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Introduction

Introduction

As a member of a school board you take your place in a history that started in 1816 when school trustees became the first democratically elected representatives in Ontario. Taking up the office of school board trustee is a call, not only to carry on the tradition of local decision-making, but to model ethical and courageous leadership that values every member of the board community and reaches for equity of outcomes for our students. It’s an opportunity to drive the ongoing positive improvements that contribute to one of the strongest education systems in the world.

Setting the conditions that will provide a high-quality education for every student to reach their full potential in school and in life is the first priority of a school board. As a leader in school board governance, your job is to ensure that Ontario’s education system continues to adapt and transform to meet the ever-changing needs and shifting challenges of our rapidly evolving world. To do so will require collaborative work with key education partners at all levels of the education system.

This guide offers a substantive introduction to the work of effectively governing a school board. Your many and varied responsibilities are all focused on the central goals of improving student achievement and well-being, ensuring safe and inclusive learning environments, and building public trust. From strategic planning to budget-setting, community engagement to assessing the director’s performance, the chapters in this guide offer practical information on Ontario’s education system and on your role as a leader within this system.

We congratulate you on starting a new term of office, and thank you for your commitment to responding to the needs of your board with flexibility, integrity, and principled action. We hope you find yourself inspired by the challenges and opportunities of your position as trustee and by the influential role you will play as a member of your school board.

We wish you a term as trustee that brings you opportunities for learning and growth, a sense of accomplishment, and professional satisfaction. Through your board service, you are helping to shape the future of Ontario.
CHAPTER 1

An Overview of Ontario’s Publicly Funded Education System
In Ontario, children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 must be enrolled in a formal education program. The province’s Education Act and its regulations establish the framework for the delivery of education programs. There are many key partners that work together for public education in Ontario including the provincial government, school boards, educators (e.g., teachers, early childhood educators etc.), students, parents, Indigenous partners, and the public. Collaboration and inclusion are vital to ensuring that all partners, at all levels of the education system, are working together to share knowledge, skills, and experience to improve student achievement and student and staff well-being.

This chapter provides an overview of the roles of the key partners in education. (Throughout this document, relevant sections of the Education Act are referenced in square brackets.)

**Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education provides leadership and sets the direction for early years, child care and education policy by:

- Supporting a high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care system
- Strengthening compliance and health and safety in child care settings
- Setting provincial standards for student outcomes
- Promoting a safe, equitable, and inclusive environment that fosters well-being and enriches student learning
- Developing and sustaining a rigorous and challenging province-wide curriculum
- Promoting accountability throughout the publicly funded education system
- Promoting and supporting excellence in teaching
- Providing school boards with resources, including financial resources, and support for program implementation.

In addition, the ministry sets requirements for child care licensing, student diplomas and certificates, and makes regulations that govern the early years and child care, the school year, the organization of schools and school boards, and the duties of teachers, principals, early childhood educators and school board officials. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for the administration of English-language provincial and demonstration schools for deaf, blind, deaf-blind students and/or for students who have severe learning disabilities. (The governance of French-language provincial and demonstrations schools has been transferred to the Centre Jules-Léger Consortium. See below for details).

**District School Boards**

The Education Act provides for the establishment of the following four types of district school boards:

- English Public
- English Catholic
- French Public
- French Catholic.

Although the Education Act refers to the non-Catholic English-language and French-language systems as ‘public’, all four systems are publicly funded.

There are also ten school authorities in the province, including:

- Six hospital-based school authorities established under Section 68 of the Education Act to provide programs for students with complex medical needs who are unable to attend regular school for medical reasons. These schools operate in hospitals and treatment centres.
- Four isolate school authorities which are one-school school boards.
The table below shows the number of district school boards and school authorities in the province, and the number of students in each category.

### Ontario School Boards – 2017-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Boards</th>
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<td>English-Language Public Boards</td>
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<tr>
<td>French-Language Public Boards</td>
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<td>English-Language Catholic Boards</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Authorities</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Public School Boards**

Ontario’s English-language and French-language public district school boards provide universally accessible education for all children and students.

The public education system is founded on the principle of equality of educational opportunity: every student deserves an opportunity to achieve their full potential. Public school boards provide high standards in their programs and ensure there are supports and resources available to help all students reach those standards. Public school boards also focus on character education to ensure that students develop as caring and responsible members of their community and of Canadian society as a whole. Character education embraces values such as Citizenship, Cooperation, Courage, Empathy, Fairness, Honesty, Humility, Inclusiveness, Initiative, Integrity, Kindness, Optimism, Perseverance, Resilience, Respect, and Responsibility.

**Catholic School Boards**

English-language Catholic and French-language Catholic district school boards have the same obligations, duties, rights, and privileges under the Education Act as public school boards. In addition, Catholic boards strive to create a faith community where religious instruction, religious practice, value formation, and faith development are integral to and woven through every area of the curriculum. In Catholic school boards, the school, the home, and the Church work together to develop within students a Catholic way of living. They also set high standards in their programs and ensure that there are resources to support equity of outcomes. The Catholic school boards are also concerned with the formation of the whole person through the personal integration of faith and life.
Catholic schools seek to provide a learning experience that allows students to develop their particular skills and individual talents, and to realize their uniqueness as children of God, and as brothers and sisters to every person in the world. Catholic boards provide Catholic education by:

- Ensuring support and guidance to develop each school as a Catholic Christian community in all its academic and non-academic activities
- Hiring and providing support to teachers, principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers, and other personnel who are committed to building the school system as a Catholic Christian community
- Preparing and putting to use academic curricula, including formal religious instruction, in which Catholic faith and life are integrated.

Parents who are holders of French-language education rights, under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, are guaranteed a French-language education for their children. (See Appendix B Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 23: Minority Language Educational Rights). Parents who do not have rights under section 23 but who want to enroll their child(ren) in a French-language school may apply to the admissions committee of a French-language school [s. 293].

It is important to note that enrolment in a French-language child and family program or child care service does not guarantee future admission to a French-language school.

Over the past thirty years, the ethno-linguistic profile of the French-speaking community in Ontario has undergone a major transformation. In order to ensure that admission to French-language schools is inclusive and that the process is transparent, the ministry issued guidelines in April 2009 requiring French-language school boards to review their local admission policies, guidelines, and administrative directives to streamline the admission process for three groups whose parents are not Charter rights holders: French-speaking immigrants; children whose grandparents were holders of French-language education rights; and immigrant children whose parents’ mother tongue is neither French nor English.

French-language district school boards may only operate schools/classes in which French is the language of instruction [s. 288]. However, they may offer English as a subject of instruction in any grade, and must offer English as a subject of instruction in Grades 5 through 8 [s. 292].

Correspondingly, English-language district school boards may not operate schools/classes in which French is the language of instruction [s. 289]. However, they may, with Ministry approval, offer

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**Language of Instruction**

Parents who are holders of French-language education rights, under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, are guaranteed a French-language education for their children. (See Appendix B Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 23: Minority Language Educational Rights). Parents who do not have rights...
programs “involving varying degrees of the use of the French language in instruction” [s. 8(1)25]. It is important to note that the Ministry’s curriculum includes various components for French-as-a-second-language instruction for use by English-language district school boards starting in Grade 4. Many school boards offer French Immersion programs as an option for students starting as early as Senior Kindergarten.

It is important to note that both French and English-language schools may offer instruction of other languages such as Indigenous languages, Mandarin, American Sign Language/Langue des signes québécoise, Punjabi, etc.

Policies Specific to French-Language Schools and School Boards

In Ontario, French-language education is provided in a linguistic minority setting. This creates particular challenges for French-language education. The Aménagement Linguistique Policy for French-Language Education supports the province’s French-language educational institutions in optimizing the transmission of the French language and Francophone culture among young people. The goal of the policy is to help all children and students in French-language schools reach their full potential and become engaged citizens who contribute to the vitality of Ontario’s Francophone community. The policy is the cornerstone of all French-language Education Activities at the elementary and secondary levels. It assists French-language school boards in fulfilling their mandate by providing a framework to ensure the protection, enhancement, and transmission of the French language and Francophone culture in a minority setting. The objectives of Ontario’s Aménagement Linguistique Policy are to:

- Deliver high-quality instruction in French-language schools adapted to the minority setting
- Educate young Francophones to become competent and responsible citizens, empowered by their linguistic and cultural identity
- Increase the capacity of learning communities, including school staff, students, and parents, to support the linguistic, education, and cultural development of students throughout their lives
- Expand the Francophone “espace” in order to provide children and students with enriching experiences in French outside the school setting through solid partnerships between the education sector, community organizations, the private sector and various levels of government, as well as parent engagement
- Increase the vitality of education institutions by focusing on student retention and increased enrolment, thus contributing
to the sustainable development of Ontario’s Francophone community.

The Consultation Policy on Governance of French-language Education reflects the Ministry’s commitment to consult with French-language education partners on project proposals requiring amendments to the Education Act or its regulations which could, if made, result in changes to the governance of French-language education. The complete policy document and an overview are available on the Ministry of Education’s website at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/mandate.html.

