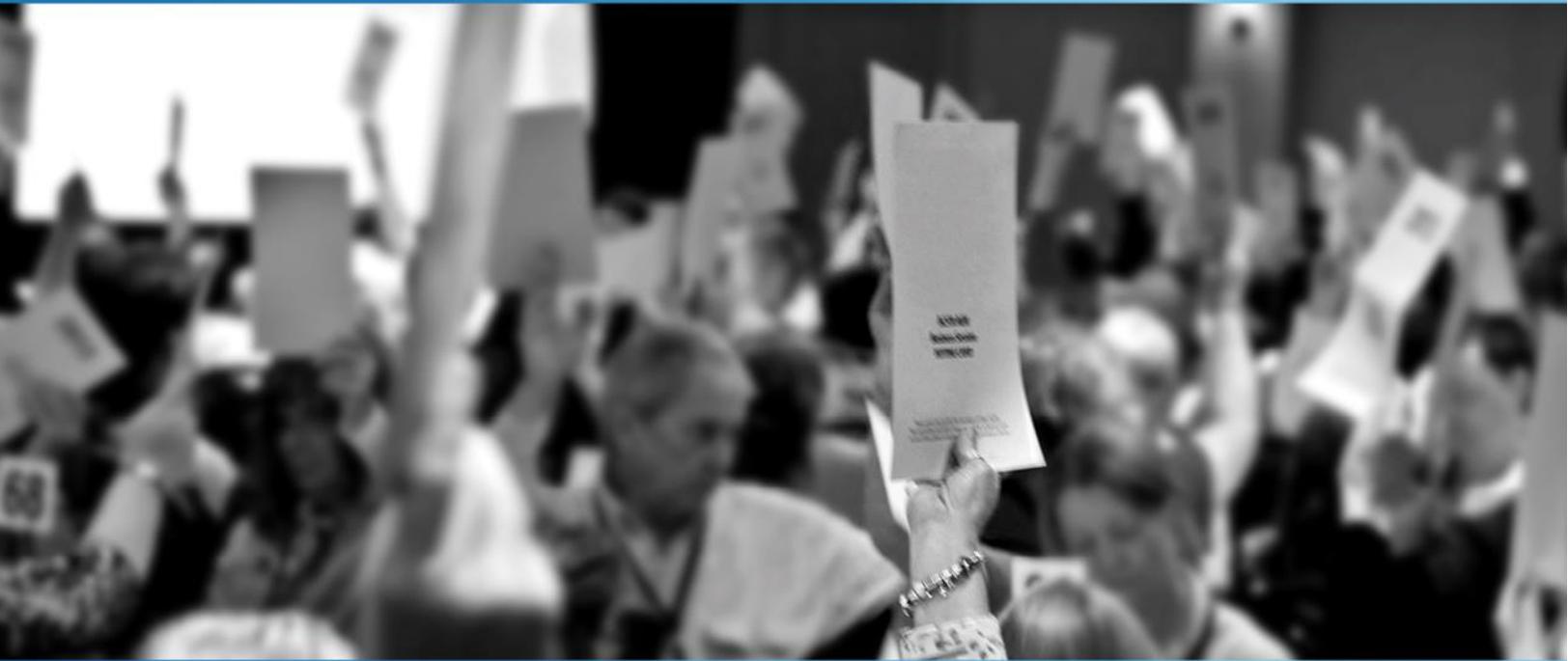




British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

New Trustee Orientation Checklist



INTRODUCTION

The role of a school trustee is both rewarding and challenging. The position requires commitment, time, and knowledge if it is to have the positive impact on students and the community that is intended. Individual trustees, elected by local constituents, are responsible for representing the interests of community members, their children and the communities in which they live.

Collectively, trustees form the board of education that is charged with:

- The governance and oversight of the school district, a significant public institution with an operating budget totalling millions of dollars, and assets in the form of buildings, property and equipment of extremely high value, and
- Ensuring local students receive the best Kindergarten-to-Grade-12 (K-12) education possible.

Fulfilling these responsibilities, requires considerable knowledge. The checklist below represents some of the most important areas of understanding for a new trustee. It is accompanied by a resource that provides a very brief introduction to these areas of knowledge as well as references for where to find information in more depth.

Initial orientation and ongoing professional learning opportunities for trustees will be presented both through the administration in each school district and through the BCSTA. This guide is meant to be a starting point for the learning pathway of a trustee. Trustee Academies offered by the BCSTA, including one for new trustees, and sessions planned in each district for new boards of education will provide another layer of orientation. Over the course of the four-year term of a trustee, more professional learning opportunities will be provided through the BCSTA and school districts.

New Trustees will have opportunities to become more involved with the BCSTA and its many professional learning and other opportunities for participation. The Mission of the BCSTA is to support and advocate for effective public Boards of Education in British Columbia.

CHECKLIST

What do trustees need to know as they begin to fulfill their roles as members of a board of education?

THE BOARD'S AUTHORITY

- Key provisions of the School Act
- Mandates of boards of education, and of the provincial and federal governments, with respect to K-12 education
- Board powers and responsibilities under the School Act
- Co-governance with the Ministry of Education

THE BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Fiduciary

- Protecting the interests, image and credibility of the school district, to ensure its financial viability and to act in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations and governing the board and its actions

Strategic

- Developing a vision for the students under the board's jurisdiction so they are provided with every opportunity to succeed in school, and to give their parents confidence that schools provide a caring and safe environment for their children
- Oversight of the school district's human, financial, and capital resources to ensure the vision is realized

Financial and Facilities

- The prudent use of financial resources, planning to reach goals and objectives
- Establishing and monitoring budgets, including expenditures and reserves
- Long-term facility planning

As Employer

- The role of the board with the superintendent and other exempt staff
- The role of BCPSEA
- Employee groups, including collective bargaining

Leadership and Engagement

- Responsibility to represent the public's voice in publicly-funded education
- Community consultation and engagement
- Working with Indigenous communities
- Dealing with inquiries and concerns
- The role of advocacy

THE BOARD'S OPERATIONS

Governance vs Operations

- The difference between the role of the board and the role of its senior staff

Board Meetings and Procedures

- Essential procedural aspects of meetings
- Characteristics of effective meetings

Board Policy and Bylaw Development and Implementation

- Board of education policy
- Bylaws

Conflict of Interest

- The definition of trustee conflict of interest and how it is addressed in the School Act

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTEXT

Trustees will be supported by their administrative staff to find out more about specific district topics. Areas that are important to understand in a school district context include:

- Strategic plan
- Educational and instructional scene
- Indigenous education
- Finances
- Human resources
- Facilities
- Communications
- Trustee conduct