



2022 Candidate for 2023 Board of Directors
**ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS
OFFICIALS INTERNATIONAL**

KAREN SMITH, RTSBA, CPA, CIA

Chief Financial Officer

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District
Houston, Texas

BIOGRAPHY

Karen Smith is the chief financial officer at Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, the third-largest district in Texas, with over 118,000 students and a budget of \$1.1 billion. She has worked in school business for 30 years with experience in finance, risk management, child nutrition, technology, parent organizations and internal audit. Smith is an active member of the Texas ASBO affiliate, serving as its board president in 2016. She has written curriculum, presented at conferences and webinars, mentored new business managers, and participated in various committees. She provided testimony to the Texas legislature regarding the need to revise the existing school funding system and was invited to testify on the funding formula for at-risk students. Smith has also been involved in ASBO International, serving as a member and vice chair on ASBO's Legislative Advisory Committee, advocating on Capitol Hill, presenting sessions at the annual conference, and developing webinars.

VISION STATEMENT

Public education is a gift. While each of us have different state and national laws and school funding systems, our duty as school business officials is to ensure a strong public education system is available to all children. As a globally recognized authority in the school business profession, ASBO is in a unique position to bring us together and make a difference in public education.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Why do you want to be a board member of ASBO International?

There are a variety of reasons why I'm volunteering as a candidate for the ASBO Board of Directors, both professional and personal. I would not have run for the board without careful consideration of the time commitment and evaluation of my own qualifications and passion for ASBO. The decision was made much easier based on my past volunteer experience in the school business profession and with ASBO.

I encourage all new members to try volunteering at your local chapters, state affiliates, and at the national level. It will help you build a trusted network of colleagues, hone your ability to work as a team, and take home new ideas. Because ASBO and those I have met through ASBO have helped me throughout the years, I truly have a vested interest in the organization, the members and contributing to other school business officials.

Beyond personal enrichment, volunteering on the board is a commitment to help the profession. I believe it is a duty for qualified members to consider running for leadership positions within the association. Based on my past experience on the Texas affiliate board, my committee and advocacy roles at ASBO, and my own areas of expertise in school finance and operations, I believe I have demonstrated the ability to be an effective member on the ASBO board. I was so fortunate to serve as a director, then leader, of an exemplary board in Texas. During my tenure, we revised and expanded curriculum, grew the sponsorship program, revised the membership structure, developed a mentor program for new business officials and revised the bylaws to allow TASBO to advocate for the good of all school districts.

As an ASBO International board member, it is my responsibility to listen to the members and help provide the resources to our members to navigate through these unprecedented times. I would be honored to be elected

and have the opportunity to serve ASBO and the school business and operations community.

Given the permanent economic changes around the world, including decreased funding for schools, what do you see as the most important areas on which school business officials should be focusing? How does ASBO International help SBOs in that endeavor?

Enrollment and student attendance has declined due to the pandemic. It is crucial to get children back in school and engaged. School finance decisions remain the uppermost importance to the success of our schools.

Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic has significantly impacted student learning, social and emotional health, recruiting and retaining quality staff, supply costs, the availability of resources, the digital divide and ultimately school district budgets. Although the federal stimulus funding has provided a temporary solution to bridge the gap, ongoing solutions are needed to address these issues and recover from the achievement gap resulting from two years of interrupted learning.

School business officials should continue to focus on educating their boards, community, and legislators on the impact of historically being underfunded to meet the needs of changing student demographics, increased academic standards, unfunded mandates, and aging buildings and infrastructure. Increased funding and less administrative burden are needed at all levels.

Other important areas school business officials should concentrate on are initiatives that provide opportunities for all such as fully funding IDEA at 40% of the national average per student expenditure, resources for career and technology programs, increased educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged and bilingual students, a safe learning environment, rising health costs, and reducing the costs of school breakfast and lunch programs.

ASBO International helps school business officials by giving school districts a voice at the national level through their legislative advocacy efforts. ASBO partners with other organizations to combine legislative efforts and provide the maximum voice for school districts. ASBO provides tools to assist school districts address their communities, local government, and federal government. ASBO has been instrumental in offering just-in-time training and resources, especially during the pandemic.

ASBO has become recognized by legislators as a source of credible information. One thing I have learned is without advocacy, legislators assume school districts agree with the programs in place. ASBO will be offering their first Advocacy Bootcamp in June to assist school business officials advocate for the needs of school districts and help provide policymakers the impact of their decisions on public education.

If you are elected to the Board of Directors position, you will have an opportunity to speak to many members and groups. What would you tell them about ASBO International that would encourage individuals to join and inspire those who are members to become more involved?

I entered school business after ten years in industry. I immediately started researching where I could get financial training in school business. I was told to join ASBO International and my state affiliate. I am so glad I did because ASBO has given me much more than I have given ASBO. The more I participate and volunteer, the more I learn and become a better school business official.

At one of ASBO's annual conferences, a member told me my contributions to the ASBO Network made them realize that they would benefit from attending the annual conference. Although school business officials come from different states and countries, we all have the same goals of supporting our students and our district to provide the best public education possible.

ASBO is a resource for all and offers extensive educational and networking opportunities. By becoming involved, school business officials will gain information and tools that benefit them in their daily responsibilities and help them problem solve in areas presenting challenges.

Look around when you're on the ASBO Network or at in-person events. There are so many people sharing their experiences and challenges. Why wouldn't we want to work together through ASBO? I truly believe we are better together.