

HANDOUT 7.1: The Role of School Trustees



THE SCHOOL TRUSTEE IS A MEMBER OF A TEAM

Only the team (the board of trustees), not an individual trustee, has the authority to make decisions or take action on behalf of a school board. A board of trustees must think about the whole board when making any decision. Trustees are required to support the implementation of any board decisions (motions, resolutions).



TRUSTEES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ESTABLISHING POLICY DIRECTION

Policies set out the expectations about what should happen or how services are to be provided within the school board. Policies are rules. The board of trustees ensures that the Director of Education carries out responsibilities for implementing the board's policies.



TRUSTEES, AS MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PROVINCE

The board of trustees is answerable to the provincial government for the proper conduct of their duties and powers. This includes carrying out provincial policy and the use of provincially allocated funds.



TRUSTEES ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS

As elected officials, trustees must balance the demands of the community with the duties required by the provincial government. Trustees are required to consult with parents, students and community members on the board's multi-year plan and bring the concerns of these groups to the attention of the board.



SCHOOL TRUSTEES ARE COMMUNITY LEADERS

Trustees build and maintain relationships with the entire community – not just their neighbours or families with school-aged children. They work with their colleagues and other community partners to ensure that all students within the board's geographic area have equal opportunities to reach their full potential regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances. Trustees demonstrate their leadership in the following key areas:

- Establishing the board's multi-year strategic plan and educational vision
- Setting goals for student achievement, well-being and equity
- Monitoring progress against the board's strategic goals and priority areas
- Establishing a respectful, caring, professional climate throughout the school board
- Creating collaborative relationships inside the board and across the community
- Hiring the Director of Education and holding them accountable as they lead, execute and monitor activities
- Ensuring effective supervision of the board's financial resources
- Allocating resources in ways that ensure equity of outcomes and demonstrate accountability
- Championing equity in education

The role of school trustees involves representing all of their constituents, including marginalized communities (e.g., Indigenous communities, newcomers/immigrants, people coming from low socio-economic backgrounds) and bringing the voices of multiple groups to the board table.



TRUSTEES HOLD THEMSELVES RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CONDUCT

In exercising their role, trustees are required to comply with the board's Code of Conduct, which sets out standards that govern the ethical behaviour of trustees. This includes the expectation to act with integrity and to conduct themselves in a manner that enhances public confidence in Ontario's publicly funded education system.