



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

New Trustee Orientation Resource



INTRODUCTION

Fulfilling the responsibilities of a trustee requires considerable knowledge. This resource represents some of the most important areas of understanding for a new trustee.

THE BOARD'S AUTHORITY

Trustees and the boards of education they form in British Columbia derive their authority from the School Act.

Key provisions of the School Act

The *School Act* makes it very clear that a board of education is a corporate body, and that its rights, duties and powers reside with the board and not with individual trustees ([School Act section 65](#)). All decisions of the board must be made by bylaw or resolution at a legally constituted meeting of the board of education. The *School Act* provides boards with the “power and capacity of a natural person of full capacity” so long as the power is used to carry out powers, functions and duties under the *School Act* (sections [85](#) and [166.12](#)).

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 9. Legal Accountability, Board Status, **Board Powers and Responsibilities under the School Act**

Mandates of boards of education, and of the provincial and federal governments, with respect to K-12 education

The mandate of public boards of education in B.C. is articulated in various sources, the most important of these being the [School Act](#). Other resources that address the mandate of boards of education and the provincial government include [The Statement of Education Policy Order](#) and [The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning](#). For example, *The Statement of Education Policy Order* describes the duties, rights and responsibilities of boards of education as follows:

“School Boards: have a duty to govern districts and their schools in accordance with specified powers in a fiscally responsible and cost-effective manner. They have a responsibility to ensure that schools provide students with opportunities for a quality education; to set education policies that reflect the aspirations of the community and that are consistent with overall provincial guidelines; to provide leadership and encouragement to schools and the community; to cooperate with the community and social service agencies in the delivery of non-educational support services to students; and to focus on the following areas of district concern: (1) implementation of provincial and local education programs; (2) school finance and facilities; (3) student access and achievement; (4) teaching performance; and (5) accountability to parents, taxpayers, the community and to the Province.”

One board of education is markedly different from the others in B.C. The [Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique](#) (also known as CSF, Francophone Education Authority or School District #93) is the French-language board of education for all francophone schools located in British Columbia. Unlike the other boards of education in British Columbia, this board's territorial jurisdiction is the whole province. Its members elect regional trustees.

The [Constitution of Canada](#) divides the power to make laws between the federal and the provincial governments, assigning specific powers to the provinces. Under the *Constitution of Canada*, education is a provincial responsibility, so legislation that directly applies to it comes from the provincial legislatures, not the federal Parliament. The legislature is the supreme authority with respect to education. In B.C., the *School Act*, as approved by the legislature, delegates certain province-wide administrative functions to the Ministry of Education; and many regional administrative functions related to K-12 public education to local, public boards of education.

Although the federal government does not directly legislate in respect of education, federal legislation and policies are relevant to the provincial education system in a number of areas, such as criminal law, immigration, First Nations, copyright and taxation. In addition, the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) is part of the *Constitution of Canada*, and it applies to all laws made in Canada, including provincial law.

The provincial government has described its duties with respect to the public education system as follows:

The Ministry of Education has a duty to set policies for the British Columbia public school system in accordance with specified duties and powers. The ministry has a corresponding responsibility to ensure that the education system provides students with opportunities for a quality education in a cost-effective manner; to set standards and overall directions for the education system; to provide leadership and encouragement to all educational agencies in the province; to cooperate with provincial agencies in the delivery of non-educational support services to students; and to focus at a high level of provincial concern on finance and facilities, program direction, development and implementation, student access and achievement, teaching performance, and system evaluation and public accountability.

Other government ministries and agencies have a duty to set policies in accordance with specified powers. They have a corresponding responsibility to ensure that provincial policies and resources support the family and local community in providing a healthy and supportive environment necessary for children's learning.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 9. Legal Accountability, **Government Mandates Regarding Public Education**

Board powers and responsibilities under the School Act

Some of the functions of boards of education that are specifically mentioned in the *School Act* include:

- Improving student achievement in the school district
- Setting local policy for the effective and efficient operation of schools
- Making rules governing student conduct and discipline
- Employing the staff necessary for school district operations, such as teachers, principals, supervisory personnel, aides, clerical and administrative personnel, custodians, building maintenance staff, bus drivers, etc.
- Establishing conditions of employment for employees, within the framework of collective bargaining for unionized staff
- Preparing and approving the board's operating budgets and capital plans
- Hearing appeals from parents and students where a staff decision significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student
- Approving local courses and resource materials for use in the school district, and
- Acquiring, owning and disposing of school property and making decisions on school facilities, subject to minister's orders.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board**; and, Section 9. Legal Accountability, **Board Powers and Responsibilities under the School Act**

Co-governance with the Ministry of Education

The existing co-governance relationship between the provincial government and boards is outlined in the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) signed between the parties in December 2015. While there are ongoing discussions as to how the agreement should be operationalized on a day-to-day basis, it has encouraged the parties to work toward a recognition of shared responsibilities, efforts and direction. It is just as important to recognize, however, that boards maintain the right and responsibility to independently advocate for the vision and resourcing of K-12 public education as they see fit.