School Board Trustees

Every school board in Ontario is governed by a Board of Trustees. Trustees play a key leadership role in ensuring that schools operate within the standards established by the province, and that programs and services remain responsive to the diverse communities they serve. There are five types of trustees:

1. Publicly Elected Trustees compose the vast majority of trustees of Ontario’s district school boards and isolate boards. School board elections are held every four years at the same time as municipal elections. The election process is governed by the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. The role of the school board trustee is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this Guide.

2. First Nation Trustees (O. Reg. 462/97) represent First Nations communities who have an education services agreement with a publicly funded Ontario school board. There are currently 23 First Nation trustees in Ontario who are selected by the First Nations band council(s). They have all the same rights and responsibilities as publicly elected trustees including bringing the voice of their constituents to the board, bringing forward and seconding motions, voting rights, participating in professional development, and being paid an honorarium.

3. Student Trustees (O. Reg. 7/07) are secondary students elected by their peers to represent the voice of students at the board table. Student trustees cannot vote or forward board motions, but with a few exceptions, have the same opportunities to participate at board and committee meetings as any other board member. Student trustees serve one or two-year terms. For the term of office beginning in the 2020-21 school year, boards must provide for the election of two or three student trustees. Where possible, boards are encouraged to stagger the terms of student trustees serving two-year terms to provide for mentoring and support of incoming student trustees. Some boards have introduced the position of Indigenous student trustee.

4. Ontario has six school authorities under Section 68 of the Education Act (also known as hospital boards) whose trustees are appointed by the Minister for a term of four years, on the same term cycle as publicly elected trustees. Boards of Trustees for Section 68 school authorities have all the same powers and duties as district school boards. These boards provide education programs and services for students in select children’s treatment centres.

5. The newly established Centre Jules-Léger Consortium (O. Reg. 201/18) is composed of six trustees (3 public and 3 Catholic) appointed by the two French-language trustee associations (ACÉPO and AFOCSC) from among their members.
The Consortium governs and operates the Centre Jules-Léger provincial school, demonstration school, and resource and consulting services. There are four trustee associations which represent the interests of trustees to the government, advocate for publicly-funded education, and play a key role in trustee professional development:

- Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACÉPO)
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA)
- Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA).

The trustees’ associations also act as the Employer Bargaining Agencies (EBA) in the collective bargaining process. Under the terms of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 (SBCBA), they represent their member school boards at the central bargaining tables.

There are also two student trustee associations which represent the interests of student trustees to the government, advocate for the student voice in publicly-funded education, and play a key role in student trustee professional development:

- Ontario Student Trustees’ Association – L’Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l’Ontario (OSTA-AÉCO)
- Regroupement des élèves conseillers francophones de l’Ontario (RÉCFO).

Contact information for each association is provided in Appendix A.

### School Board Responsibilities

School boards are responsible for student achievement and well-being, safe and inclusive school climates, ensuring effective stewardship of the board’s resources, and delivering effective and appropriate education programs for their students. The Education Act and its regulations set out the services that district school boards and school authorities must offer. The responsibilities of a school board include:

- Hiring and performance appraisal of the director of education
- Having a vision statement that reflects the board’s philosophy and local needs and priorities
- Developing a multi-year strategic plan
- Setting the board’s budget within the provincial grants and accompanying regulations
- Developing and monitoring board policies
- Being accountable to the public.

### Directors of Education

The director of education is the chief executive officer and chief education officer (CEO) of the school board and acts as secretary to the board. The director is the sole employee who reports directly to the board of trustees. Through the director of education, a school board holds all of its schools accountable for improving student achievement and well-being, providing an equitable and inclusive environment and enhancing public confidence in publicly funded education, based on expectations set at the provincial and board levels.

Directors of education are responsible for:

- Supporting the development of the board’s multi-year strategic plan, implementing the plan effectively, monitoring progress, and reporting to the board annually (at minimum)
- Managing all facets of school board operations
- Implementing board policies
Bringing to the board’s attention any act or omission by the board that could violate or has violated the Education Act or any of the applicable policies, guidelines or regulations. If the board does not respond in a satisfactory manner, the director is required to report the act or omission to the Deputy Minister of Education.

All school board staff report either directly or indirectly to the director of education. The director of education reports to the board, usually through the chair or their delegate. (See Chapter 4, Board and Committee Meetings)

Every district school board must hire only a qualified supervisory officer as its director of education [s. 283(1)] and obtain the Minister’s confirmation that the person to be appointed is eligible for the position [s. 285(2)]. Subject to the Minister’s approval, two or more school authorities may jointly share a director of education [s. 280]. Under special circumstances, a supervisory officer (either a director or superintendent) may be appointed by the Minister of Education [s. 286(2)]. In that case, the supervisory officer is responsible to the Minister.

The Act distinguishes between a board’s responsibility for policy development and the responsibility of the director of education for operationalizing that policy. It is important that the board of trustees be clear about roles and responsibilities and determine, through policy, which matters are operational and therefore addressed by the director, and which matters are policy and, therefore, decided on by the board.

All directors of education belong to the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE). All 12 French-language directors of education also belong to the Conseil ontarien des directions d’éducation de langue française (CODELF). English Public directors of education may belong to the English Catholic Council of Directors of Education (ECCODE), and French Catholic directors of education may belong to the Conseil ontarien des directions d’éducation catholique de langue française (CODEC).

**Supervisory Officers**

There are two types of supervisory officers, often called superintendents:

1. **Academic Supervisory Officers:**
   - Accountable to the director of education for the implementation, operation, and supervision of educational programs in schools (Hold both supervisory officer and teacher qualifications)
2. Business Supervisory Officers:
   - Accountable for the business functions of the organization (Required to hold business supervisory officer qualifications but not necessarily teacher qualifications).
   
   Prior to appointing a supervisory officer, a board must obtain the Minister’s confirmation that the person to be appointed is eligible for the position [s. 285(2)]. Specific duties are assigned to each supervisory officer by the board. Boards determine the number they require and designate their titles and areas of responsibility.

   Supervisory officers’ responsibilities include:
   - Implementing board and ministry policies on Indigenous education, special education, leadership development, equity and human rights, etc.
   - Completing principal performance appraisals
   - Working with principals and staff to ensure schools have improvement plans based on student learning needs and in alignment with school, board and ministry priorities
   - Ensuring school buildings are maintained according to ministry and board policy.

   Supervisory officers have an opportunity to have a significant impact on leadership development through their support of the growth of individuals and the organization as a whole, and through conducting their daily duties by modelling collaboration, professionalism, and ethical leadership.

   Supervisory officers belong to one or more of the following professional organizations, depending on the system they serve:
   - The Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO)
   - The Council of School Business Officials (COSBO)
   - The Ontario Public Supervisory Officers’ Association (OPSOA)
   - The Ontario Catholic School Business Officials Association (OCSBOA)
   - The Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers’ Association (OCSOA)
   - Association des gestionnaires de l’éducation franco-ontarienne (AGÉFO).

**Schools**

In general, elementary schools provide programs for children in Full-Day Kindergarten to Grade 8, and secondary schools serve students enrolled in Grades 9 through 12.

All boards must provide or purchase special education programs for exceptional students within their jurisdictions. School boards are required to make full-day kindergarten programs available for four- and five-year olds on a full-time basis. Where there is sufficient demand, school boards are also required to offer fee-based before and after school programs for
children four to twelve years of age. Before and after school programs may be operated directly by the school board, a licensed child care centre on-site, or by an authorized recreational and skill-building program (for children over six years of age).

Subject to provincial direction on matters such as class size and instructional time, school boards and schools can set policies for organizing schools and grouping students. For example, boards may operate full-time special education classrooms for individuals who have developmental disabilities. School boards may also employ educators who teach in Care, Treatment, Custody and Correctional (CTCC) facilities (e.g., hospitals, children’s mental health centres or youth justice custody facilities).

**Principals**

Principals are the educational leaders within their school communities. They are responsible for creating the conditions to support student achievement, equity and well-being, and for creating a safe, accepting and inclusive learning environment for students. They ensure that the programs that are in place are effective and align with board and ministry policies. They are responsible for supervising teachers and programs within their schools, and for ensuring that student evaluation and assessment is performed according to ministry and board guidelines and policies. Principals ensure that parents and guardians receive appropriate information about the learning of their children, as well as the overall performance of the school. Principals work collaboratively with their staff, parents, and the community to develop and implement school improvement plans that reflect board priorities and respond to the needs and interests of their student communities. In consultation with their school council, and in alignment with board policy, principals are responsible for establishing the vision and direction for their school.

Principals and vice-principals are uniquely positioned to exercise influence and ensure that every student in their care receives equitable educational opportunities. Principals develop and sustain effective relationships in order to communicate clearly, identify and solve problems, anticipate and resolve conflicts, and make decisions that reflect the best interests of students, staff, parents/guardians and the school community.

Principals and vice-principals may belong to one or more of the following professional organizations:

- The Ontario Principals’ Council (OPC)
- The Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- The Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO).

In addition to any teaching duties principals or vice-principals may have, they are also responsible for the daily operation of the school, including the care of students and the supervision of staff. Some of the principal’s obligations under the Education Act include:

- Developing implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement and well-being, or accountability of the education system to parents
- Undertaking teacher performance appraisals
- Maintaining proper discipline in the school and attending to the care of students and property
- Registering students, and ensuring that attendance is recorded, examinations are held, and students’ progress is reported on
- Preparing a school timetable, assigning classes and subjects to teachers, and encouraging cooperation among staff members
Reporting on any aspect of school business required by the board and providing information to the ministry and the appropriate supervisory officer about discipline, student achievement and well-being, school climate, and the condition of school premises.

