suggested activities and tips
- Sample news release
- Sample letter to the editor
- Public service announcement scripts
- Sample article for division newsletters and other publications
- Education quotes sheet
- Sample resolution

Thank you in advance for your support to make School Board Appreciation Month a success! Please contact [communications@vsba.org](mailto:communications@vsba.org) with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

# **KIT CONTENT & INSTRUCTIONS**

## **Suggested Activities & Tips**

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

## **Sample News Release**

This news release can be submitted to the local media for publication. 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 division and/or board members. Include photos, if available.

## **Sample Letter to the Editor**

This sample letter can be submitted to your local newspaper for publication. Use the letter to inform the community about School Board Appreciation Month and to send a positive message about public education and your division's accomplishments. You could also ask a parent, booster or business partner to sign or co-sign the letter.

## **Public Service Announcements**

Contact local radio stations to arrange the announcing and placement of your public service announcement (PSA). This sample radio scripts can be customized to include your division information.

## **Sample Opinion Column**

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

## **Draft Proclamation**

A sample resolution that your city council or county board of supervisors can adapt and pass to proclaim February as "School Board Appreciation Month".

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND TIPS

- Form a recognition month planning committee of staff and community leaders to plan special events/activities that can meet and plan virtually.
- Plan a special reception at the February board meeting. Ask local restaurants and grocery stores to help host the event.
- In lieu of an in-person reception, School Board Members could be recognized at the monthly school board meeting and presented with refreshments.
- Promote the initiative in division communications, consider compiling statements from stakeholders to create a video to present to the board in appreciation.
- Place messages on school marquees and websites.
- Seek endorsement and recognition for 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 Appreciation" proclamation.
- Invite legislators to attend a reception or, school board meeting if meeting virtually, and "say a few words" of appreciation.
- Publish a brochure with photographs of board members giving their background, years of service, committee assignments, accomplishments, etc. for use at civic meetings.
- Ask your community's civic and business clubs (Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Jaycees, chamber of commerce, etc.) to host your board at a breakfast or lunch.
- Arrange a speaking engagement with a local service or civic club to explain the school board's role and how public education is governed.
- Ask the 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.
- Invite students to write about the important role of school boards that can be given to members and published in local newspapers.
- Hang a "School Board Appreciation Month" banner and/or poster in public places.
- Ask elementary children or high school graphic design students to design "School Board Appreciation Month" posters for downtown store windows.
- Every day, for the first week of February, 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 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.
- Decorate entrances to school buildings.

- Ask students to write handwritten notes of appreciation.
- Feature student entertainment at the board meeting.
- Send a press release on School Board Appreciation Month (sample enclosed).
- Send a letter to the editor (sample enclosed).
- Ask your local radio station to run a public service announcement (sample enclosed).
- Ask a student or the school webmaster to design a School Board Appreciation Month ad for your division'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 division 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.
- Plan a social media campaign where you introduce each of the school board members on social media with photos and fun facts about them.

# **SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

[DATE]

**Contact**

[NAME]

[PHONE]

## **SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE IN FEBRUARY**

Rising to the Challenge

[CITY/COUNTY], VA – [SCHOOL DIVISION] will join school divisions throughout the state to celebrate School Board Appreciation Month in February. Almost 850 elected and appointed school board members throughout Virginia will be recognized by schools and communities for their service and dedication to public education.

The theme of this year’s celebration, “Rising to the Challenge,” reflects the leadership of the local school board members as they serve their local divisions and advocate for public education with local, state, and federal leaders on behalf of all students.

“The foundation of student success is yearlong leadership, advocacy, and support from our School Board,” said [SUPERINTENDENT]. “We’re proud of our division, and School Board Appreciation Month is the time to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of our elected trustees.”

In [SCHOOL DIVISION], 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 statewide make decisions that affect 1.5 million Virginia children and more than \$3 billion,” notes [SUPERINTENDENT LAST NAME], “They preserve the core of our democracy—public education.”

[ADD A PARAGRAPH LISTING WAYS YOU WILL HONOR BOARD MEMBERS IN YOUR DIVISION DURING FEBRUARY.] More information is posted on the [SCHOOL DIVISION] website at [WEB ADDRESS].

The men and women serving on the [SCHOOL DIVISION] school board are [LIST BOARD MEMBERS AND YEARS OF SERVICE].

# SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The month of February marks the annual observance of School Board Appreciation Month—a time to salute the work of school board members and celebrate public education. The theme of this year’s celebration, “Rising to the Challenge,” reflects the leadership of local school board members as they serve their local divisions and advocate for public education with local, state, and federal leaders on behalf of all students. Local school boards keep the public in charge of public schools since they represent their community’s beliefs and values.

In [SCHOOL DIVISION], 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 preserve the core of our democracy—public education.

Too often we neglect to recognize the dedication and hard work of these board members who represent us. I invite you to recognize and celebrate the work of your school board. Invite them out for coffee. Ask how you might help support your local neighborhood schools. Write your school board members a thank you note. Let them know you appreciate what they do for students in [SCHOOL DIVISION].

Those who are serving on the [SCHOOL DIVISION] school board are [LIST BOARD MEMBERS AND YEARS OF SERVICE].

Sincerely,

[SUPERINTENDENT]  
[SCHOOL DIVISION]

School Board Appreciation Month, in February, is celebrated by local school divisions in Virginia, as almost 850 school board members are honored by their schools and community for untiring dedication to school governance.

# **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

[DATE]

## **Contact**

[NAME]

[SCHOOL DIVISION]

[PHONE]

## **“School Boards Speak Out for Public Schools”**

### **THANK YOU ANNOUNCEMENT (15 seconds)**

The month of February marks the annual observance of School Board Appreciation Month—a good time to recognize the work of school board members and celebrate public education. Tell your locally [ELECTED/APPOINTED] board members you appreciate what they do for students in [SCHOOL DIVISION] and for speaking out for public schools. A message from [RADIO STATION] and [SCHOOL DIVISION].

### **CELEBRATE ANNOUNCEMENT (30 seconds)**

The month of February marks the annual observance of School Board Appreciation Month—a good time to salute the work of school board members and celebrate public education. Your locally [ELECTED/APPOINTED] board in [SCHOOL DIVISION] speaks out for public schools by ensuring our students have the opportunity to benefit from a high-quality education. Their decisions and actions affect the present and future lives of our community’s children. Join us in celebrating School Board Appreciation Month in [SCHOOL DIVISION]. A message from [RADIO STATION] and [SCHOOL DIVISION].



## **SAMPLE ARTICLE**

**The following article can be adapted for use in your division 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 board members, details of how board members will be honored during February, and examples of ways your board has improved education for the students in your division.**

As citizen leaders, school board members face complex and demanding challenges. Yet few people fully understand the scope and far-reaching implications of board members' responsibilities. Virginians 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 an endless string of meetings and 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 divisions. Board members must pull together as a team toward a common goal of helping all students achieve. Though individual school board members may sometimes disagree on issues, their role as a member of the school board is to consistently strive toward the goal of high academic achievement. Working together, school board members speak out for public schools and the students they serve.

Board members contribute hundreds and hundreds of hours each year leading their divisions. Whether it is 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 in their divisions. 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 the dedicated service of school board members throughout Virginia, February has been designated as School Board Appreciation Month. This is the time to show our recognition and to increase our understanding of how local board members work together to provide a better future for our children. Please join [SCHOOL DIVISION] and the 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

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.” —Anthony J. D'Angelo

“Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.”  
—Edward Everett

“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

“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

# SAMPLE RESOLUTION

## Virginia School Board Appreciation Month February 2023

**Whereas**, the education of Virginia's school -aged children is the foundation upon which the economic, social, and intellectual capital of our state is built; and

**Whereas**, locally elected and appointed school boards play an important and vital role in a constitutional republic, and decisions made by local boards of education directly influence instruction in Virginia's public schools; and

**Whereas**, these decisions affect the present and future lives of children, and also set direction to prepare all students to be competitive in a local, state, national and global 21st Century knowledge economy; and

**Whereas**, local school board members work with parents, businesses, education professionals and other community members to create the educational vision we want for our students; and

**Whereas**, this year's theme – *Rising to the Challenge* - reflects the leadership of local school board members as they serve their local divisions and advocate for public education with local, state, and federal leaders on behalf of all students; and

**Whereas**, School Board Appreciation Month provides an opportunity to celebrate Virginia's school board members who champion the mission of public education; now, therefore be it

**Resolved** the \_\_\_\_\_ recognizes the contributions of the state's local school boards to the academic success of its public school students and expresses its sincerest recognition to local board members for their focus on the well-being and achievement of children throughout the state; and be it finally

**Resolved** the \_\_\_\_\_ declares February 2023 as School Board Appreciation Month and encourages local school divisions and community leaders to appropriately recognize our state's dedicated school board members.