Through this co-governance relationship, boards and the Ministry of Education share a common responsibility for improved learning outcomes for students, and a demonstrated commitment to respect, integrity, public service, accountability and the effective management of public resources within their respective jurisdictions.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Co-governance with the Ministry of Education**

THE BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Boards of education have, as their primary function, the governance of the school district and the oversight of student achievement through a strong strategic plan that directs resources, informs policy development and aligns the work of staff.

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

The following is an overview of some of the fiduciary expectations as articulated in British Columbia's [School Act](#):

- Setting local policy to guide the effective and efficient operation of the school district
- Ensuring appropriate oversight of all school district operations is being maintained, including the work of senior district staff, teachers, school administrators, and support staff
- Approving the local conditions of employment for employees within the framework of collective bargaining for unionized staff and the employment contracts for exempt staff
- Approving the school district's operating budgets and capital plans
- Hearing appeals from parents where a staff decision significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student
- Approving local courses and resource materials for use in the school district
- Attending board and committee meetings
- Maintaining effective two-way communication with all groups within the community, as well as with parents, students and district employees
- Approving school plans as put forward by the superintendent
- Approving district plans for improving student achievement.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, Foundations: **The Board's Fiduciary Responsibilities**; and, Section 5. Financial and Facility Planning and Accountability, **Overview of Fiduciary Responsibilities**

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

Each board, supported by their staff and in consultation with the community, must define the mission, vision and values that will lead their school district to achieve its intended purpose. The board, on behalf of the communities it represents, takes on the responsibility for thinking regarding the success of the entire district and engaging the whole system in developing a strategic plan or roadmap which will move the school district towards the realization of its short- and long-term goals. There are many models for such planning.

More information can be found on The Hub, under **Strategic Planning Resources**, and in the Learning Guide, Section 2 Vision, Culture and Planning, **Strategic Planning**

Oversight of the school district's human, financial, and capital resources to ensure the vision is realized

Elected boards are not to be merely overseers of school districts focusing on compliance with specific fiduciary duties; they are leaders of public education in their communities and in the province by setting forward both a vision and strategic plan for the future. They are charged with the responsibility to create the conditions within their school districts that enable students to meet high standards of achievement within a school environment that ensure their safety and promote their well-being. Undertaking these responsibilities requires the board to understand issues deeply, align resources and foster a culture within the system that supports all those charged with improving student achievement and promoting student well-being. It involves the board articulating its education mission and garnering the public support and resources needed to achieve that mission.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Big Picture Thinking: The Board's Strategic Role**

FINANCIAL AND FACILITIES

The prudent use of financial resources, planning to reach goals and objectives

Boards of education:

- Generate local revenues
- Allocate funds to programs and services
- Review and approve budget documents
- Monitor expenditures against budget and plans
- Approve audited financial statements.

In a recent report by B.C. Auditor General Carol Bellringer, the following recommendations were provided about the overall budget and financial accountability process:

- Develop a strategic plan that shows how the process for identifying priorities and setting goals informs operational strategies and budget decisions; and then communicate that plan to all stakeholders. See information provided in the Governance section related to strategic planning
- Develop a long-term facilities plan that shows how capital decisions today are informed by the current condition of existing facilities, projected student enrolment, anticipated changes in land use and other long-term factors; and then communicate that plan to all stakeholders
- Document milestone dates and key deliverables in budgets, including deadlines and formal assignment of responsibility for completion of each milestone
- Document the authorities and key responsibilities for managing and monitoring budgets
- Regularly report forecasted results compared with actual budget results to the board of education (or committee of the board); and provide an accompanying discussion and analysis, as necessary, to fully communicate financial performance and key risks
- Implement more rigorous controls to prevent the initiation of unbudgeted purchases.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 5. Financial and Facility Planning and Accountability, **Roles and Obligations of the Provincial Government and Boards**

Establishing and monitoring budgets, including expenditures and reserves

The provincial government and B.C.'s 60 elected boards of education co-manage British Columbia's public education system. The province establishes the amount of grant funding for public education annually and uses a funding formula to allocate these funds to boards.

