

Board Policy 3

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. The oath of office taken or affirmation made by each trustee when he assumes office binds that person to work diligently and faithfully in the cause of public education.

The Board of Trustees is a corporation. The decisions of the Board in a properly constituted meeting are those of the corporation. Individual trustees exercise an effective decision making role in the context of corporate action. A trustee who is given authority by Board motion 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 Division. Individual trustees do not have the authority to direct the Division's administration and staff.

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.

The Board believes an orientation program is necessary for effective trusteeship.

1. The Division will offer an orientation program for all newly elected trustees that provides information on:
 - 1.1 Role of the Trustee and the Board;
 - 1.2 Board policy, agendas and minutes;
 - 1.3 Organizational structures and procedures of the Division;
 - 1.4 Existing Division initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;
 - 1.5 Division programs and services;
 - 1.6 Board's function as an appeal body; and
 - 1.7 Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest.

2. The Division will provide support for trustees attending Alberta School Boards Association and Public School Boards Association of Alberta sponsored orientation seminars.
3. The Board Chair and Superintendent are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the Division's orientation program for newly elected trustees. The Superintendent shall provide each trustee with access to the Board Policy Handbook and the Administrative Procedures Manual at the organizational meeting following a general election or at the first regular meeting of the Board following a by-election.
4. Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about history, functions, policies, procedures and issues.
5. A trustee handbook will be made available to all trustees.

Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees

1. Become familiar with Division policies and procedures, meeting agendas and reports in order to participate in Board business.
2. Refer queries, or issues and problems not covered by Board policy, to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
3. The trustee, upon receiving a complaint from a parent or community member about operations, may choose to refer the parent or community member back to the school or department and will inform the Superintendent of this action, or refer the matter to the Superintendent.
4. Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the Division.
5. Assist the Superintendent with counsel and advice, providing the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
6. Attend Board meetings; participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board in order to provide the best solutions possible for education within the Division.
7. Trustees have the responsibility to bring forward and advocate for local issues and concerns. When such concerns conflict with the interests of the Division, Division needs shall be paramount.

8. Trustees must vote on every Board motion, unless there is a conflict of interest, or they have permission to abstain through Board Resolution in accordance with the School Act.”
9. Support a majority vote of the Board as if the vote had been unanimous.
10. When delegated responsibility, will exercise such authority within the defined limits in a responsible and effective way.
11. Participate, subject to Board approval, in Board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the Division can be enhanced.
12. Stay current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
13. Share with fellow trustees at a Board meeting, the materials and ideas gained in an appropriate format, following a trustee development activity. Format be may oral, written or by electronic means.
14. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the Division.
15. Liaise with School Council(s) as assigned.
16. Attend Division or school community functions when possible.
17. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct. (Policy 4)
18. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Conduct to the Board Chair.

Reference: Sections 60, 61, 68, 72, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 246 School Act
Section 6 Commissioner of Oaths Act