

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. Trustees are elected by the voters and the ratepayers that support the High Prairie School Division (HPSD). The oath of office or affirmation taken by each trustee upon assuming office compels 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 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 Division. Individual trustees do not have the authority to direct the Division's administration and staff.

To ensure all trustees have equal access to the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective, each member is required to participate in an orientation training program. The Division will offer an orientation program for all newly elected trustees that will provide information including but not limited to:

- Role of the trustee and the Board;
- Organizational structures and procedures of the Division;
- Board policy, agendas and minutes;
- Existing Division initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;
- Division programs and services;
- Board's function as an appeal body;
- Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest; and
- Professional development requirements, expectations, supports and resources.

General Duties of Individual Trustees

1. Politician

- 1.1. Trustees, as policy makers and legislators, are politicians, not by the common definition associated with partisan politics, but as members of a governmental unit charged with the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the school division in a way that is representative of the communities served.
- 1.2. Trustees are responsible to their electorate through the democratic process. They must be highly visible and skilled at diplomacy and public relations as they deal with general community and stakeholders.
- 1.3. The political process is the process by which a community makes decisions about its goals, priorities, processes, and allocation of resources and the means by which it will resolve its conflicts.
- 1.4. Trustees are expected to be cognizant of provincial, national, and international issues and trends in education.

2. Goal Setter

- 2.1. The trustee, through the Board, provides leadership to the system by setting goals, statements of purpose, and directions, which serve to identify the results the Board wishes the system to achieve. If a Board is not continually studying its community and society needs, the school system will continue to educate its students in a manner which prepares them better for the past than the future. It is the trustee's responsibility to ensure that students' education opportunities and experiences remain in step with today's world and prepares students to enter, engage, and find success with the world of tomorrow.

3. Planner

- 3.1. To guide the system toward the achievement of its goals, the Board must plan the allocation of its resources. The trustee, as a planner will be faced with setting priorities in light of community wishes, changing needs, resources available and sound educational practice. This planning will necessitate the delegation of duties to Division administration and staff. The quality of planning will determine the success of goal achievement.

4. Evaluator

- 4.1. The trustee, as evaluator, must ensure that policies are within the parameters of the Board's authority, consistent with goals, compatible with other policies, implemented in a fair and just manner, and effective in achieving intended outcomes. In addition, the trustee is constantly evaluating the information received before decisions are made. Trustees must constantly appraise the system to determine its present development relative to expressed goals. The appraisal function is an important on-going activity that allows the trustee to assess the total system and make adjustments when necessary.

5. Financial Planner

- 5.1. The Board operates within specific financial parameters. The trustee recognizes that the wishes of all cannot be realized, and that astute long-term and annual financial planning is an essential part of trusteeship. The role of the trustee is to assess the needs of the system and to decide what can be achieved with the resources available. The annual budget is a statement to administration, the schools and the public that the Board is accountable for the dollars spent. In the eyes of the public, the adoption of the budget is one of the most important decisions a Board makes; it is an opportunity for the trustee to demonstrate to the electorate willingness and ability to shoulder the responsibility that comes with being a member of the Board.

6. Policy Maker

- 6.1. A responsibility of the trustee, through the Board, is to develop policy which will guide the administration and other employees toward achieving Division goals. Policy-making requires recognition of the needs for specific policies and often the anticipation of those needs. Policies create the framework and organizational culture within which the staff perform their duties. The trustee, as policy-maker recognizes that the task of implementing policy is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer. Policy development is also a process which allows for systematic review by trustees of the Division's objectives and plans.

7. Legislator

- 7.1. Many acts of a Board have the status of law in a jurisdiction. When a Board sets the school year or develops a policy on corporal punishment, these actions are laws which govern the conduct of students and staff. Other Board actions directly impact members of the public. The trustee, as legislator, must carefully consider the effects the Board's laws will have on all the members of the community it serves.

8. Communicator

- 8.1. To effectively meet the responsibility of trusteeship, the trustee must interact effectively with the many diverse individuals and groups who are invested in education. The electorate must be made aware that their concerns and wishes will be heard and in turn must be informed as to the actions taken to deal with them. Effective communication is essential between board members as in reality the corporate decision determines the actions of the Division.
- 8.2. Expectations need to be clearly communicated to staff. Different points of view must be presented, considered, and evaluated. In short, communication is an integral part of trusteeship, a necessary skill, and a critical obligation.

9. Public Education Advocate

- 9.1. Schooling is one of the most important activities that any community undertakes. The role of the trustee is to keep the positive image of schooling before the community, both to ensure that it is given a high priority by the public and to keep the community aware of its accomplishments. The image must be tempered by reality because the image is not only presented for the purpose of enhancing the reputation of schooling in general, but also for the purpose of identifying and solving problems when necessary.
- 9.2. Trustees, in partnership with health, welfare and social agencies, will collaborate to determine how to meet the diverse needs of students and families.