The funding allocation system, which is currently undergoing a major review, provides financial resources for the operation of the K-12 system by using data collected from schools and districts and applying formulae to ensure equity across British Columbia. Boards manage and allocate their allotment based on local spending priorities. In addition, the province provides capital costs and funding for special programs through supplemental government funds. More than \$5.9 billion annually is allocated to public boards of education.

There are three types of funds managed by boards of education:

Operating: This fund reports assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses for general operations: salaries and benefits, classroom supplies, cleaning, heat, light, administration and student transportation for the day-to-day operations of the district. **Capital:** This fund reports the assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses for capital assets: land, buildings, buses and vehicles.

Special purpose funds: These funds report assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses for specific restricted expenditures such as distance education, capital projects and provincial resource programs.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 5. Financial and Facility Planning and Accountability, **Annual Budget Preparation**

Long-term facilities planning

Along with the operating planning, it is also necessary to plan for the school facilities necessary to deliver programs and services. Funding for public school buildings and structural improvements is shared between the provincial government and boards of education.

An important part of a strategic framework is a *long-range facilities plan* (LRFP). Such a plan is critical to ensuring not only that school facilities are used efficiently now to minimize the cost of service delivery, but also that they are maintained and as necessary improved, to meet future school district needs. Without a long-term outlook, there is a risk of cost pressures that might have been anticipated (and therefore avoided) emerging and leading to budget difficulties.

An effective long-term facilities plan should demonstrate how capital decisions made are based on the current condition of existing facilities, projected student enrolment, anticipated changes in land use and other long-term factors.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 5. Financial and Facility Planning and Accountability, **Long-Range Facilities Plan**

AS EMPLOYER

The role of the Board with the superintendent and other exempt staff

A board's relationship with the superintendent of schools is the most important employment relationship in the district, and is central and critical to effective governance. In the majority of districts, the superintendent is the sole employee who reports directly to the board, with all other employees reporting directly or indirectly to the superintendent. The board is responsible for the recruitment, selection and performance evaluation of the superintendent. Overseeing a superintendent's effectiveness is one of the most important responsibilities of a board.

A school district's exempt administrative and supervisory staff are those employees who are not unionized and who are part of the leadership/management team for the district. The number and category of exempt staff employed by each district varies, dependent upon such factors as size of district, needs of the district and available resources (funding and personnel). Some examples of exempt leadership/management positions in British Columbia's public school districts in addition to the Superintendent, are assistant superintendent, secretary-treasurer, director of instruction, principals and vice-principals, district administrators for facilities, human resources, etc.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 6. Human Resources and Labour Relations, **Superintendent as the Board's Key Employee**, and **Other Exempt Employees**

The role of BCPSEA

BCPSEA provides human resources and labour relations services to school districts and has responsibility for:

- Promoting effective and cooperative human resources practices in the public school system that contribute to the betterment of public education
- Coordinating benefits administration among the various school districts in order to maximize coverage in the most cost-effective manner
- Coordinating compensation for employees who are not subject to collective agreements; in most cases, these are the administrative and management staff in school districts
- Providing labour relations advice and services to boards, including contract interpretation and grievance/arbitration case management
- Determining collective bargaining objectives for the public education sector
- Negotiating provincially with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the teachers' union) for a provincial teachers' collective agreement covering the 60 public boards and their employees; and for coordinating local bargaining between the boards and their local teachers' associations

- Providing assistance, resources and coordination for support staff collective bargaining in [its] capacity as the accredited bargaining agent for all 60 public boards. While bargaining is done at the local level, approval of the negotiated compensation provisions is required by [the] association
- Leading the K-12 public education sector in the development and implementation of strategies and resources to address labour market trends and demands to ensure the maintenance of a sustainable, qualified workforce
- Facilitating the development and implementation of public policy through advice to government and services to school districts. Provide insight and advice on the human resource implications of legislative and policy initiatives.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 6. Human Resources and Labour Relations, **Governance of Human Resources**

Employee groups and collective bargaining

A board, and individual trustees, rely on their administrative staff to implement collective agreements and maintain communication processes necessary for good employee relations.