- Reporting promptly to the board and medical officer of health if he or she suspects a communicable disease in the school or detects an unsanitary condition in the school building or on school property.
- Refusing access to anyone who, in the principal’s judgement, might threaten the physical or mental well-being of students.

Principals and vice-principals engage in a formal performance appraisal process every five years, and in each year, they are required to prepare and follow an “Annual Growth Plan”. The requirement of the appraisal process and annual growth plan are found in O. Reg. 234/10 – Principal and Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA). These requirements include a focus on human rights and equity at the school level.

The principal also has a key role to play in ensuring that school councils operate effectively. The principal attends and acts as a resource at school council meetings and reports on actions taken as a result of the council’s recommendations. Regulation 298 (Operation of Schools – General) lists additional principal duties.

Leadership Development for Principals, Supervisory Officers and Directors of Education

Based on current research confirming the relationship between effective leadership and student outcomes, the Ministry of Education has supported leadership development for principals, supervisory officers, and directors of education for the purpose of succession planning, mentorship, performance management and appraisal. The strategies used for leadership development are founded on an evidence-based research document developed in consultation with the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership. This document describes:

- The leadership practices of successful school and districts leaders.
- The characteristics of effective school and system leaders.
- Summarizes the evidence about the characteristics of “strong” school districts – those districts that are successful at improving the learning of their students.

Teachers

Teachers who are members in good standing of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) or temporary teachers (individuals who are not members of the OCT) but are employed by school boards under a letter of permission granted by the Minister of Education may teach in publicly funded elementary or secondary schools. (See “Ontario College of Teachers” later in this chapter.)

Under the terms of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 (SBCBA), teachers must be represented by one of the following four teachers’ federations, which are affiliates of an umbrella organization, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF):

- The Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA)
- The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
- Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
- The Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF).
The federations are the Employee Bargaining Agencies that engage in the collective bargaining process for teachers at both the central and local tables.

Teachers are front-line representatives of the education system. Their many activities go beyond instruction and include encouraging students to pursue learning, maintaining classroom discipline, and evaluating students’ learning and progress.

*The Education Act [s. 264(1)] and Regulation 298 (Operation of Schools – General) set out the following teacher duties and expectations:*

- Instruct and assess pupils in classes or subject areas assigned by the principal
- Manage the classroom effectively
- Carry out the supervisory duties and instructional program assigned by the principal
- Cooperate fully with other teachers and the principal regarding the instruction of pupils, including cooperative placements
- Ensure that all reasonable safety procedures are carried out in courses and activities
- Cooperate with the principal and other teachers to establish and maintain consistent disciplinary practices in the school
- Ensure that report cards are fully and properly completed and processed
- Cooperate and assist in the administration of tests under the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996
- Participate in regular meetings with pupils’ parents or guardians
- Assist the principal in maintaining close cooperation with the community
- Perform duties normally associated with the graduation of pupils
- Participate in professional activity days as designated by the board.

Many teachers choose to participate in supervising co-curricular activities at the school. These activities occur outside the regular instructional program and are designed to enrich students’ school-related experience and support educational goals. Examples include athletics, arts and cultural activities.

**Ontario College of Teachers**

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) enables teachers to regulate and govern their own profession in the public interest. Teachers who want to work in publicly funded schools in Ontario must be members in good standing of the College.
The College:

- Ensures Ontario students are taught by skilled teachers who adhere to clear standards of practice and conduct.
- Establishes standards of practice and conduct.
- Issues teaching certificates and grants additional qualifications.
- Accredits teacher education programs and additional qualification courses.
- Hears complaints and investigates members, and may suspend or revoke certificates for professional misconduct.

In order to be certified by the College as a teacher of general education in Ontario, prospective teachers must:

- Complete a post-secondary degree from an acceptable postsecondary institution; and
- Complete an accredited Initial Teacher Education Program.

To be certified by the College as a teacher of technological education in Ontario, prospective teachers must:

- Complete a secondary school diploma.
- Have five years of work experience or a combination of work experience and post-secondary education totalling five years in the field of technological education.
- Provide proof of competence in the field of technological education (e.g., a trade certificate).

All prospective teachers seeking certification by the College must:

- Provide a criminal background reference check and proof of language proficiency in English or French; and
- Pay the annual membership fee.

For more information, visit the Ontario College of Teachers website at www.oct.ca.

Education Workers

Education workers are other school board employees who help ensure that schools run effectively, safely, and appropriately. Such workers include but are not limited to:

- Education Assistants (EA)
- Early Childhood Educators (ECE)
- Secretarial/Clerical staff
- Custodial/Maintenance staff
- Information Technology and Library Technicians
- ESL and literacy Instructors
- Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP)
  - Speech-language Pathologists
  - Social Workers
- Lunchroom Supervisors.

Union representation of education workers varies across school boards. In central bargaining they are represented by unions or councils of unions. The Employee Bargaining Agencies (EBA) for education workers who engaged in the last round of central bargaining under the terms of the SBCBA were:

- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation-represented Education Workers (OSSTF-EW)
Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario - represented Education Workers (ETFO-EW)
Education Workers’ Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW).

Early Childhood Educators

Only registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) may be designated as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) in full day kindergarten classrooms, and board run before and after school programs for four and five year olds. Under the Education Act, the Minister of Education may appoint a person who is not a registered member of the CECE to a position designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator, if no registered early childhood educator is available.

Early childhood educators have specialized knowledge about early childhood development, observation and assessment. They focus on age-appropriate program planning that promotes each child’s physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and creative development and well-being.

College of Early Childhood Educators

The College of Early Childhood Educators was established to regulate and govern Ontario’s early childhood educators to protect the public interest. It is the first professional self-regulatory college for early childhood educators in Canada. The College:

- Establishes and enforces standards of practice and conduct
- Promotes and provides leadership for the profession of early childhood educators
- Sets registration requirements and ethical and professional standards
- Establishes requirements for professional development, including a mandatory Continuous Professional Learning program
- Governs member conduct through a complaints and discipline process.

For more information visit The College of Early Childhood Educators website at https://www.college-ece.ca/en

School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees

The Education Act requires each school board to establish a school council for each school operated by the board [ss. 170(1)171]. School councils are advisory bodies made up primarily of parents and guardians whose purpose is to improve student achievement, equity and well-being, and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.

School boards must also establish a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) [O. Reg. 612/00 (School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees)]. The role of a PIC is to support improved student achievement and well-being through encouraging and enhancing parent involvement at the board level. PICs are tasked with identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systematic barriers to parent engagement, and helping to ensure that schools of the board create an environment in which parents are welcomed, respected, and valued by the school community as partners in their children’s learning and development.
Parents and guardians also have many informal ways of participating in school and board life.

The Public

The public is a key partner in Ontario’s education system. In the broadest terms, education is what prepares the next generation to maintain and improve our shared society - to care for our communities, our province, and our planet. The Ministry of Education and school boards work together to focus on delivering a high quality, publicly funded education system as the foundation of a fair and productive society, where everyone can feel safe and respected. Vibrant communities and a prosperous society are built on the foundation of a strong education system.

Ontario’s public education system enhances public confidence through responsible, sustainable, accountable, and transparent governance practices. Such practices include a clear delineation between the role of trustee and that of administration; evidence-informed decision making; public input on policy development; data collection on student achievement and student and staff well-being; and strong consultative practices that seek out, listen, and consider a variety of perspectives and voices. These perspectives come from parents, students, staff, Indigenous communities, and the broader community.

Community Organizations

There are many not-for-profit organizations that lend their expertise in areas of the arts, environmentalism and outdoor education, science and technology, Indigenous education, values-based learning, social services, and others. The Ministry may provide funding to community organizations in support of education priorities to enhance and enrich programs or services offered by school boards.

Public Sector Organizations

Public sector organizations act as education partners to support the safety and well-being of students and staff. For example, health care, justice and police, and social service agencies partner with boards to maximize effectiveness and efficiencies in dealing with families and students in need and in crisis.

Colleges and universities partner with school boards for dual credit programs that provide students with options to pursue apprenticeships and post-secondary courses towards a secondary diploma.

Municipalities also partner with boards on many issues such as land use, elections, and meeting the needs of their constituents.

Private Organizations

The private sector also plays a large role in supporting and collaborating with the education system. Small and large businesses hire co-operative education students and develop internships to support student success and transitions to the workforce. Many businesses also provide in-kind service and product donations, professional development training, and other partnerships that benefit Ontario’s education system.
Background

School boards are responsible for the provision of publicly funded education within their jurisdictions. As such, trustees are leaders of publicly funded education in their communities and in the province. School boards represent the community's interests in setting high standards of student achievement, well-being and equity. They carry out this responsibility within relevant statutes and regulations. Through their local governance school boards exercise their leadership to set policy and strategic direction, hire and appraise the performance of the director of education, approve allocation of resources, and engage with the public. This governance role is fundamental to set the conditions for students to develop into adults who are successful, productive and engaged citizens. Effective governance ensures that the education system remains accountable to the people of Ontario.

