

## Policy 3

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### ROLE OF THE TRUSTEE

The role of the trustee is to contribute to the Board as it carries out its mandate in order to achieve its mission and goals. The oath of office taken by each trustee when s/he assumes office binds that person to work diligently and faithfully in the cause of public education.

Alberta's Catholic Schools exist to offer Catholic parents a distinct system of education for their children. The trustees of a Catholic school board are empowered by the community to fulfill both the educational requirements set forth by the government and the vision of the faith community.

This presents Catholic school trustees with a unique, dual challenge. They must ensure that students are provided an education, which includes literacy skills, the ability to interpret and communicate information, analyze quickly and creatively, and solve problems effectively. At the same time, a Catholic school board must ensure that Catholic values and principles are reflected at all times in its policies and practices.

As leaders in the faith community, Catholic trustees require an understanding, a willingness to grow and a commitment to bearing daily witness to the faith. To meet this challenge, Catholic trustees are entrusted with certain denominational school rights, powers and privileges enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. They exercise these rights with the religious guidance of parish and diocesan authorities.

The Board of Trustees is a corporation. 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.

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 Board believes an orientation program is necessary for effective trusteeship.

1. The Division will offer an orientation program for all newly elected trustees that provide information on:
  - 1.1 Role of the trustee and the Board;
  - 1.2 Organizational structures and procedures of the Division;
  - 1.3 Board policy, agendas and minutes;

- 1.4 Existing Division initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;
  - 1.5 Division programs and services;
  - 1.6 Board's function as an appeal body; and
  - 1.7 Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest.
2. The Division will provide financial support for trustees to attend Alberta School Boards Association and Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association sponsored orientation seminars.
  3. The Board Chair and Superintendent are responsible for developing and implementing the Division's orientation program for newly elected trustees. The Superintendent shall provide each trustee with access to the Board Policy Handbook and the Administrative Procedures Manual at the organizational meeting following a general election or at the first regular meeting of the Board following a by-election.
  4. Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about the history, functions, policies, procedures and issues.

#### **Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees**

1. Become familiar with Division policies and procedures, meeting agendas, and reports in order to participate in Board business.
2. Refer queries, or issues and problems not covered by Board policy, to the Board for corporate discussion and decision.
3. Refer administrative matters to the Superintendent. The trustee, upon receiving a complaint from a parent or community member about operations, will refer the parent or community member back to the school or department and will inform the Superintendent of this action.
4. Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the Division.
5. Assist the Superintendent with counsel and advice, providing the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the community.
6. Attend meetings of the Board; participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board in order to provide the best solutions possible for education within the Division.
7. Model the values and requirements of a practicing Catholic and participate in parish and church activities.
8. Ensure that Catholic values and principles are reflected at all times in the Board's policies and practices.

9. Support the decisions of the Board and refrain from making any statements that may give the impression that such a statement reflects the corporate opinion of the Board when it does not. A trustee acting individually has only the authority and status of any other citizen of the Division.
10. When delegated responsibility, exercise such authority within the defined limits in a responsible and effective way.
11. Participate, subject to Board approval, in Board/trustee development sessions so that the quality of leadership and service in the Division can be enhanced.
12. Stay current with respect to provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
13. Share the materials and ideas gained with fellow trustees at the Board meeting immediately following a trustee development activity.
14. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the Division.
15. Attend Division or school community functions when possible.
16. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Ethics.
17. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Ethics to the Board during an in-camera session.

Legal Reference: Section 60, 61, 68, 76, School Act  
Section 6, Commissioner of Oaths Act