Unions, representing unionized employees and school districts in their role as the employer, negotiate *collective agreements* (sometimes referred to as *contracts*) that lay out terms and conditions of employment (e.g., salary, leave provisions, seniority, benefits, etc.) for individual employees or groups of employees. The specific language addressing these terms in collective agreements varies from district to district, as each union local conducts some of its own bargaining (as with teachers) or all of its bargaining (as with support staff).

Both employees and management staff are required to uphold all of the clauses in their collective agreement. It is important to note that the collective agreement (along with laws) defines the limitations on employer rights to management the school district as they see fit. Where limits are not defined or imposed by the collective agreement, management retains the right to make the decisions it determines are appropriate. Collective agreements advise what cannot be done or the processes that must be followed, rather than what can be done (which remains open and undefined).

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 6. Human Resources and Labour Relations, **Collective Agreements**

LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Responsibility to represent the public's voice in publicly-funded education

A trustee's *community representative role* is not directly a governance role. Governance is at its most effective when it embraces the community perspectives brought by the individual trustees. Indeed, proactive community participation is a crucial part of good governance by the board. The key is achieving a balance between the governance authority of the board as a whole, and the individual representative role each trustee also fulfils. While members of the board act as representatives of their constituency, their primary job is to participate in policy-making and strategic planning that are in the interests of all of the district's students and are grounded in promoting student achievement and well-being. Successful trustees manage to balance the governance role with the representative role, participating in decision-making that benefits the whole board while representing the interests of their constituents.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Representing Communities and Constituents**

Community consultation and engagement

Effective boards make deliberate, ongoing efforts to establish and maintain protocols and processes that actively seek the community's voice and build its commitment to public schools. Seeking and hearing the community's voice as well as enlisting its support are effective strategies for balancing competing interests in the broader community, while always acting in the best overall interest of students. Some examples of strategies to use are: open board meeting delegations, board standing committees, ad-hoc committees, public meetings or forums, community surveys, web-based engagement.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 7. Community Engagement and Community Relations, **Public Consultation and Community Engagement**

Working with Indigenous communities

The key to connecting with the Indigenous community is persistence and building trust. Often, the leaders and community members that the board or schools are trying to reach and engage are extremely busy or do not trust the school system, so trustees and staff must not give up. These obstacles can be overcome by: using an intermediary to help with introductions; consistently reaching out to individuals and showing up at meetings and events; and highlighting why the issues should be important to the Indigenous community and how the issues will help students to succeed. Demonstrating sincerity through persistence, respect for people's time and roles and a desire to build a respectful partnership with reciprocal benefits will reap the greatest rewards for students. In addition, there may be particular protocols or channels that must be adhered to in order to connect with the First Nations chief and council, political leaders and other key stakeholders and leaders. Indigenous support staff may be able to help you identify these.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that learning about Canada's Aboriginal people needs to be a priority for all Canadians. The B.C. Ministry of Education has mandated that understanding and embedding First Peoples Principles of Learning, as well as Indigenizing education, can no longer remain on the periphery of the educational experience or in the margins and prefaces of textbooks. Rather, it must be woven into the very fabric of the teaching and learning experience for all.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 7. Community Engagement and Community Relations, **Engaging Indigenous Communities**, and Section 4. Indigenous Education, **Historical Context**

Dealing with inquiries and concerns

There is no enterprise more personal, nor involving of more human interaction, than education. Human interaction sometimes leads to conflict. If that is viewed as a normal part of life, as a natural, predictable product of the interaction of people who have different perspectives, values, opinions, beliefs and interest, it can then be seen as a challenge and an opportunity. Conflict does not need to damage relationships; it can bring people together to work collaboratively on common problems.

A constructive approach to resolving a conflict which can have many positive effects:

- Expose underlying causes of conflict
- Promote communication
- Facilitate needed change and growth
- Challenge imagination and creativity
- Forge stronger partnerships
- Provide mutually satisfactory and durable solutions, and
- Develop skills and abilities for dealing with conflict.

Many boards have developed comprehensive policies regarding handling inquiries. These processes need to be clearly visible on the district website.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 7. Community Engagement and Community Relations, **Handling Inquiries and Complaints**

The role of advocacy

Advocacy, in addition to governance and oversight, is an important role for publicly-elected school trustees. Advocacy depends upon trustees being attentive to the cause of public education while being creative, agile, resilient and supportive. It calls on boards: to speak out to the value of public education; to call for resources and supports needed for public schools to be successful; and to ensure government (through the electorate) maintains the legislative and policy framework needed to ensure the ongoing success of public schools.

