



Public School Board Roles

Late 18th century. A seated goddess Libertas, wearing the Phrygian cap (liberty cap), uses the light of science atop the scepter Reason to banish fear and superstition.

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From the War of 1812 period.
An American Navy seaman being crowned with glory by the goddess Libertas, who also holds the staff of Reason topped by a Phrygian cap (liberty cap).

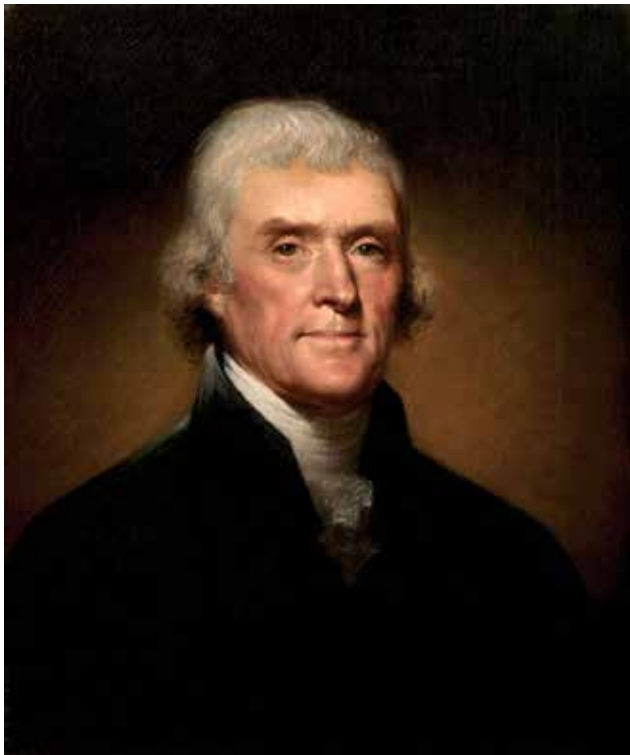
The Founders of our country created a “republic”.

The word “republic” is derived from the Latin, *res publica*, “res” (thing or matter) & “publica”, (not private, held in common).

A republic is the form of government wherein the people elect representatives from amongst themselves not a democracy, where the people vote directly on everything themselves.

School Districts

Public education was considered by Jefferson and most of the founding generation to be as he put it, **“the key-stone of the arch of our government.”**



“It is an axiom in my mind that our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves, and that too of the people with a certain degree of instruction. This it is the business of the state to effect, and on a general plan.”

Thomas Jefferson

School Districts

Viewed as crucial in a republic, the founders invented a shared system of public education, to be governed at the most local level.

The primary purpose was not vocational training, rather it was to create *citizens*

This was enshrined in law amongst a series of Northwest Ordinances in the mid-1780's.

Congress made a public education system a condition for statehood.



School Districts

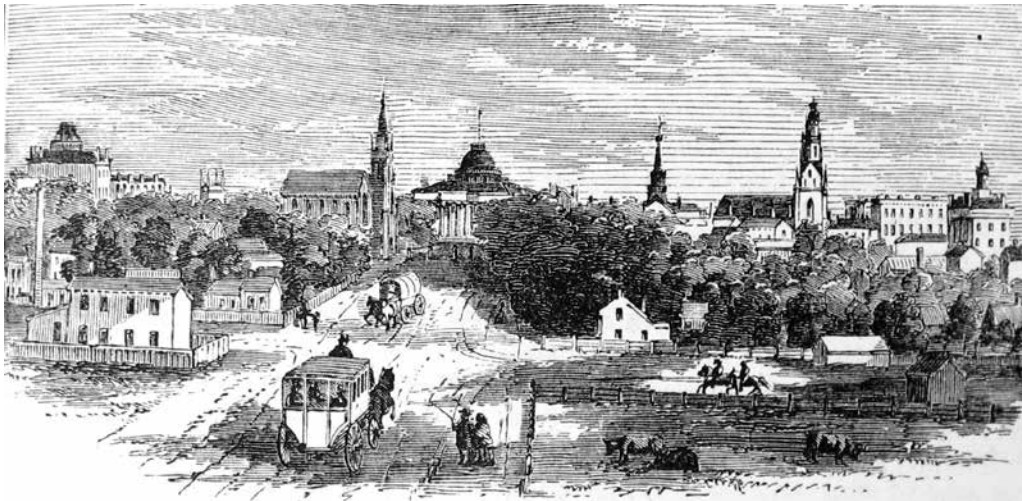
One of these was *The Land Ordinance of 1785*, which provided, among other things:

There shall be reserved for the United States out of every township, the four lots, being numbered, 8, 11, 26, 29, and out of every fractional part of a township, so many lots of the same numbers as shall be found thereon. There shall be reserved the lot No. 16 of every township, for the maintenance of public schools within the said township.

School Districts

Wisconsin's constitution requires the legislature to create district schools throughout the state to provide free public elementary and secondary education to all children. This education is supported by, among other things, an annual school tax levied by each district*.

Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance



* Now limited by the state.

Powers & Duties

The school board may do all things reasonable to promote education, including

- Establishing, providing and improving school district programs, functions and activities for the benefit of pupils
- Suspension and expulsion of pupils.
- Purchasing or otherwise acquiring necessary books and equipment.
- Granting the temporary use of school grounds and buildings.

Powers & Duties

- Soliciting and obtaining options to purchase real property and buy after authorization
- The duty of care, control and management of the property and affairs of the school district
- General supervision of the schools.
- Tax for operation and maintenance of the district.
- Determine school hours and courses of study
- Abide by conflict of interest laws

Board Powers & Duties

- Advocate for district's interests
- **Develop policies to guide and direct the board, administrators and staff**
- Hire, fire, non-renew, layoff, promote and assign staff
- Abide by general employment law & state & federal anti- discrimination laws
- Abide by public records laws

Board Powers & Duties

- Hold a regular meeting at least once a month and may hold special as necessary
- Abide as a “government body” with the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law
- In the case of a school board with more than 3 members, the board annually elects a school district president
- School boards may adopt rules of parliamentary procedure but are not required to adopt such.

Board Powers & **Duties**

Exercise reasonable care when carrying out responsibilities toward students

Afford students their constitutional due process rights when action is taken against them

**Policy
vs.
Administration/Operations**

With the exception of the board's specific quasi-judicial role:

- **Board creates Policy**
- **Policy = “What” and “Why”**
- **Superintendent & staff perform administration and operations**
- **Administration and operations = “How” “When” and “Where”**

**Policy
vs.
Administration/Operations**

Superintendent & Staff

Education

Experience

Background checked

Bonded

Professionally current

Professional associations

Board

Elected by people

Local connection

Signs of an Effective School Board Member

Great school board members have a clear vision for the district. They set the vision and goals, and measure the success of the district and superintendent against the goals.

Great school board members communicate their actions to the community. Through public discourse and written reports, great school board members keep the public informed of the district's progress and challenges.

Great school board members work as a team. They collaborate well with others and are respectful of the other board members and superintendent.

<http://www.greatschools.org/improvement/volunteering/93-what-makes-a-great-school-board-member.gs?page=all>

Signs of an Effective School Board Member

Great school board members adopt a fiscally sound district budget. They pay attention to finances and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the district.

Great school board members focus on what is best for all students. They focus on student achievement and implementing policies that will ensure success for all students.

Great school board members advocate at the local, state and national level for public education. They take advantage of opportunities to communicate the needs of public schools to other levels of government and advocate for strong public schools.

<http://www.greatschools.org/improvement/volunteering/93-what-makes-a-great-school-board-member.gs?page=all>

We stand in the shadow of Jefferson who believed that a society founded upon the rule of law and liberty was dependent upon public education and the diffusion of knowledge.

Matt Blunt

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