



Policy 3 – Role of the Trustee

Background

Trustees are elected in accordance with the *Local Government Act*. The *School Act* prescribes eligibility requirements for running for the office of school trustee.

Trustees are members of a corporate board responsible for governing the school district to improve student achievement. Trustees shall act in good faith, comply with the *School Act* and discharge their duties with care, skill, diligence, and integrity, in accordance with their oath of office.

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 of Education of School District No. 36 (Surrey) (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.

The decisions of the Board in a properly constituted meeting are those of the corporation. 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 17 - Indemnification Bylaw.

Orientation

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

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

The Surrey School District No. 36 (the “District”) will provide an orientation program for newly elected trustees to support effective governance and continuity of the District. Trustees are expected to participate in orientation sessions and review the materials provided.

The orientation program will provide information on:

1. Role of the trustees, role the Board, and role of management;
2. Organizational structures and procedures of the District;
3. Board policies, agenda setting process, meeting proceedings and decorum;
4. Existing District strategic plan, annual reports, budgets, budget process, financial statements, capital plans, key initiatives and other long-range plans;
5. District programs and services;
6. Board's function as an appeal body; and
7. Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities regarding conflict of interest, freedom of information and protection of privacy, and human rights.

The Board Chairperson, the Superintendent and the Secretary Treasurer are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the District's orientation program for trustees.

Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about the history, functions, policies and procedures of the District.

The Board governs the District on a continuing basis. Changes in Board membership do not interrupt the authority or strategic direction of the Board. All duly adopted policies, bylaws, and resolutions remain in effect unless amended or repealed by formal Board action. The Board is committed to continuity in long-term initiatives and strategic priorities across election cycles.

Responsibilities

1. Specific responsibilities of individual trustees
 - a. Become familiar with District policies and procedures, meeting agendas, and reports to effectively participate in Board business.
 - b. Refer governance queries, issues and problems not covered by Board policy to the Board for consideration.
 - c. Refer queries, issues or problems raised by a parent or community member about a school or school policy to the Superintendent or designate.
 - d. Keep the Board and the Superintendent informed of all matters that might affect the District.
 - e. Provide the Superintendent with counsel and advice, giving the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
 - f. Attend meetings of the Board; participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board in order to provide the best possible solutions for the education of children within the District.
 - g. Support the decisions of the Board.
 - h. When delegated responsibility, exercise such authority within the defined limits in a responsible and effective way.
 - i. Participate in Board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the District can be enhanced.
 - j. Share the materials and ideas gained from a trustee professional development activity with fellow trustees at the next available opportunity.

- k. Stay current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
- l. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the District.
- m. Become familiar with and adhere to the *School Act* and all relevant legislation.
- n. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct and the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.
- o. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Conduct to the Board during a closed session.

References

Local Government Act, R.S.B.C., 2015, c .1.

Public Interest Disclosure Act, S.B.C., c. 22.

School Act, R.S.B.C., 1996, c. 412.

Approved: June 10, 2026