What Is Governance?

Governance is how the board is controlled and run. It establishes a framework and processes for decision-making and holds leaders responsible for modeling and exercising ethical leadership. School boards are the embodiment of local governance in action. Through their decisions and policies, they demonstrate accountability and effective stewardship of public resources in the interests of all students, stakeholders, and the community as a whole.

Ultimately, governance is the exercise of authority, direction, and accountability to serve the higher moral purpose of public education. A governance structure defines the roles, relationships, and behavioural parameters for the board and its staff.

The trend in changes to legislative obligations and in public expectations increases the pressures on school boards to demonstrate continued improvements in student achievement and well-being while staying accountable for and transparent about the resources they govern. This includes government funding that is increasingly prescribed. The law plays a significant role in defining governance structures, powers, and processes for school boards. The context within which boards operate includes meeting the challenges of maintaining quality as communities change, particularly enrolment decline in some parts of the province and increasingly diverse population in other parts.

A board's governance practices can have significant effects on students, staff, parents, and the broader community. Effective school board governance can be seen in the level of public trust in a board, the ways a board continues to improve, the strategic direction of the board, and the quality of the board's leadership.
Good governance begins with well-defined roles and responsibilities, and clear decisions about how the board will govern. This includes clarity around the goals it aims to achieve, the strategies it will employ to achieve them, and the role of the director of education to manage all aspects of implementation of board direction. A clear understanding on the part of the school board with regard to its system of governance will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of its policy development, decision-making and business practices, and adherence to legal obligations. It will also influence how the public perceives the efficacy of the board and its value to the community.

The true test of any board’s governance structure is its effectiveness in promoting and sustaining a board’s standard in achievement, well-being, and equity. Good governance is established by accomplishing goals designed to bring positive results to all of the board’s students, staff and communities, and building public confidence by demonstrating accountability to the public and the ministry. The report of the School Board Governance Review Committee (2009) reflects the input from trustees across the province and offers the following principles of effective school board governance:

- The board of trustees has a clearly stated mission that includes high expectations for student achievement.
- The board of trustees allocates its resources in support of the goals it has set.
- The board of trustees holds its system accountable for student achievement through its director of education by regularly monitoring evidence of student achievement.
- The board of trustees engages with its constituents in the creation of policies that affect them and communicates its progress in raising student achievement.
- The board of trustees monitors its own performance and takes action to continually improve its governance processes.

As a rule of thumb, good governance means that trustees have their “noses in, fingers out,” which is to say that the trustee role is not in the details of operations and individual cases but in overall board performance. For example, the board should be informed of what trends are appearing in grievance cases, but need not know the details of any individual case.

Balancing Accountabilities

In carrying out their role, trustees have the very real challenge of balancing their responsibilities and allegiances as representatives of their communities with their role as education leaders within the decision-making body of the board as a whole. This dual responsibility can mean that the ultimate decisions made are at variance with the specific interests of a particular geographical constituency, demographic population, or interest group.

Effective board governance is dependent on a clear understanding of, and respect for, roles and responsibilities. As trustees communicate with their constituents and hear their concerns, they must at the same time convey that changes to existing board policy require consideration by the full board. Trustees, as individuals, do not have authority to make decisions or take action on behalf of the board.

Trustees can facilitate the concerns of their constituents by advising them as to which board staff can answer their questions or deal directly with their concerns. In some cases, trustees may bring issues that affect the entire jurisdiction to the board for discussion, and where appropriate, resolution.
Evidence-Informed Decision Making

Board decisions must be evidence-based and informed by research that supports educational goals. Boards should base their decisions on a wide variety of evidence and current research to ensure the best strategic and policy approaches are followed. Socioeconomic and demographic data about the board’s communities should be collected, analyzed and considered when making decisions. Ministry data will complement board data to inform decision making and support boards in developing systems to track achievement, equity, and well-being. Data systems will also help boards monitor trends in human rights claims and grievances, as well as track trends in hiring and promotion, and parent involvement.

Consultation and engagement are vital so that a diversity of voices and perspectives are heard. Consultation and collaboration with families, staff, students, community members and diverse stakeholders provide information that will support the best decisions to be made.

Boards can also review current research and best practices in order to ensure board decisions reflect the best thinking in the field of education, community outreach, and child development.

Board Self-Assessment

Good governance doesn’t just happen. It requires the elected board to take responsibility for the effectiveness and continuous improvement of its governance practices. Effective Boards of Trustees will have a governance review policy which includes processes that can contribute to meaningful change. Self-assessment is a valuable process that results in a range of benefits. In addition to improving communication among board members and building an understanding of the effectiveness of the directions taken by the elected board, the key outcome is greater certainty around what works for the benefit of students.

The process that boards of trustees undertake to review their performance will vary from board to board. Collection of the information to inform the review can occur in a number of ways including:

- surveys of board and committee members
- focus groups with community members and other stakeholders
- interviews with board members and the director of education
- use of an outside facilitator/consultant.

Establishing a System of Governance

Governance literature offers many governance models. Choosing a model for a particular school board and adapting it to local circumstances requires a thorough examination of the board’s vision, priorities, and governance goals. Each board will find both merits and obstacles in every governance model it considers.

All school boards have a governance model in place which they have adapted to their local context. New trustees should become familiar with their board’s governance model. Boards may choose to review their governance model by looking to the governance models of other boards for ideas. School board associations have access to professional and organizational development resources that can be helpful to your board in assessing the effectiveness of its governance model.

Each new board, with its returning and new members, should take the opportunity to review its governance structure to ensure that the board members can take ownership of the planning,
policy, and decision-making processes.

In *The Road Ahead II: A Report on the Role of School Boards and Trustees*, the former Education Improvement Commission (EIC) proposed a process for school boards to follow in establishing and assessing their system of governance. It recommended that each district school board:

- create a vision in consultation with its staff and community
- appoint a director of education who shares the vision and has the skills to work with the board to realize the vision
- establish policies critical to achieving the vision
- establish a budget consistent with the priorities set out in the vision and policies
- develop an organizational model for senior staff and assign responsibilities, so that the vision and policies are implemented throughout the system
- establish procedures for monitoring the implementation of its policies, and tie these procedures to the performance appraisal of the director of education
- communicate its performance to the community and the ministry; and
- reassess its vision (on a regular basis).

These steps are further articulated in the Chapter 3: Roles and Responsibilities of School Boards and Individual Trustees.

### Supplementary Resources on Governance

Additional information about effective governance can be found in the following resources:

- **The Road Ahead: A Report on the Continuous Improvement in School Board Operations (2013)**. This report results from operational reviews of Ontario’s 72 district school boards and identifies factors such as: greater delineation of roles and responsibilities; strong, streamlined decision-making processes; engaging a broader base of stakeholders in the strategic planning processes; organizational structures to ensure performance and accountability of school board administration; improved succession planning; participation in sector-wide councils, committees and working groups. The paper is available at: [http://www.opsba.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Operational%20Reviews%20Report.pdf](http://www.opsba.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Operational%20Reviews%20Report.pdf)

- **Strong Districts and their Leadership (2013)** Kenneth Leithwood. This study associates strong school district performance with
elected boards of trustees whose practice adheres closely to a “policy governance” model. The research covers areas such as: assessing community values and interests and incorporating them in the school system’s mission and vision for students; creating a climate which engages staff and the wider community to support the vision; creating a climate of excellence; using the board’s beliefs and vision for student learning and well-being as the foundation for planning and evaluation; focusing policy making on improvement of student learning and well-being, provision of rich curricula and engaging forms of instruction; development of productive relationships; systematic orientation for board members; respect for senior staff; holding the director accountable for improving teaching and learning; individual member accountability for supporting decisions of the board. The study can be found at: http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/downloads/Strong%20Districts-2.pdf

- **Good Governance for School Boards – Trustee Professional Development Program.** This online resource, developed by Ontario’s school board associations offers a full range of professional development modules designed specifically to support school board trustees in their governance role. It is available at: http://ontarioschooltrustees.org/

- **School Boards Matter, The Report of the Pan-Canadian Study of School District Governance (2013).** This report developed by researchers from Memorial University and the University of Manitoba in collaboration with the Canadian School Boards Association reviews the role of board-governed school districts in contributing to successful public education systems. The report can be found at: http://www.schoolboardsnl.ca/pdf/School-Boards-Matter-Report-Small.pdf

- **Key Work of School Boards**, a program of the National School Boards’ Association in the United States, is a governance model focused on improving student achievement. You can learn more from the NSBA website at http://www.nsba.org/keywork.

- The ‘20 Questions’ series on risk and governance, a product of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants which has done significant work on board governance is available at: https://www.cpastore.ca/Catalogue/Catalogue.aspx?categoryID=26

- **Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada’s Voluntary Sector** is a detailed review of governance in the volunteer sector produced by the Panel on Accountability and
Governance in the Voluntary Sector. The panel, which was created in 1997 by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR), an unincorporated group of Canadian national volunteer organizations, produced a discussion paper in 1998, which was widely circulated to many Canadian volunteer sector organizations. In 1999, the panel released Building on Strength, which is based on the responses and advice received following the circulation of the discussion paper. While school boards are not volunteer sector bodies, there are many aspects of governance structure and policy identified in this report that would be helpful to boards that are reviewing or developing governance models. This document is available at: [http://www.ecgi.org/codes/documents/broadbent_report_1999_en.pdf](http://www.ecgi.org/codes/documents/broadbent_report_1999_en.pdf)

- **The Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation (CCAF)** has excellent resources on public sector governance and accountability. Learn more at: [https://www.caaf-fcar.ca/en/](https://www.caaf-fcar.ca/en/).

