

NDSBA School Board Member Legacy of Service Award

Submission Deadline: July 31, 2026

The NDSBA Legacy of Service Award was created in 2024 to honor North Dakota’s longest-serving school board members and the impact they have made on their local school districts, their communities, and the state of North Dakota.

Stephen Covey says in his book, *The Speed of Trust*, “The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is today.” In education and in life, the fruit is the best part of planting seeds. Yet, fruit takes time to grow. In order for fruit to grow, it takes watering, tending, pruning and waiting. Planting, nurturing, and ultimately, waiting and hoping that a tree will bear fruit is an apt analogy for the work of school boards, particularly the members who have committed 15 or more years in pursuit of positive student outcomes.

We honor these school board members to recognize their sacrifice and their legacy; we hope their dedication will inspire the next generation of tree planters. There are two ways in which a North Dakota school board member may qualify for the NDSBA Legacy of Service award. The award may only be received once in a lifetime.

Category 1:

Steadfast Commitment

School board members who have completed their 20th cumulative year of school board service are immediately eligible to be honored. Years of service can include terms on the school boards of different districts (e.g., school districts participating in reorganization or consolidation) and may be interrupted by periods of time where the individual did not serve on the board for any reason.

Category 2:

Profound Impact

School board members who have completed their 15th cumulative year of school board service but leave the board prior to serving 20 years are eligible to be considered in this category. Individuals receiving the award in this category will have made a significant and recognizable impact on their district, within North Dakota education as a whole, or with the North Dakota School Boards Association, despite not reaching the 20-year service mark. Board members may be nominated by their district, themselves, or any other individual. The NDSBA Board of Directors will select recipients annually on the basis of merit. School board members are only eligible for nomination once their board service ends.

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Qualifications

Category 1: Steadfast Commitment

1. 20 cumulative years of service
 - Years may be interrupted (got off the board, got back on)
 - Years may include appointments and partial terms
 - Years may include services on different boards due to reorganization, consolidation, or simply relocation of the school board member
 - Board service all must occur within North Dakota school districts
2. The 20th year of service must have been completed, or the board member must still be in active service in the 2025-26 school year.
3. Board members may not have been convicted of or plead guilty to crimes that conflict with the school board member oath of office during their service. NDSBA reserves the right to not honor individuals whose behavior is not consistent with school board member ethics and best practices as taught by the association.

Category 2: Profound Impact

1. No less than 15 cumulative years of service, but less than 20
 - Years may be interrupted (got off the board, got back on)
 - Years may include appointments and partial terms
 - Years may include services on different boards due to reorganization, consolidation, or simply relocation of the school board member.
 - Board service all must occur within North Dakota school districts
2. The 15th year of service must have been completed in the 2025-26 school year. School board members are only eligible in this category once their board services have ended.
3. Board members may not have been convicted of or plead guilty to crimes that conflict with the school board member oath of office during their service. NDSBA reserves the right to not honor individuals whose behavior is not consistent with school board member ethics and best practices as taught by the association.
4. Board members must have made a profound impact on their district, within North Dakota education as a whole, or with the North Dakota School Boards Association. One example may include significant engagement and regular leadership roles in service of statewide education-related boards or other efforts to improve student outcomes and advance the mission(s) of locally-elected school board members.

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Nomination Procedures

Category 1: Steadfast Commitment

When the school board member completes their 20th year of service, the school district business manager shall certify the years of service on that year's information form AND **submit the NDSBA Legacy of Service Award Nomination form to the NDSBA office by July 31** of the year in which the board member will be honored. Only the business manager may submit this nomination.

Category 2: Profound Impact

1. When the school board member's service ends and they are believed to have met the qualifications for this category, they may be nominated using the NDSBA Legacy of Service Award Nomination form. **The form must be submitted to the NDSBA office by July 31** of the year in which the board member will be honored. The nomination form should be submitted along with the following supporting evidence:

- A letter of nomination describing why the board member is deserving of the award and the nature of the impact they have had.
- A listing of their years of service, local committees served on, and any involvement and/or positions held on state, regional, or national education-related boards and activities. This list should be certified by the signature of the school business manager of the district in which the board member served and may be sent separately from the rest of the nomination packet if necessary.
- Letter(s) of support or other evidence of impact you may wish to include.