10. Information Receiver

- 10.1. Having reliable and accurate information forms the basis for sound decisions. Trustees often utilize the Board's staff through their Executive Officer to research information; however, only the corporate board has the right to demand information. The public may provide input and receive information through formal procedures established by policy, attendance and participation at Board meetings, surveys prepared by staff, and informal contact with trustees and staff. Information may also be available from fellow trustees from other jurisdictions that have considered similar problems. The Alberta School Boards Association and Public School Boards' Association provides services to trustees by organizing workshops and seminars and by providing Boards with consultative services in legal, labour relations, and educational matters upon request.

11. Information Disseminator

- 11.1. Decisions made at the Board table must in turn be communicated through procedures established by Board policy. A trustee may be expected to communicate these decisions on a less formal basis to those affected by the decisions. Communication policies will identify those occasions when an official Board spokesperson will deal with issues and announcements.

12. Adjudicator

- 12.1. Policy implementation is usually delegated to the Board's administrative staff. From time to time, staff members, parents, students, and other members of the community may appeal to the Board if they feel decisions and/or the procedures used affect them in a prejudicial manner. The trustee, as an adjudicator, must set aside personal concerns and make judgments that are perceived by those concerned to be fair and just.
- 12.2. The Board may also delegate to a committee the task of adjudicating policy disputes.
- 12.3. As a member of such a committee the trustee's role is determined by the powers granted to the committee by the Board.
- 12.4. Sound policy-making procedures can minimize the number of occasions when the trustee is called upon to act as an adjudicator.

13. Commissioner of Oaths

- 13.1. Each trustee, upon assuming the office of trustee, automatically acquires the status of a commissioner of oaths for oaths pursuant to the Commissioner of Oaths Act and will be provided with a copy of the Commissioner of Oaths handbook.

14. Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees:

- 14.1. The trustee shall:
 - 14.1.1. Become familiar with Division policies and procedures, meeting agendas, and reports in order to participate in Board business.
 - 14.1.2. For the purpose of this policy, become familiar with and adhere to Division 5 "Conflict of Interest" of the *Education Act*.
 - 14.1.2.1. Declare Conflict of Interest
The Board believes that Trustees, or their families, should not gain benefits or monetary rewards because of their position as a Trustee except for any allowances, honorarium or remuneration approved by the Board for duties performed.

- 14.1.2.1.1. The Board expects that each Trustee will:
 - 14.1.2.1.1.1. accept sole responsibility for declaring conflict of interest.
 - 14.1.2.1.1.2. be knowledgeable with Sections 85-96 of the Education Act.
 - 14.1.2.1.1.3. advise the recording secretary of the declaration.
 - 14.1.2.1.1.4. declare any personal conflict of interest at the point in the agenda where the matter arises.
 - 14.1.2.1.1.5. absent themselves from the Board table when in conflict and shall leave the meeting room until the discussion and voting on the matter are concluded.
 - 14.1.2.1.1.6. refrain from participating in discussion, debate or voting on any issues in which a personal conflict of interest is declared.
- 14.1.2.1.2. The recording secretary will record in the minutes:
 - 14.1.2.1.2.1. the Trustee's declaration; and
 - 14.1.2.1.2.2. the Trustee's abstention from the debate and the vote.
- 14.1.3. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Ethics, Policy 4.
 - 14.1.3.1. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Ethics to the Board during a closed session.
- 14.1.4. Refer matters not covered by Board policy, to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
- 14.1.5. Refer administrative matters to the Superintendent.
 - 14.1.5.1. The trustee, upon receiving a complaint or an inquiry from a parent, staff member or community member about operations, will refer the parent, staff member or community member to address their complaint or inquiry to the source. (See Appendix 3.2 – Protocol for Public Concerns) That being, back to the teacher, Principal, or department, identifying the route of appeal to take if dissatisfied with the response at the first level and will inform the Superintendent or designate of this action. All problems or inquiries should be made closest to the source of origin and move up the organization if the issue cannot be solved or the inquiry cannot be answered. For example, a question about protocol in a classroom should be addressed first with the teacher, then the principal then referred to the superintendent's office. Only then can the issue or concern be appealed to the Board of Trustees as per Policy 7 – Board Operations (Delegations to Board Meetings).
 - 14.1.5.2. Personnel matters shall be brought to the Superintendent only.
- 14.1.6. Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to the Trustee's attention that might affect the Division.
- 14.1.7. Attend Regular Board meetings and the meetings of Committees on which they serve. 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 Division. (See Policy 8 - Committees of the Board)
- 14.1.8. Support the decisions of the Board and refrain from making any statements that may give the impression that such a statement reflects the corporate opinion of the Board when it does not. When delegated responsibility, will exercise such authority within the defined limits in a responsible and effective way.
- 14.1.9. Participate in in-service opportunities in order to ensure that the appropriate skills, knowledge and understandings are acquired.
- 14.1.10. Strive to develop a positive learning and working culture both within the Board and the Division.
- 14.1.11. Attend school council meetings regularly and Council of School Council (CoSC) meetings, other invited events, and Community Engagement activities whenever possible.
- 14.1.12. Perform periodic Trustee tours of schools.

Legal Reference

Education Act, Sections 53, 88, 86, 87, 85, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96

Cross Reference

[Board Policy 3 Appendix 3.1 – Services, Materials and Equipment Provided to Trustees](#)

[Board Policy 3 Appendix 3.2 – Protocol for Public Concerns](#)

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