- **Policy Governance** is a trademarked governance model developed by John Carver. The basis for this model can be found in his book *Basic Principles of Policy Governance*, published by Jossey Bass Publishers in 1996. For more information on policy governance, visit: [www.policygovernanceassociation.org](http://www政策governanceassociation.org).

- A good resource in the area of corporate governance that has some relevance for the education sector is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s [OECD Principles of Corporate Governance](https://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/18/31557724.pdf), which can be found online at: [http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/18/31557724.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/18/31557724.pdf).

CHAPTER 3

Roles and Responsibilities of School Boards and Individual Trustees
“As individual advocates for public education, we are all invested in creating the conditions that make a better world for our students and our society. Trustees are on the front line, working closely with local communities, living that commitment every day and Ontario is the better for it.”

Michael Barrett, Past President, OPSBA

A school board is responsible for governing the school system in the best interests of all students in its jurisdiction and on behalf of the communities it serves. The school board, as a corporate body, is the legislative source of all decisions, and individual trustees are granted no authority through the Education Act. Unlike provincial and federal parliaments, school board members do not vote according to an official affiliation, nor are there governing trustees and opposition trustees. Both the board as a whole and individual trustees have roles and responsibilities.

School Boards

Under the Education Act, locally elected school boards are responsible for operating publicly funded schools within their jurisdiction. Legal accountability for board decisions applies to the board as a corporate entity rather than to individual trustees. In fact, the Act gives no individual authority to trustees. As members of the corporate board, trustees are legally accountable to the public for the collective decisions of the board and for the delivery and quality of educational services.

The Education Act stipulates that every school board shall:
- Promote student achievement and well-being
- Promote the prevention of bullying
- Promote a positive school climate
- Ensure effective stewardship of the board’s resources
- Deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils
- Develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the board’s goals and, encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board in achieving the board’s goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies
- Develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the board’s goals
- Annually review the multi-year plan with the board’s director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education; and
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of the board’s director of education, or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education, in meeting their duties under this Act or any policy, guideline or regulation made under this Act, including duties under the multi-year plan, and any other duties assigned by the board.

School boards are accountable for their fiscal and operational performance as boards, and for the academic achievement of students and well-being of their students and staff. They are responsible for effectively communicating the board’s performance to parents and the
community – both where the board is succeeding, and where the board is struggling to meet expectations and what steps are being taken to improve outcomes.

An Effective School Board:
- Understands why it exists, what difference it aims to make in the community and develops a plan for this purpose
- Maintains a focus on student achievement and well-being
- Works together as a team
- Serves as a role model for the education system and the community
- Makes informed decisions
- Strives for excellent communications with its partners and constituents
- Has a clear sense of the difference between its role and that of senior management
- Understands the distinction between policy development and implementation
- Is accountable for its performance
- Holds the director of education accountable for effectively implementing the policies of the board
- Monitors the effectiveness of policies and implementation plans
- Ensures that local provincial and federal politicians understand local issues and needs, and encourages them to make education a high priority.

As the governors of the school board, the two most important responsibilities of Boards of Trustees are:

1. The development and monitoring of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)
2. The hiring and performance management of the Director of Education

The Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Under the Education Act, every school board must create a multi-year plan that spans a minimum of three years. The purpose of the multi-year strategic plan (MYSP) is to help boards set long-term strategic priorities and goals. The plan must be based on evidence to ensure that it has a clear purpose and that it is effective. It is important that boards use a collaborative process at every step in the MYSP’s development, so that everyone can take ownership of the MYSP and feel responsible for its success.

The MYSP is a visioning and policy document that sets the direction for the board. It is fundamental to ensuring good governance and to building public trust in boards of trustees not only to safeguard our schools, but also to ensure that they are caring, equitable, innovative, and flexible. While our schools make every effort to offer stability, they also strive to meet the changing needs and realities of our society. The operational and improvement plans created by the director of education and senior administrators are
based on the MYSP and map out how the MYSP will be implemented.

A thoughtful and robust plan reflects what has been learned from the past, not what has been done in the past. A strong MYSP is a driver for positive change in the board. When developing their plans, boards should be relentless in their efforts to address the needs of all students and changing communities. Boards must show leadership and drive, and that they collaborate closely with families, students, staff, and community members.

In August 2017, the Ministry of Education released a new resource, *Multi-Year Strategic Planning – A Guide for School Board Trustees*. A strong MYSP not only points the way forward, it provides a framework for how to get there by:

- Detailing the allocation of the board’s resources among its strategic priorities
- Functioning as a guide for the board of trustees and senior administrators when they are making difficult choices
- Illustrating to stakeholders how decisions are made
- Focusing the board’s attention when it is dealing with unexpected challenges, and thus preventing reactive or short-sighted decision making

A thoughtfully developed MYSP will also:

- Creating a shared vision for diverse internal and external stakeholders
- Motivating the board’s staff and giving employees at every level of the organization a sense of purpose.

An effective MYSP will also:

- Help boards to reach provincial goals for education
- Help create coherence and cohesion for Ontario’s publicly funded education system
- Encourage collaborative professionalism and a collective growth mindset among educational stakeholders
- Engage communities in ongoing conversations about education
- Stand as a beacon for boards as they focus on creating a measurably better future for all children, students, and staff
- Not only protect, but promote human rights and ensure equity in achievement and well-being.

The Guide focuses on the four key phases involved in developing and monitoring the strategic plan. Recognizing that boards have different contexts, this guide provides guiding questions and considerations to account for differences in board size, geographic circumstances, and demographic trends. As outlined in the Guide, the four phases of plan development are:

**Phase 1 - Getting Organized**

- How to best build capacity?
- Could planning process benefit from the perspective of a third party?
- How to assign responsibilities?
- What will the timelines be?
- Have the mission, vision, and values statements been reviewed?

**Phase 2 - Gathering Information**

- How will data be collected and analysed?
- How will stakeholders be engaged?

**Phase 3 - Developing the MYSP**

- What would be the ideal duration of the MYSP?
- Which strategic priorities should be finalized?
- What criteria should determine the strategic goals?
- How will an evaluation framework be developed?
- How will the MYSP story be told?
- When should the MYSP be submitted for final approval?
- How will a communications plan be created?
Phase 4 - Implementing and Monitoring the MYSP
- What are the Director of Education’s responsibilities?
- What are the Board of Trustees’ responsibilities?

Hiring and Performance Appraisal of the Director of Education

Selecting a new director of education is perhaps the most important decision a board may make in its term of office. Consistent high-quality leadership from the director of education is a key factor in the success of a school board in meeting its priorities. When recruiting and selecting a new director, the board must look for the candidate that will most effectively lead the implementation of the board’s strategic plan. In order to find the right individual, the board must ensure an open, professional, confidential and objective competition which invites a broad range of diverse candidates, both internal and external.

Conducting a search for a new director calls for a carefully considered, coordinated plan and it is wise to formulate a plan before a board is required to act by the pressure of the moment. The price of making the wrong selection is high. The director must be matched with the board and its communities with competencies to engage with all communities of the board, including marginalized ones. When the match is not good, everyone suffers and typically much time is wasted in managing difficult conflicts. This can lead to resignations, firings and expensive buyouts of contracts. It can sometimes lead to a review of the board by the Minister of Education and much negative media attention. Effective boards spend time on planning for the succession of their chief executive officer, and expect the chief executive to develop informal and formal succession plans for all key staff positions in the board.

Selection Process Considerations

The following principles and procedures should be considered when designing a selection process:
- The whole board must approve the appointment of the director of education by formal resolution. Most boards appoint an ad hoc Search Committee that includes the chair and/or vice-chair. The search committee is given clear direction by the board and develops a detailed plan of action to conduct the selection process.
- Research shows that unconscious bias plays heavily during recruitment and selection processes, particularly for leadership positions. It is strongly recommended that the entire board participate in a training session on unconscious bias prior to the start of the process and implement mitigating strategies throughout the process to limit biased decisions at every stage.
- Consultation and research within the district is an important part of the process. The board should know the strengths of the board as well as its challenges from various perspectives, including the senior team, employee groups, trustees, students, parent groups such as the Parent Involvement Committee, and the broader community. It is particularly important that the board seeks out perspectives from families and community groups representing students who are struggling and/or marginalized groups. This consultation process will help the board determine the qualities and skills the new director will need to demonstrate.
- A clear description of the qualities and skills required is developed, reviewing by relevant board advisory
committees, and approved by the board. This document will be developed as an outgrowth of the MYSP priorities and input from the consultation and research. This description becomes the foundation of the process.

- Recruitment for the position is an important step that is sometimes taken for granted. In order to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates, the board needs to think creatively to advertise the position with a broad range of community groups and education-sector organizations.

- Confidentiality, integrity and respect for all candidates are critical. The board must hold itself to high standards and continually stress and reinforce the importance of confidentiality throughout all steps in order to preserve the integrity of the board, the candidates, and the search process from start to completion.