Boards have an important role in the area of advocacy. In their interactions with families, citizens, various levels of government and the general public, trustees are responsible for representing and promoting the best interests of students of the district. In doing so, they have the opportunity to be champions for public education and to promote the role of boards in delivering quality education at the local level.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Advocacy for Public Education**

THE BOARD'S OPERATIONS

Every trustee and every board is unique. A board is comprised of trustees with a variety of knowledge, experience and expertise. A board has shared awareness of its communities, yet each trustee represents an individual point of view. Together the talents of individual trustees combine to form the assets and perspectives of the board as a whole.

GOVERNANCE VS OPERATIONS

The difference between the role of the Board and the role of its senior staff

In defining how the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent (representing all staff) should be best divided, it is important to consider three key points:

- **Individual trustees have no legal authority or stipulated power on their own.** It is only the corporate board as a whole that holds power. All decisions of any significance, as well as direction to the superintendent or other staff, must come from the board and not from individual trustees.
- **The *School Act* assigns specific responsibilities to the board of education, the superintendent and the district's secretary-treasurer.** These responsibilities cannot be ignored or over-ridden, even where they come into conflict with local direction.
- **It is the role of the board to govern the school district, and not to run the day-to-day operations of the school district.** This is a critical distinction that needs to be kept at the forefront when constructing policy that outlines roles and responsibilities. When defining the governance role of the board, key areas of responsibility should be taken into consideration.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

BOARD MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

Essential procedural aspects of meetings

Trustees must attend board meetings on a regular and consistent basis. The *School Act* stipulates that should a trustee be continuously absent from board meetings for a period of three consecutive months, unless the absence is because of illness or with the leave of the board, the office of the member is deemed to be vacant and the person who held the office is disqualified from holding office as a trustee until the next general school election.

The hierarchy of governing documents starts with the “the laws of the land”: the Canadian Constitution, provincial legislation, primarily the *School Act*, court decisions, board bylaws and board policies. The procedural bylaw of the board is supported by rules of order, typically *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Eli Mina has provided a succinct overview of the rules for debate (*Robert's* sections 42, 43)

A. Members speak only after being recognized by the chairperson.

Recognition is on a *first-come-first-served* basis, except:

- The maker of a motion has the right to speak first (not last, unless the procedural bylaw provides for it)
- Second-time speakers must yield to first-time speakers
- If possible, the chairperson alternates between proponents and opponents of the motion.

B. Rules of decorum.

- Members must remain courteous and avoid personal attacks
- Remarks must be confined to the pending motion (no digressions)
- In formal meetings, remarks are directed *through the chairperson*.

C. Limitations on the length and number of comments per member on each debatable proposal are as specified in the bylaws.

- If the bylaws are silent and *Robert's* applies, each member can speak up to two times on each motion, each time up to 10 minutes.

D. Closing debate is made by the members, and not unilaterally by the presiding officer nor by a member "calling the question" (*Robert's* section 16).

Robert's Rules of Order — Demystified, Eli Mina, 2013

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Board Meetings, Roberts Rules of Order**

Characteristics of effective meetings

A meeting is a gathering to discuss business and reach decisions jointly. Whether meeting in a public, open setting or behind closed doors, in a closed or in-camera session, there are some fundamentals for a successful meeting:

- **Clarity** of mandate, purpose, issues, and process.
- **Participation protocol and etiquette:** Only one person speaks at a time. Interruptions (verbal or non-verbal) are kept to the necessary minimum. A courteous, civilized and respectful tone is maintained. Discussions are focused on issues, not personalities.
- **Productivity and forward movement:** Discussion progresses along a pre-defined agenda, in an efficient and timely manner. For the sake of follow-up, good minutes are taken.
- **Flexibility and room for creative thinking:** Meeting structures (agendas and rules) are used in a flexible manner, to accommodate and promote creativity and open discussion rather than stifle them.
- **Quality:** Informed and in-depth discussions take place, leading to meaningful outcomes and thoughtful decisions.
- **Balance and inclusion:** All members are given an equal opportunity to participate. Dominated discussions are avoided.
- **Openness and collaboration:** Listening takes place, and members work together towards a common goal. Members are open to changing their views based on the discussion. Debates are personality-neutral, that is, hard on the issues, soft on the people.
- **Shared responsibility:** Everyone (and not only the leader) takes responsibility for the success of the process; finger-pointing is minimized. Promises are kept and assigned tasks are completed.
- **Variety and a light touch:** The meeting's pace and activities are varied to make it more engaging, interesting and enticing to attend. A light touch is introduced when appropriate: "Take yourself lightly and your work seriously."
- **Logistical support:** Logistical details are managed proactively and professionally, to allow for an optimal use of time at the meeting.

