

HANDOUT 7.1: The Role of School Trustees

A trustee's role is to maintain a focus on student achievement and well-being, and to participate in making decisions that benefit the entire district while representing the interests of their community.



TRUSTEES ESTABLISH THE DISTRICT'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The board is responsible for setting the overall direction for the school district. Trustees work together to establish the board's strategic plan, which sets the direction of the district for parents, the public and the superintendent, and lays out the priorities and strategic direction of the school district.

The board ensures that the superintendent carries out responsibilities for implementing the board's strategic plan. The superintendent holds the responsibility for the day-to-day work in this area or the delegation of the work to various people and groups within the organization.



TRUSTEES ARE FINANCIAL STEWARDS

School trustees have important responsibilities for approval and oversight of school district financial decisions. One of the most important aspects of governance for trustees is to connect district goals, strategic planning and economic realities, through the establishment of the school district's annual budget.

The board oversees development of a strategic plan and the allocation of resources to support that plan. The board ensures the budget and staff allocations are in alignment with the plan and the identified goals that are intended to improve outcomes for students.



TRUSTEES ARE A PART OF A TEAM

A trustee is a member of a team: the board of education. While the board has the authority to make decisions or to take action; individual trustees in and of themselves do not have this authority.

While healthy debate is an important aspect of good governance, once the board has voted, it is the board's decision and an individual trustee's responsibility to act in a manner that promotes and upholds the board's decision and to communicate the board's decision back to the public.



TRUSTEES ARE COMMUNITY LEADERS

Trustees work with their board colleagues and with other community partners to ensure that all the students within the board's jurisdiction have equal opportunities to reach their maximum potential.

While members of the board act as representatives of their community, their primary job is to participate in policy making and strategic planning that are in the interests of all of the district's students, and are grounded in promoting student achievement and well-being. Trustees balance the governance role with the representative role, participating in decision-making that benefits the whole board while representing the interests of their community.



BOARDS ARE EMPLOYERS

As employers of all school district staff, boards have a legal responsibility for employee relations with their management, teaching and support staff. For unionized staff, the terms and conditions of the relationship are established through legislation, board policy, and decisions made through the collective bargaining process and in collective agreements.