- Clear communication is essential. To this end, boards should expect communication to flow through the chair with regular updates to the board. The announcement of the appointment of the new director should be carefully coordinated with the new director and the communications department of the board.

- As previously noted, the whole board must approve the appointment of the director by formal resolution.

- The employment contract framework and parameters are developed by the board (often with the assistance of the executive search consultant and/or board legal counsel) early in the process. Details of the contract with the successful candidate are worked out usually with the chair, vice-chair, and board legal counsel acting on behalf of the board. It is important that any responsibilities delegated by the board to the search committee and its individual members, including the chair/vice-chair, be specific and clearly stated in advance; this includes clarity around the communication expected with the full board as a contract is developed with the successful candidate.

**Executive Search Firms**

Boards are strongly advised to engage an executive search firm to advise and assist the board with the recruitment and selection process. This allows the board to be fully engaged as governors and direction setters while a professional firm undertakes the planning and detailed work that constitutes an effective search. Executive search firms assist the board by providing the time, staff resources and expertise to conduct a professional search.
The firm can recommend well tested, structured procedures to follow and assist the board to identify and describe its goals and preferences for the skills and competencies they hope to find.

Specifically, an executive search firm will provide services which include developing a customized plan and timetable for the search, consultation with stakeholders, designing application and interview forms, brochures, advertising, outreach to potential candidates, screening and assessment of candidates, short listing, verification of resumes, detailed reference checks, follow up with candidates, interview format and questions for interviews, training regarding the interview process including bias awareness training, assistance with the interviews, debriefing, and contract consultation as requested. A search firm should also be able to guarantee to the board that it will not undertake any competing or conflicting searches which might have a negative impact on the ability to deliver the best possible candidates.

The best executive search firms have successful experience in the K-12 sector in Ontario, have outstanding credentials and references, will demonstrate expertise in mitigating bias in the process, and maintain excellent networks within Ontario and across the country to assist with the identification of suitable candidates.

**Director Performance Appraisal**

The *Education Act* requires each board of trustees to review its director’s performance. It is strongly recommended that these reviews be conducted annually. Since one of the director’s primary responsibilities is to operationalize the MYSP, it is incumbent on the board of trustees to base its appraisal of the director’s performance on:

1. How much progress has been made in realizing the priorities and goals of the MYSP.
2. The director of education’s job description.

The board and the director of education should ensure they have a mutual understanding of the performance outcomes expected of the director. One highly effective practice is to include a 360° assessment as part of the review process. This includes seeking confidential feedback from the leadership team, trustees, board committee chairs, and representatives from federations and associations.

**Additional Duties of the Full Board**

As members of their school board, trustees collectively carry out many important duties in addition to those above. These include:

**Elect a Board Chair**

Each year trustees elect from among themselves the trustee who will be chair of the board. There should always be a strong collegial relationship between the chair and the
members of the board. In electing a fellow trustee to this leadership position, they are placing confidence in the chair to guide the board in its work. Clarity of roles is vital to effective governance and it will be important for the board to discuss and come to consensus on specific responsibilities they wish the chair to undertake on their behalf in addition to the duties of chair as set out in the Education Act. Key considerations, for example, will be any division of responsibilities around the role of public spokesperson for the board and expectations on the flow of communications between the chair, the board of trustees, and the director of education.

Establish the Board Vision

As members of the school board, trustees play a critical role in establishing the board’s mission, vision, values, and climate. Through their consultative work with their communities and their own thinking and ethical leadership, the board shapes a vision that is aspirational, inspirational, and motivational. This important work creates the foundation on which all other work will be built.

Maintain a Focus on Student Achievement and Well-Being

The board is entrusted with the task of developing and adopting policies that set clear expectations and standards for student achievement and well-being of students and staff, in accordance with provincial legislation and regulations. All decisions about programs of instruction, student services, learning materials and matters regarding student safety should be based on the board’s policies aimed at promoting student achievement and well-being. This includes the achievement and well-being of every student. It can be beneficial to focus on improving the outcomes for struggling students, and groups of students who show trends in lower achievement rates and anemic well-being. Such a focus will have a positive impact on all students. School board trustees are ambassadors for student achievement and well-being in their local communities.

Develop Policies and Procedures

A key responsibility of any school board is to develop and adopt policies that are based on the board’s vision and that provide a framework for implementation of the vision. Research (Leithwood 2013) indicates that “growth in student achievement and well-being is encouraged when elected boards of trustees focus on board policy and concern themselves with ensuring the district mission and vision drive the district’s improvement efforts.” The Education Act requires boards to develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the board’s goals and encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals. It is the responsibility of the board to monitor and evaluate how efficiently the board’s policies are implemented and how effective they are in achieving the board’s goals. Policies will cover such matters as student support services, instructional material, administration of schools, staffing, transportation, accommodation reviews, facilities and equipment, etc.

It is through policy that the board informs the public, the administration, and other staff of its intent. All policies should align with the board’s vision and goals. A policy is a principle or rule that guides decisions that will achieve the organization’s goals. It articulates what must be done and the rationale for it but does not deal with how it is to be done. A procedure, or a protocol, is usually administrative, and provides
the details of how policies are to be implemented.

As elected representatives, boards are expected to develop policies in an open and accountable way. The process for developing policies may vary depending on the size of the board. Boards may choose to begin policy development at the committee level, in a standing committee, or a special-purpose ad hoc committee. Boards may also simply choose to use the committee of the whole board for this purpose. Generally, administrative staff are assigned to support committee members with the information and material they need. Board members rely on the director of education and senior staff for expertise and advice to help them reach informed decisions.

It is recommended that, as part of the policy development process, boards consult on draft policies before approving and implementing them. Some boards post draft policies to their website and provide a 4-6-week window for public input. For some policies, consultation will come before beginning to draft the policy as well.

**Allocate Resources**

The most visible and significant policy that the board will approve is the annual budget. Board members participate in the budget process, ensuring that funding is aligned with the board’s priorities for improving student achievement and well-being, and that all legislated and contractual obligations are taken into consideration. A board is legally required to ensure effective stewardship of the board’s resources and to file a balanced budget.

School boards receive their funding from the province of Ontario primarily through an education funding formula, yet there are other sources of revenue that boards receive such as special grants from the Ministry, tuition fees charged for specified students, and fundraising undertaken by schools. Boards also have authority to pass bylaws to collect education development charges on new real estate developments under certain circumstances. Any revenues from this source must be applied to new school sites.

Within the funding provided by the ministry, it is the responsibility of trustees to establish a balanced budget that reflects the board’s vision, the needs of the community, and supports the board’s MYSP. While board administrators oversee day-to-day spending, the board is the steward of its resources and must ensure that funds are spent according to the approved budget.

Since school boards rely on the provincial government for funding, their flexibility in adding to or adapting local programming is limited by the dollars available. It is the responsibility of board members to help their constituents understand the parameters within which the budget is developed.

Boards establish their own budget process. How the process is structured will vary depending on the size and dynamics of the board. For example, the whole board may sit as a budget committee, or a group of trustees may form a budget committee and bring a recommended budget forward for the consideration of the whole board. Often board administrators and some community members participate on the budget committee. In some boards, trustees set the limits within which they want the budget developed and then ask administrators to prepare a plan.

Boards must adopt budgets during open meetings and should, by holding public consultations, actively seek the viewpoints of interested parties, including school councils and the board’s Parent Involvement Committee before finalizing a budget.

Public sessions also provide an opportunity for parents,
students, taxpayers, businesspeople, and board staff to offer their opinions and to indicate their level of support for the directions proposed by the board.

**Manage Board Facilities**

The board is responsible for setting policy relating to facilities, including: maintenance, acquisition and disposal of sites; building renewal plans; and site operation. All policies relating to facilities must first take into consideration requirements related to the achievement and well-being of students of the board.

**Provide Support Services**

The board sets policies that guide the actions of administration and school staff in their dealings with students and their families. In this regard, issues such as student safety, student discipline, food services, attendance, matters related to health, and student transportation are significant matters for the attention of school board members.

**Communicate with Stakeholders**

The board and individual trustees have responsibilities to communicate effectively both within the board, and with the public. (See Chapter 6, Communications, Media Relations and Social Media.)

**Ensure Staff are Well Supported**

Even though the director of education is the sole employee who reports directly to the board, the board is the employer of all employees in its schools and in the board’s administrative offices. The board holds staff accountable and implements hiring, promotion and termination policy through its director of education. These policies must reflect collective agreements, be inclusive, and equip the board to staff appropriately and effectively.

For information on the roles of directors of education and supervisory officers, and their working relationships with the board of trustees, see Chapter 1 - An Overview of Ontario’s Publicly Funded Education System.

Other areas of responsibility related to a board’s role as employer include workplace health and safety, accessibility, adherence to human rights and equity policies, and collective bargaining (see Chapter 5 - Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities).

**Fill Vacancies on the Board**

All vacancies on the board must be filled, unless the vacancy occurs within one month of the next municipal election [s. 224(a)]. A vacancy that occurs after the election but before the new board is organized shall be filled after the new board is organized [s. 224(b)]. A school board has 90
days to decide whether to fill the vacancy by appointment or by holding a by-election.

