

So You Want to be a Trustee

Key Points for Prospective Trustees

Why School Boards Matter

Representation and voice

Bring community values, priorities and needs into public decision-making.

Participation and engagement

Listen, engage and strengthen dialogue between the district and its communities.

Stewardship of public education

Protect the long-term interests, integrity and sustainability of the public system.

Accountability and transparency

Make decisions through visible, open and understandable processes.

Legitimacy and consent

Exercise authority entrusted through democratic election.

Collective governance

Debate respectfully, decide as a Board and support the will of the Board.

What a Board Actually Does

Set Strategic Direction



Establish priorities and create alignment and coherence.

Monitor System Performance



Review evidence to provide assurance and oversight.

Ensure Compliance and Accountability



Meet statutory, policy and fiduciary obligations.

Engage and Report Transparently



Consult, engage and report publicly.

Advocate for Public Education



Exercise the Board's voice locally, regionally and provincially.

The Individual Trustee

Trustees may run from different starting points: governance improvement, community advocacy, a specific issue, or broader civic involvement.

Once elected, each trustee has one voice within the collective decision-making authority of the Board.

Effective Boards align different motivations around a shared commitment to public education and student success.

GOVERNANCE, READINESS AND THE REALITY OF THE ROLE

Governance vs. Operations

GOVERNANCE | The Board

- Sets broad direction
- Approves policy, plans and budgets
- Asks for evidence and assurance
- Makes decisions in public
- Holds the Superintendent accountable

OPERATIONS | Superintendent and Staff

- Develops recommendations
- Manages people, programs and services
- Works through operational complexity
- Implements Board direction
- Reports progress and results

The Reality of the Role

The commitment extends beyond public Board meetings. Trustees prepare for and participate in in-camera meetings, strategic planning, hearings, consultations, PAC meetings, regional and provincial sessions, and working groups. The role also includes public scrutiny, difficult conversations and collective decisions.

Questions to Consider Before Running

- What is my motivation to run, and what do I hope to accomplish?
- Am I prepared to take a system-wide view and consider the interests of all students?
- Can I participate in respectful public debate and then support the will of the Board?
- How will I manage community expectations while respecting established district processes?
- Do I have the time required for sustained public service?
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Key Considerations

Govern for the whole system
Stay connected to community
Ask governance-level questions
Respect the Board–Superintendent partnership
Exercise stewardship with ethics, fairness and courage