

January 31, 2023



Dear Alison,

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) announced today that the Harwood Unified Union School District has earned a silver 2023 Magna Award for its Harwood Harkness Initiative! Read more below about this exemplary initiative. Our sincere congratulations to the entire community of the Harwood Unified Union School District!

We're also heading into School Board Recognition Month. Read more below about the Resolution recognizing school boards in the Vermont House of Representatives. Special thanks to Representative Laura Sibilla for being the lead sponsor of the Resolution.

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#### HOT TOPICS

##### Harwood Unified Union School District Wins NSBA Silver Magna Award

The NSBA announced the winners of its Magna Awards today and a Vermont district is among them. Harwood Unified Union School District earned a silver Magna Award for its Harwood Harkness Initiative (HHI).

Harwood established the HHI in 2016 with a \$100,000 grant award from the Rowland Foundation. The program, led by history teacher Katherine Cadwell and a cadre of dedicated high school faculty and students, aims to transform teaching and learning by infusing the Harkness pedagogy of student-driven inquiry into classroom culture and practice. HHI amplifies student voice, encourages a diversity of perspectives, equity and inclusion in classroom culture and develops the skills of civil discourse throughout the school.

The School Board of the Harwood Unified Union School District has played an important role in supporting the work of the educators, both financially and instructionally, throughout the development and implementation of this unique approach to teaching and learning. Since individual voice and the democratic tradition of a New England Town Hall is central to our way of life in Vermont, the School Board sees the use of HHI as an important way to both educate and encourage students to take initiative in their learning, find their own voice, and engage with others knowing that respectful disagreement is critical to life in a free society.

NSBA's Magna Awards program has a long history of recognizing exemplary school district programs. The 2023 awards program focused on innovation in education. It honors district programs that solved a challenge with creativity and out-of-the-box strategies. All of the Magna Award winning districts will be featured in the April issue of American School Board Journal and recognized at an annual conference reception in Orlando, Florida.

##### February is School Board Recognition Month

February is [School Board Recognition Month](#)! THANK YOU to the 850+ Vermont school board members who serve their local schools and communities. Thanks also to several legislators who serve as school board members for offering a Resolution in the House of Representatives, recognizing the extraordinary responsibilities of school boards and designating February 2023 as School Board Recognition Month. Special thanks to the lead sponsor, Representative Laura Sibilla. The Resolution will be read in the House of Representative in February. We will send notification of the exact date as soon as the information is available.

##### Act 1: Temporary Measures Related to Annual Meeting and Open Meeting Law Are in Effect Until July 1, 2024

[Act 1 of 2023](#) took effect last week. Act 1 provides temporary authority until July 1, 2024 that: (1) permits school boards to move the date of the annual meeting, apply the Australian ballot system to annual and special meetings, and hold electronic informational meetings in the days preceding the annual meeting; and (2) permits public bodies to hold electronic meetings without designating a physical location and without requiring staff to be physically present at that location.

Act 1 also suspends the mandatory, specified school district budget ballot language in 16 VSA Section 563(11)(D). Please direct questions on how to manage the wording of budget ballot language to your respective school district legal counsel.

##### VSBA Seeks Director of Board Services

VSBA has a job opening for a Director of Board Services. Please see the [VSBA home page](#) for the job description and more information about the application process.

##### Applications For Act 11 Bargaining Commission Due February 1

State law requires the Vermont School Boards Association to appoint representatives to the Statewide Bargaining Commission on School Employee Health Benefits (five commissioners and two alternate commissioners). VSBA is currently accepting applications to fill two vacancies in alternate commissioner seats. The term for the alternate seats is the remainder of the two alternate members' terms (4 years).

Applicants must meet the following statutory criteria:

- an understanding of health care,
- an understanding of employer-employee relations, and
- a demonstrated willingness to work collaboratively.

VSBA Resolution N., H requires the VSBA to give priority to applicants who provide regional representation, have experience on a negotiations council, and demonstrate willingness to participate in training and professional development regarding negotiations.

The application form for appointment to the Commission can be accessed [here](#). The deadline for submission of applications is 5:00 p.m. on **February 1, 2023**.

The VSBA Board of Directors will appoint the alternate representatives to the Commission based on the above criteria. Applicants may be interviewed by the Board at its February 8, 2023 board meeting from 5:00-8:00pm.

#### GOVERNANCE TIP

##### Leading a Kind and Compassionate School District

Winter can be a difficult time of year. One month past the Solstice, the days are still short, and "it's brrrry cold outside." A lot of staff, families, and students may be struggling with something. Recognize you, your fellow board members, and superintendent might be struggling. None of us really know what someone else is going through. I've never regretted being kind to someone, but I do have some regrets about the times I wasn't. Think about that the next time one of your fellow board members does something that displeases you. You won't regret giving them the kindness and compassion you hope others would extend to you.

#### EQUITY

##### Black History Month Series Hosted By Office of Racial Equity and Vermont Human Rights Commission

The State of Vermont Office of Racial Equity and the Vermont Human Rights Commission are excited to announce a 28-day series to commemorate Black History Month. Every day in February, we will share one event, quote, resource, fact, or activity that spotlights the greatness of the Black community, and you can win some raffle prizes along the way! Are you in? It takes 1 minute to sign up using this form: [2023 BHM E-Mail Sign-Up](#).

##### Coming soon: Vermont School Board Member Affinity Group

Affinity Groups are spaces where individuals can relate with each other, share ideas and suggestions, and receive mutual support to help them do their work. We are finalizing details regarding the launch of Vermont's first Affinity Group for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) school board members. We all know how important it is to provide support for BIPOC teachers and administrators. We believe it is also valuable for school board members. If you or one of your fellow board members meet the criteria and would like to participate in this group, please [click here](#) to be added to our contact list. We will reach out to you personally with more information.

## SAVE THE DATE



#### THIS THURSDAY!

##### 2/2/23 Webinar

##### How School Boards Can Support Student Achievement and Close Gaps

Noon - 1:00pm

How does your board...

- Ensure the district is accountable for the well-being and success of all students?
- Assure high expectations for student learning?
- Demonstrate responsible and inclusive governance?
- Engage and involve your local community?
- Create conditions for the success of all students and staffs?

[REGISTER HERE](#) FREE WEBINAR

#### 3/2/23 Webinar

##### The New 2023 School Board: Onboarding New Board Members and Reorganizing the Board

Noon - 1:00pm

Town Meeting Day is coming quickly. You will walk away from this webinar with knowledge and materials to ensure your district has the best practices for onboarding and working well with new members and reorganizing your new board.

This webinar is open to all central office staff as well as school board members.

[REGISTER HERE](#) FREE WEBINAR

If you have any thoughts about the VSBA Weekly Updates, please let us know. We always welcome your feedback.

Thank you for your dedicated service as school board members. **What you do makes a difference!**

Sincerely,



Sue Ceglowski  
VSBA Executive Director



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