

## Role of the Trustee

The role of the trustee is to contribute to the board as it carries out its mandate in order to achieve its mission and goals related to student success and the development of an improved learning environment. 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 that is then responsible for them. A trustee acting individually has only the authority and status of any other citizen of the district.

Responsibilities of individual trustees include:

- Becoming familiar with district policies and procedures, meeting agendas, and reports in order to participate in board business.
- Referring governance queries, issues and problems not covered by board policy to the board for corporate discussion and decision.
- Referring queries, issues or problems raised by a parent or community member about a school or school policy to the principal and, where appropriate, inform the superintendent or designate.
- Keeping the board and the superintendent informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the district.
- Providing the superintendent with counsel and advice, giving the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
- Attending 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.
- Supporting the decisions of the board and monitoring progress to ensure decisions are implemented.
- When delegated responsibility, exercising such authority within the defined limits in a responsible, effective way.
- Participating in board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the district can be enhanced.
- Sharing the materials and ideas gained from a trustee development activity with fellow trustees at the next available opportunity.
- Staying current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
- Striving to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the board and the district.
- Acting as a liaison to assigned schools.
- Attending district or school functions when invited and when possible.
- Becoming familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Ethics.
- Reporting any violation of the Trustee Code of Ethics to the board during a closed session.

## Relationships

### Trustee Relationships

- Openness – Communication in an open, honest manner is critical to our success. Personal or hidden agendas must be placed on the table. We must be respectful of each other, and be prepared to say in meetings what is said privately.
- Confidentiality – Confidential discussions regarding land, legal and labour issues must stay “in the room”.
- Seeking Consensus – Our decisions will be made by finding common ground and using the consensus approach whenever possible. We are reminded that consensus decision-making operates best in an environment based on trust, patience, good nature and being non-judgmental. Once a decision is made it is a decision of the corporate board.
- Consideration – Trustees honour the starting and finishing times of our meetings. Being prepared for the meetings, speaking clearly, concisely, and with complete details and in a manner that is understood by all is important. At meetings of the board trustees will direct all comments and questions through the chair to the fellow trustees. Trustees will declare when they are not prepared.
- Responsiveness – Trustees are committed to consideration of community needs and encouraging the community to become more involved in public education.
- Adherence – In relation to the above, should any trustee believe another member is not adhering to these expectations, she/he should first bring the matter to this individual’s attention in a respectful manner. Where a matter of this nature remains unresolved, either party may seek the assistance of the Board Chair and the Superintendent.

### Trustee and Staff Relationships

- Management Team – Trustees and staff operate as a management team. This requires an environment of trust, confidentiality, patience and responsiveness. As a result of working together, all trustees will be treated equally and will be well informed.
- Openness – Trustees and staff are open, honest and freely share information.
- Protocols – Staff feel free to contribute to discussions in private meetings. In public meetings staff will contribute to discussions at the request of the chair. Respect – Trustees and staff are respected as individuals and for their professional ability. In addition, staff will be supported by trustees in public and any criticisms will be raised in private. All individuals must be considerate of time as it relates to punctuality and brevity.
- Accountability – Staff are accountable to the board. Staff must be prepared to set the example of presenting and owning the solution to identified problems and issues.
- Adherence – In relation to the above, should any trustee believe another member is not adhering to these expectations, she/he should first bring the matter to this individual’s attention in a respectful manner. Where a matter of this nature remains unresolved, either party may seek the assistance of the Board Chair and the Superintendent.

### **Date of Board Approval: February 2009**

*Legal Reference: School Act, Section 50*

*Cross Reference: [Respectful Schools Administrative Procedure #111](#)  
[Respectful Workplace Administrative Procedure #405](#)*