

Policy 3 – Role of the Trustee

Trustees are elected in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

The role of the trustee is to contribute to the Board as it carries out its mandate in order to achieve its vision and goals consistent with the Strategic Plan. The oath of office taken by each trustee when he or she assumes office binds that person to work diligently and faithfully in the cause of public education.

The *School Act* gives no individual authority to trustees. As members of the corporate board, trustees are accountable to the public for the collective decisions of the Board, and for the delivery and quality of educational services. A trustee must serve the community as an elected representative, but the trustee's primary task is to act as a member of a corporate board.

The decisions of the Board in a properly constituted meeting are those of the corporation. A trustee who is given corporate authority to act on behalf of the Board may carry out duties individually but only as an agent of the Board. In such cases, the actions of the trustee are those of the Board, which is then responsible for them. A trustee acting individually has only the authority and status of any other citizen of the district.

As a result of elections, the Board may experience changes in membership. To ensure continuity and facilitate smooth transition from one Board to the next following an election, trustees must be adequately briefed concerning existing Board policy and practice, statutory requirements, initiatives and long-range plans. Trustees are expected to attend orientation programs that will provide information on:

1. Role of the trustee and the Board;
2. Trustee Code of Ethics;
3. Organizational structures and procedures of the district;
4. Board policy, agendas and minutes;
5. The Strategic Plan, existing district initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;
6. District programs and services;
7. Board's function as an appeal body;
8. Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities in regard to conflict of interest; and
9. Board evaluations.

Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about the history, functions, policies and procedures.

The district will provide financial support for trustees to attend relevant professional development activities.

Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees

The trustee shall:

1. Become familiar with district policies and procedures, meeting agendas, and reports in order to participate in Board business.
2. Refer governance queries, issues and problems not covered by Board policy to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
3. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Ethics.
4. Where appropriate, inform the Superintendent, or designate about issues or problems raised by a parent or community member about a school or school policy.
5. Direct a parent or community member to the School Principal when issues arise about a school or school policy, where appropriate.
6. Keep the Board and the Superintendent informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the district.
7. Provide the Superintendent with counsel and advice, giving the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
8. Attend meetings of the Board; participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board in order to provide the best solutions possible for the education of children within the district.
9. Support the decisions of the Board.
10. Monitor progress to ensure decisions are implemented.
11. When delegated responsibility, exercise such authority within the defined limits in a responsible and effective way.
12. Participate in Board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the district can be enhanced.
13. Share the materials and ideas gained from a trustee development activity with fellow trustees at the next available opportunity.
14. Stay current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
15. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the district.
16. Act as a liaison to assigned schools.
17. Attend district or school functions when invited and when possible.
18. Trustees absent from the district for an extended period shall, for emergency contact purposes, ensure that the other trustees and office of the Superintendent are informed of their whereabouts.

References

Appendix: Trustee School Liaison Program