

Policy 3

ROLE OF THE TRUSTEE

Trustees are elected in accordance with the *Local Government Act*. The British Columbia *School Act* prescribes eligibility requirements for running for the office of school trustee. The Board of Education of School District No. 71 is a corporate body elected by citizens of the Comox Valley.

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 board in good faith and with reasonable diligence. Trustees have one (1) 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.

The trustee must balance the governance role with the representative role participating in decision making that benefits the whole district while representing the interest of their community.

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.

Trustee Rights

Within the parameters of board policy and bylaws, trustees have a right to:

1. Voice opinions and perspectives in an open and respectful manner, and have such opinions and perspectives respected by fellow trustees and district staff;
2. Represent the interests of their constituents while maintaining a district-wide perspective;
3. Vote on issues free from pressure or lobbying by other trustees and/or district staff;
4. Receive remuneration and expense allowances as determined by the board and in compliance with the *School Act*;
5. Be provided with an orientation session when newly elected;

6. Request and receive information from the superintendent of schools or designate pertinent to district policy and operations; previous, current or pending board or board committee activities; and any other legitimate assistance pertaining to the role of the trustee or the business of the board; and,
7. Attend well-organized and purposeful meetings.

Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

Within the parameters of board policy and bylaws, trustees have a responsibility to:
Make a prescribed oath of office,

1. 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. Those trustees interested will have the opportunity to Chair the open and closed Committee of the Whole meetings on a rotational basis.

Note: *The School Act* indicates, 52 (2) If a trustee is continuously absent from board meetings for a period of three (3) consecutive months, unless the absence is because of illness or with the leave of the board, the office of the member is deemed to be vacant and the person who held the office is disqualified from holding office as a trustee until the next general school election.

2. Be aware of and knowledgeable about the issues that require board decisions and attend orientation sessions for new trustees conducted by district staff and the B.C. School Trustees' Association (BCSTA).
3. Commit to the importance of the public education system in a democratic society.
4. Adhere to the direction of the chair of the board, and chair of a board committee, while attending meetings.
5. Adhere to confidentiality requirements regarding personnel and property issues as well as other matters discussed and determined at in-camera meetings.
6. Respect that the chair of the board or appropriate district staff communicate on behalf of the board, and when making statements to the media, PACs or employee groups make it clear that these are individual statements only and not necessarily the opinion of the board.
7. Become familiar with district policies, meeting agendas and reports in order to participate in board business.
8. Support a majority vote of the board to advance the work of the board and monitor progress to ensure decisions are implemented.
9. Refer governance queries, issues and problems not covered by board policy to the board for corporate discussion and decision.
10. Refer administrative matters to the superintendent.

11. Trustee contacts with staff shall be through the superintendent.
12. 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 of this action.
13. Keep the board and the superintendent informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to their attention that might affect the district.
14. Provide the superintendent with counsel and advice, giving the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
15. Attend external committee meetings or meetings as a board representative, as assigned, and report to the board in a timely manner.
16. When delegated responsibility, will exercise such authority within the defined terms of reference in a responsible and effective way.
17. Participate in board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the district can be enhanced.
18. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the board and the district.
19. Continue to carry out duties with integrity and responsibility during an election period.
20. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct.

Trustee 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 (BCSTA) 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.

Legal Reference: Sections 49, 50, 52, 65, 85 *School Act*
Local Government Act
A Guide for School Trustee Candidates 2018 BCSTA

Adopted: September 2019

**SERVICES, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT
PROVIDED TO TRUSTEES**

The following shall be made available to trustees upon their election to the board:

Equipment

- Ipad
- Cell phone or the option to use their own and receive a monthly phone allowance

Services

- Technology support

District equipment shall be considered the property of the district and shall be returned to the district at the conclusion of the term of office. Should the trustee wish to purchase the equipment at the end of their term this may be done at the discounted value.

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