

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

Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees

1. As a Member of the Board

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. An individual trustee derives his or her authority through the corporate entity of the Board as specified in the legislation. When given the authority to act on behalf of the Board, a trustee may act individually only as an agent of the Board. In that case the Board is responsible for that action. At all other times the Board member acting individually has only the authority and privileges given any other citizen. Individual trustees do not have the authority to direct the Division's administration and staff.

1.1. Decisions

A trustee is responsible to be well prepared to participate in the decision making process of the Board. Once the Board makes a decision, the trustee must accept and support that decision. Any attempt to change that decision must be through the appropriate procedures at legally constituted meetings.

1.2. Appeals

The Board may serve as an appeal body on administrative decisions appealed by individuals under the legislation. When approached with a problem or dispute, which may be appealed to the Board or result in legal action, the trustee must be careful not to put himself or herself in a "biased" position by discussing the matter with an individual. The individual is to be referred to the Superintendent.

1.3. Resignation

A trustee may resign by submitting his or her written resignation to the Secretary Treasurer, as corporate secretary of the Board as outlined in legislation and regulations.

1.4. Membership

The Division is an active member of the Alberta School Boards Association. Trustees are the representatives of the corporate membership.

2. As an Individual

A trustee must represent the Board responsibly in all Board-related matters with proper decorum and respect for others.

2.1. Responsibility:

- 2.1.1 A trustee has an active role in being available to and serving the public. Although chosen by the electors of a particular ward, upon election the trustee becomes responsible to the electorate of the Division as a whole and for the education of all students within the jurisdiction.
- 2.1.2 A trustee must be familiar with Board policies, meeting agendas, and reports in order to participate in Board business.
- 2.1.3 A trustee attends Board meetings prepared to participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board.
- 2.1.4 A trustee recognizes his or her fiduciary responsibility to the Division, and acts in the best interests of the Division.
- 2.1.5 A trustee respectfully brings forward and advocates for local issues.
- 2.1.6 A trustee promotes positive community engagement.
- 2.1.7 A trustee refers queries, or issues and problems not covered by Board policy, to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
- 2.1.8 A trustee refers administrative matters to the Superintendent.
- 2.1.9 A trustee participates in Board/trustee development sessions.
- 2.1.10 A trustee participates in Division or school community functions when appropriate.
- 2.1.11 A trustee is familiar with, and adheres to, the Trustee Code of Conduct.
- 2.1.12 A trustee reports violations of the Code of Conduct to the Board Chair.
- 2.1.13 A trustee shall maintain a home office at their home address to perform their duties as a trustee, and shall confirm their responsibility to maintain a home office through a signed mutual agreement with the Division.

2.2. Power

- 2.2.1 An individual trustee has no legal power on his/her own but must recognize that the public and employees may perceive residual power. A trustee must, therefore, use good judgment in clarifying when he or she is speaking as an individual Board member or on behalf of the Corporate Board.

2.3. Conflict of Interest

- 2.3.1 The trustee must declare any conflict of interest between personal life and his or her position on the Board, and abstain from voting by leaving the room during debate and motion when appropriate. Examples of conflicts of interest include, but are not exhaustive of, the following: business interests, benefits for spouse, personally benefiting financially either directly or indirectly, etc.

2.4. Communication

- 2.4.1 The trustee must represent the perceived concerns or needs of the community to the Board or Superintendent as appropriate, and accurately communicate the Board's decisions to the community.

- 2.5. Confidentiality
 - 2.5.1 The trustee must keep Board in-camera/closed meeting information confidential. The trustee must not use Board information for their own benefit or advantage.
- 2.6. Concerns
 - 2.6.1 Concerns expressed by students, parents or teachers are to be directed to the appropriate person in the organization for resolution. The trustee will inform the Superintendent of this action. Concerns that trustees may have with the operation of the Division must be voiced at a Board meeting.
- 2.7. School Visits
 - 2.7.1 As a courtesy, the trustee is to advise the Principal of his or her visit and its purpose. The visit may not be for the purpose of evaluation, or to exercise any perceived influence on behalf of a particular individual or issue.
- 2.8. Division Staff
 - 2.8.1 Teachers are employees of the Board and are responsible to the Board through the Superintendent or his/her designate, which at the school site is generally the Principal.
 - 2.8.2 Trustees, (while maintaining normal social friendly contact with staff), must remember that they may be perceived to be a person deserving special consideration. Trustees must be sensitive to the dual role and the politics of their position. Staff who express concerns or make requests of trustees are to be referred to their principals or other established channels used to address issues.
- 2.9. School Councils
 - 2.9.1 School Councils are mandated and directed by legislation. The Division supports and encourages School Councils as a vehicle for parental and community involvement in school culture and direction. The trustee acts as the information liaison between the Board and the School Council. trustees need to use discretion when sharing information that may be controversial or sensitive.
 - 2.9.2 School Councils have an advisory role in the direction of the school and the Principal. The Principal is responsible to the Board through the Superintendent, and not to the School Council, nor to an individual trustee.
- 2.10. Help
 - 2.10.1 If the trustee is unsure of his or her role in a particular circumstance, clarification is to be requested from the Board Chair or the Superintendent.
- 2.11. Orientation
 - 2.11.1 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.
 - 2.11.2 The Board believes an orientation program is necessary for effective

trusteeship. All trustees are expected to attend all aspects of the orientation program.

- 2.11.3 The Board Chair and Superintendent are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the Division's orientation program for trustees.
- 2.11.4 The Division will provide support within the Board governance budget for trustees attending provincial association sponsored orientation seminars.
- 2.11.5 Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about history, functions, policies, procedures, and issues.

Reference: Section 33,34,51,52,53,64,67,85,86,87,88,89,90,91,92,93,94,95,96,222 Education Act
Section 16 The Notaries and Commissioners Act

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