Appointment: If a majority of the trustees remain in office, the remaining trustees can appoint a qualified person within 90 days of the position becoming vacant. If a board decides to fill a vacancy by appointment, they must appoint a person who is eligible to serve on the board and who is willing to accept the appointment.

The legislation does not set out any other criteria. It is up to the board to determine how they will decide who to appoint. Different approaches include:

- Appointing the candidate who came second in the general election.
- Inviting interested persons to apply for the position.
- Offering the appointment to a member of the community.

By-election: The board can, by resolution, require that a vacancy be filled in a by-election held in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, if the vacancy occurs:

- In a year where there is no election under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996
- Prior to April in a year where there is an election under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996
- After the school board election, in a year where there is an election under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

If a majority of the trustees does not remain in office following a vacancy, a by-election must be held.

Once the school board has decided to hold a by-election, the municipal clerk is in charge of conducting the by-election. The board does not decide when nomination day or voting day will be. These dates are determined by the clerk.

Nominations open when the school board has passed a resolution ordering the by-election and sent it to the clerk who will conduct the by-election. Nominations close at 2 p.m. on nomination day.

The clerk must set the nomination day within 60 days after the by-election is ordered by council, the board or the court. Voting day takes place 45 days after nomination day.

In a by-election for a trustee position, the following persons cannot run unless their present term of office is due to end less than two months after the nominations close, or unless they resign from their present office before the nominations close:

- A trustee of another district school board or school authority.
- A member of the council of a county or municipality included in the board’s area.
- An elected member of a local board of a county or municipality included in the district school board’s area.

Subsection 7 (2) of the Municipal Elections Act (MEA) states that municipalities bear the costs of a regular election, but local boards bear the costs of by-elections under the MEA. The Ministry of Education provides funding to school boards in cases where they
are legally required to hold a by-election.

**Responsibilities of Individual Trustees**

A school trustee is a member of a board, not a member of a parliament, and it is important for both trustees and the general public to understand that school board trustees hold no individual authority. A clear understanding of a school board trustee’s role and responsibilities is fundamental to good governance.

As the representatives in their local jurisdiction, trustees consider the needs of their communities and ensure that programs and strategies are developed to address specific local needs and the needs of specific constituents in the trustee’s ward. It is through the process of collaborating and engaging in joint decision making as members of the board that trustees work with the values, priorities, and expectations of the community to translate them into policy.

The *Education Act* provides clarity about the responsibility of individual trustees to bring to the board the concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board and to consult with them on the board’s MYSP.

Once the board of trustees has voted, individual trustee members are legally bound by the majority decision, regardless of whether they supported it during debate or voted in opposition. They are required to uphold the implementation of resolutions passed by the board. Although they may not agree with the decision, trustees should be able to explain the rationale for the policy and ensure that it is understood, implemented, and monitored. Trustees who wish to explain a school board decision should do so in this context and express any divergence in their personal views in a manner that respects the decision-making authority of the collective board. In this way trustees carry a dual responsibility - as a representative of their ward and as a member of the board.

As required under the *Education Act*, individual school board trustees are to:

- Carry out his or her responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under this Act, the regulations and the guidelines issued under this Act, including but not limited to the board's duties under section 169.1
- Attend and participate in meetings of the board, including meetings of board committees of which he or she is a member
- Consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on the board’s multi-year plan under clause 169.1 (1) (f)
- Bring concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board to the attention of the board
- Uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board
- Entrust the day to day management of the board to its staff through the board’s director of education
- Maintain focus on student achievement and well-being
- Comply with the board’s code of conduct

Individual trustees interpret the role of representing their community in different ways. Some community members expect a trustee to be very active, others do not. Because Ontario’s communities are so diverse, the job of school trustee varies widely. What all trustees have in common is serving the community as elected representatives while focusing on the primary task of acting as members of a board that makes policy decisions, oversees curriculum and program delivery, and fulfils its responsibilities as an employer.

Trustees bring a range of skills, experience, knowledge, values, beliefs, and opinions to their
role. Their background does not necessarily include teaching, administration, or any other aspect of education. This diversity can support processes to be democratic and can contribute to good decision-making. The board must balance the interests of the broader community with the interests of those involved in the delivery of education.

**Advocates of Public Education**

Trustees act as education advocates at various levels. At the local level, they work on behalf of the community and must consider the unique needs of their communities when deciding what position to take on any issue.

The trustee’s role as an education advocate often extends beyond the boundaries of the district school board. In the broader public domain, trustees are education advocates throughout the province and work with the provincial government in the interest of publicly funded education. They may liaise with members of the provincial government, the school system, and with local organizations or individuals in the community.

**Code of Conduct for Trustees**

Boards recognize that the public trust placed in them as a collective body is honoured through determining and enforcing norms of acceptable behaviour, which boards usually set out in local codes of conduct for trustees.

Currently, all school boards are required to have a publicly available code of conduct for trustees and review their code on a regular basis, generally after each municipal and school board election (O. Reg. 246/18).

A code of conduct is not intended to prevent individual trustees from expressing their opinions on issues under consideration by the board, nor is it intended to prevent the public from evaluating a board’s decision-making procedures. If used effectively, the code of conduct can serve to encourage respect for divergent views and help boards focus their efforts on student achievement, equity and well-being. It is intended to provide a common understanding about how to conduct the work of the school board with appropriate authority and integrity and, thereby, promote public confidence.

Like any school board policy, a code of conduct is developed in consultation with all board members. As a matter of good practice, boards may consider engaging accountability and transparency experts (e.g. integrity commissioners) when developing/revising their code of conduct. (For more information on Code of Conduct for Trustees, see Chapter 5, Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities).

**Professional Development Opportunities**

As education leaders in their community and as advocates for the value of publicly funded education, trustees need to engage in ongoing professional learning. They must continually increase their knowledge of the education sector and good governance practices, and further develop their skills as ethical leaders, community advocates, inclusive policy makers, and strategic thinkers.

The pace of change has increased dramatically in the first two decades of the twenty-first century and it is important for trustees to be aware of changes that could affect their role. A strong level of awareness will enhance the contribution they make to the work of the board.

There are many publications that trustees can read to support their professional learning. Additionally, boards
have funding for professional development to enable trustees to participate in workshops, attend conferences, and complete courses. Trustees are strongly encouraged to participate in these and other professional development activities that allow them to grow, become more effective in their roles, and be well-informed decision makers.

A key source of professional development for trustees is through their provincial associations. In addition to timely reports and analyses of emerging issues and a rich array of website services, provincial associations offer conferences, symposia, online professional learning and training customized to meet the needs of school boards.

**Trustee Expenditures**

The Education Act also enables school boards to establish a policy that provides for reimbursement of travel and other expenses incurred in fulfilling the role of trustee [s. 191.2] Guidance is also provided by the Trustee Expenditure Guideline. See: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/july2009/Guideline_2009B08.pdf.

Trustees do not have access to board benefit plans that are provided to school board staff, such as group life insurance; general accident insurance; and sickness, hospital/medical, dental, and extended health insurance. The board may provide accident and third-party liability insurance for trustees, but a trustee would only be covered while on board business.

**Trustee Honoraria**

A board may pay each of its members an honorarium while in office. District school boards are required to establish a policy for the payment of trustee honoraria and the amount varies from board to board in accordance with the limits set out in Ontario Regulation 357/06 (Honoraria for Board Members). The outgoing school board has the responsibility to determine the level of remuneration for the new, incoming board. The honorarium for the incoming board must be determined by October 15 in the year of the municipal and school board elections.

The honorarium is paid annually and is made up of: a base amount; an enrolment amount tied to the board’s average daily enrolment; an attendance amount payable for attendance at eligible committee meetings; and a distance amount payable for attendance at eligible board and committee meetings in certain geographically dispersed boards. First Nation trustees receive the same honorarium as other members of the board. Annual trustee
honoraria across Ontario range from $7,500 to $30,000. The chair and the vice-chair of a board may receive additional amounts for the responsibility of their office.

Trustees elected to school authorities are paid yearly honoraria according to locally established policies within limits set out under Ontario Regulation 367/06 (Honoraria for Board Members). Appointed trustees to Section 68 school authorities are paid a yearly honorarium with their chair and vice-chairs receiving additional compensation.

Student trustees are entitled to an annual honorarium of $2,500, which is pro-rated if the student trustee serves less than a full year [s. 55(8)]. The board must implement a policy providing for matters relating to student trustees and the payment of honoraria.

Trustees and student trustees each have access to $5,000 annually for professional development opportunities and to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses.

As of August 24, 2018, compensation adjustments for trustees and executives have been suspended until the new government can conduct a review and put in place an appropriate expenditure management strategy.
CHAPTER 4

Board and Committee Meetings
Meetings are formal ways people gather to discuss issues and make decisions. Formal processes in these meetings help deliberations run smoothly and provide structure to board business. The Education Act [s. 207] details the parameters for open and closed meetings. Within this, boards have flexibility to create their own policies and procedures that ensure orderly, productive meetings.

**Board Meetings/ Public/Open**

One of the primary ways that school boards meet public expectations of transparency and accountability is to make policy decisions at open, public meetings. Public accountability is a cornerstone of Ontario’s education system. The *Education Act* states that all meetings of the board shall be open to the public [s. 207(1)] with certain exceptions.