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More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Board Meetings, Ingredients for Successful Meetings**

BOARD POLICY AND BYLAW DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Board of education policy

Boards are the *direction setters* for the district. The board sets the overall direction for the school system through its strategic planning; and, with its vision, mission and values, the board articulates the strategic priorities and goals for the system.

The board sets *financial direction* through the annual budget that determines how resources are allocated to schools and programs.

The board also provides direction through its policies. This includes *planning, developing, implementing and evaluating policy*. Boards have the task of establishing the structure to support student achievement, and they do this through their policies. The directions boards establish through policy have an impact on students, schools and all staff. Policies contribute to the culture of the district. Policies range from the broad (such as the district's mission) to the specific. All new trustees should learn early in their term of office: where the policies are available; how they are developed, changed and used; and what the outstanding policy matters in the district are.

It is vital for the board to be clear about the alignment between its role as a governing, policy-making body and the job of the superintendent as the chief executive officer who implements the directions of the board. In essence, the board should be clear about what its policies are, why they exist, be able to explain them to the public and hold the superintendent accountable for implementing them.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Providing Direction, the Function of Policy**

Bylaws

The *School Act* requires that some types of decisions be made by bylaw rather than ordinary resolution. For example, boards are required to have bylaws setting out their section 11 appeal procedures. Board budgets must be adopted by bylaw. School closure and disposal of board property must be done by bylaw. The bylaw process can also be used at the board's discretion for other types of decisions even if a bylaw is not required by the *School Act*. For example, the *School Act* requires boards to set out their meeting procedures in writing. Some boards adopt meeting procedure policies, whereas other boards prefer to codify their meeting procedures in a procedural bylaw.

Bylaws require three distinct readings to be adopted. All three readings cannot happen at the same meeting unless all the trustees present at the meeting unanimously agree to proceed with all three readings at one meeting.

BCSTA maintains a database of the policies adopted by B.C. boards of education which are available on the Hub.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Developing Board Policy**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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

The *School Act* includes a special part on trustees' conflict of interest, and all trustees should be familiar with its content. It applies to trustees who have contracts or interests in contracts with the board of education, including trustees with immediate family members employed by the board, when matters affecting those contracts come before the board for debate and for decision.

Part 5 of the *School Act* requires a trustee who has such an interest in a matter before the board to declare that interest — and to not take part in the discussion, vote or attempt in any way to influence the outcome. Further, the declared interest must be recorded in the board meeting minutes. Should a trustee knowingly not declare an interest, the courts may declare the trustee's office vacant and require financial restitution.

More information can be found on The Hub, in the Learning Guide, Section 1. Governance, **Conflict of Interest**

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTEXT

Trustees will be supported by their administrative staff to find out more about specific district topics. The following are some questions trustees might want to ask as they become more knowledgeable about their districts.

Strategic plan

- What is the school district's vision for student success and how does the planning process realize this vision?

Educational and instructional scene

- What is the record of student achievement over the last few years?
- What strategies and structures has the district put in place to enhance achievement?
- How does the district work to meet the needs of all students?

Indigenous education

- What is the success rate for Indigenous students in the district?
- What is the relationship of the school district with its Indigenous communities? What channels of communication are in place?
- What protocols does the district follow in respect of their Indigenous communities?
- What specifically is the district doing in response to the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations?

Finances

- What is the current financial situation of the school district?
- How do trustees engage in the business of school district finance?

Human resources

- What employee groups are there in the district?
- What is the status of collective bargaining?
- What are the most challenging human resources issues?

Facilities

- What is the current enrolment and how are buildings in the district currently being used?
- What is the district's facilities plan?

Communications

- How are trustees meant to deal with inquiries and concerns that are presented to them in the district?
- What is the trustee's role with the media? Who speaks on behalf of the board?
- How does the community stay informed about board activities?

Trustee conduct

- What is the district's policy on Code of Conduct for Trustees?