

## 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 legislated mandate. The oath of office taken by each trustee when they assume office binds that person to work diligently and faithfully in the cause of public education. A trustee must first and foremost be concerned with the interests of the school board.

The Board of Education is a corporation. The decisions of the Board, in a properly constituted meeting, are those of the corporation. 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. School board trustees collectively and individually have a public duty to carry out their responsibilities and the work of the school board in good faith and with reasonable diligence. Trustees have one overarching responsibility – a shared public duty to advance the work of the school board. A trustee's fiduciary duties are owed to the school board (not to themselves, their family or friends) which is, in turn, accountable to the electorate.

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.

- The Board shall indemnify a trustee in accordance with Policy 20 Indemnification By-Law

### **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. Support a majority vote of the Board to advance the work of the board and monitor progress to ensure decisions are implemented.
3. Refer governance queries, issues and problems not covered by Board policy to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
4. Refer administrative matters to the Superintendent.
5. 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 back to the teacher, Principal, or District Office personnel and will inform the Superintendent or designate of this action.

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. Attend committee meetings or meetings as a Board representative, as assigned, and report to the Board in a timely manner.
10. When delegated responsibility, will exercise such authority within the defined terms of reference in a responsible and effective way.
11. Participate in Board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the District can be enhanced.
12. Share the materials and ideas gained from a trustee development activity with fellow trustees at the next available opportunity.
13. Stay current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
14. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the District.
15. Attend District or school functions when invited and when possible.
16. Continue to carry out duties with integrity and responsibility during an election period.
17. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct.

### **Orientation**

As a result of elections, the Board may experience changes in membership. To ensure continuity and facilitate a 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 approved plans.

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

1. The District will offer an orientation program for all trustees following an election that provides information on:
  - 1.1 Role of the trustee and the Board;
  - 1.2 Organizational structures and procedures of the District;
  - 1.3 Board policy, agendas and minutes;
  - 1.4 Existing District initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;

- 1.5 District programs and services;
  - 1.6 Board's function as an appeal body;
  - 1.7 Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest; and
  - 1.8 Trustee remuneration and expenses.
2. The District will provide financial support for trustees to attend British Columbia School Trustees Association sponsored orientation seminars.
  3. The Board Chair and Superintendent are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the District's orientation program for trustees. The Superintendent shall ensure each trustee has access to the Board Policy Handbook and 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 and procedures.

*Legal Reference: Sections 49, 50, 52, 65, 85 School Act  
Local Government Act*

*SD No. 40 (New Westminster)*

*Adopted: May 30, 2017*

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Modification to this document is not permitted without prior written consent from SD No. 40 (New Westminster)