Boards hold meetings regularly in order to govern effectively. Most boards adopt a regular meeting schedule, usually monthly. The dates are usually set in advance and should not be changed unless absolutely necessary.

**In-Camera/Closed/ Private Meetings**

The *Education Act* provides that a meeting of a committee of the board, including a committee of the whole board, may be closed to the public, the media, and any trustee who has declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter being discussed, when any of the following will be discussed [s. 207(2)]:

- The security of the property of the board
- The disclosure of intimate, personal, or financial information about a member of the board or one of its committees, an employee or prospective employee of the board, or a pupil or their parent or guardian
- The acquisition or disposal of a school site
- Decisions in respect of negotiations with employees of the board
- Litigation affecting the board
- An ongoing investigation by the Ontario Ombudsman.

In-camera meetings are considered a good governance practice for handling issues that are best discussed in private. They serve the core functions of assuring confidentiality, creating a mechanism for board independence and oversight, and enhancing relationships among board members and with the director of education. Over time, in-camera sessions allow for areas of possible conflict to be identified proactively. These meetings should be used sparingly with a well understood rationale for their use.

In-camera meetings may take place before, in the middle of, or at the end of a regular meeting. Typically, the need for these meetings should be determined prior to the regular board meeting; however, an in-camera
meeting may be called promptly should a particular matter arise that meets the criteria mentioned above.

A school board must make all of its decisions at a public meeting of the board, even when the discussions took place in an in-camera meeting. When this happens, it is often the director of education who determines what aspects of the private discussion can be made public.

The only motions that can be passed at an in-camera meeting are procedural and include the following:

- A motion respecting the minutes to be kept of in-camera discussions.
- A motion to revert to out-of-camera.
- A motion to recess.

Additionally, no new topics should be introduced during an in-camera session.

Student trustees may participate in in-camera meetings with the exception of those dealing with matters relating to intimate, personal or financial information about a member of the board or of a committee of the board, an employee (or prospective employee) of the board, a student, or a student’s parent or guardian.

Trustees must be aware of the confidentiality that applies to in-camera sessions. As a member of the board, a trustee’s role is to respect the board’s decision-making process and not discuss any aspect of private matters, including the nature of the topic and anything that occurred during the in-camera meeting. In certain cases, the law may require trustees to disclose proceedings discussed during in-camera meetings. Even after the board has voted on a private matter, it may still remain completely undisclosed to the public, sometimes for a short period of time, and other times forever.

### Special Meetings

Special meetings may be needed for the board to consider time-sensitive or weighty matters [s. 208(13)]. Special meetings may be called by the chair, usually in consultation with the director [s. 208(13)], but may also be called on a request, in writing to the director, by a majority of the members [s. 198(1)(d)].

### First Meeting/ Organizational Meeting

The Education Act requires a board to hold its first meeting within seven days following the start of the term of office [s. 208(2)]. For this term of office, the first meeting must be held no later than December 7, 2018. By default, the first meeting is held at the board office on the first Wednesday of December. The board can determine an alternate location and day, as long as it is within the first seven days of the term of office [s. 208(2)].

The first meeting of a term of office will always be an organizational meeting. Organizational meetings accomplish the following:

- Elect the chair of the board for a one-year term [s. 208(4), (5)]
- Elect a vice-chair, where appropriate
- Determine committee structure and provide direction for the development of terms of reference for each committee
- Adopt a meeting schedule for board and committee meetings for the following 12-month period
- Appoint members to committees.

### Board Meetings – Operations

#### Agendas

Board staff must provide trustees and the public with proper notice of an upcoming meeting [s. 198(1)(c)] and the agenda of items to be discussed. Most often this is
done by posting the agenda to the board website and emailing it to the trustees.

The chair, in consultation with the director of education, sets the agenda for meetings and a process is established whereby individual trustees can request that a matter be considered for inclusion on an agenda. The chair works closely with the director of education to ensure that the rights and privileges of board members are recognized, and to ensure that administrative requirements are met.

Minutes

Minutes are official records of what happened in a board meeting. The secretary of the board is responsible for keeping a full and accurate record of the proceedings of every meeting of the board and for ensuring that the minutes, when confirmed, are signed by the chair of the meeting.

Minutes will include:
- When and where the meeting took place
- Who was present
- All matters considered at the meeting (in some boards, only the decisions are recorded, in other boards, the discussion is also recorded)
- All decisions made, including procedural steps taken to reach those decisions. The votes of individual members are not in the minutes unless a recorded vote has been requested. Student trustees are not members of the board and are not entitled to exercise a binding vote on any matter before the board [s. 55(2)]. However, they are entitled to request a recorded non-binding vote in order to have their opinion officially reflected in the board minutes.

Meeting minutes are public documents [s. 207(4)] and should be posted to the board’s website along with any report or background information considered by the board at the meeting. Some boards find it helpful and a matter of good public relations to produce a summary of board decisions soon after the meeting to distribute to trustees, board staff and post on the board’s public website.

Attendance at Board Meetings

Trustees are expected to attend all regular meetings of the board, either physically or through electronic means. Trustees are also expected to attend all meetings of the committee(s) of which they are a member. A trustee may not be absent from three consecutive regular meetings of the board without the permission of the board [s. 228(1)].

Participation by Electronic Means

Every board must develop and implement a policy providing for the use of electronic means for the holding of meetings of a board and meetings of a committee of a board, including a committee of the whole board [Ont. Reg. 463/97 (Electronic Meetings), s. 2(1)]. Participation by electronic means must be noted in the record of the meeting’s attendance.

A member who participates by electronic means must ask the chair to be recognized and inform the meeting when joining, leaving or returning to a meeting. This is necessary to enable the chair to properly conduct votes.

While electronic participation is permitted, each trustee must physically attend three meetings in a 12-month period beginning December 1.

Quorum

A meeting of the board cannot be convened until a quorum is present. A quorum is “a majority of all the members constituting a board” [s. 208(11)]. The number for quorum is constant and does not get reduced even if there’s a vacancy on the board (due to resignation, death, etc.). Student trustees
are not included in the number required to constitute a quorum.

If a lack of quorum is caused from one or more members declaring conflicts of interest, the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act provides that a meeting may continue without the members who have declared conflicts of interest as long as there are no fewer than two members remaining [s. 7(1)]. The Act also provides remedies that may be applied if there are fewer than two members remaining [s. 7(2,3)].

**Rules of Order**

School board meetings are run according to parliamentary procedure. These rules of procedure are designed to allow trustees to introduce motions and proceed with debate, dissent, and decision making in an orderly way. Although specific practices may vary, most school boards follow accepted rules of parliamentary procedure for their public decision-making processes. The most commonly used procedures are the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order or Bourinot’s rules, but should be based on these authorities while taking into consideration the privileges and duties of school board members, democratic principles, and any special rules deemed necessary to suit the needs of an elected member who represents constituents and the needs of a school board.

Some boards conduct orientation sessions for new trustees that include the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. Others may have a staff member present at meetings who can answer procedural questions.

A board’s meeting rules do not need to be as comprehensive or complex as Robert’s or Bourinot’s rules, but should be based on these authorities while taking into consideration the privileges and duties of school board members, democratic principles, and any special rules deemed necessary to suit the needs of an elected member who represents constituents and the needs of a school board.

**Key Roles of the Board**

**Chair and Vice-Chair**

The board chair and vice-chair (if a board chooses) are appointed for one-year terms. School boards may choose to have elections for the position of chair and vice-chair by secret ballot or by recorded voting (public). If there is a tied vote, the Act stipulates that it shall be decided by the drawing of lots.

The Education Act does not indicate the number of years or terms that the same person may continue as chair, however, boards may create a by-law with term limits.

**Attendance**

The chair of a meeting must be physically present in the
meeting room unless the board has a policy allowing the chair to preside over meetings by electronic means. If the board has such a policy in place, the chair may preside over meetings electronically if any of the following applies:

- The distance between the chair’s residence and the meeting location is 200km or more.
- Weather conditions do not allow the chair to travel to the meeting safely.
- The chair cannot physically attend the meeting due to health-related issues.

No more than half of board meetings in a 12-month period, beginning December 1, can be chaired electronically.

**Chair Responsibilities**

A chair of the board has the following additional duties [s 281.4]:

- Preside over meetings of the board
- Conduct the meetings in accordance with the board’s procedures and practices
- Establish agendas for board meetings, in consultation with the board’s director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education
- Ensure that members of the board have the information needed for informed discussion of the agenda items
- Act as spokesperson to the public on behalf of the board, unless otherwise determined by the board
- Convey the decisions of the board to the board’s director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education

The chair may vote on all matters but has only one vote as any other trustee. However, a chair, while presiding over a meeting, should not participate in the discussion or make motions. If a chair wishes to have their views heard, the chair must delegate their responsibilities to another trustee at the beginning of the discussion. The gavel may be returned to the chair only when consideration of the matter is concluded.

The chair must adhere to the board’s directions and may not act unilaterally. The chair of the board is also an individual trustee and has no greater rights or powers than any other member of the board other than the abovementioned additional duties.

The chair may call special meetings of the board [s. 208(13)] and, as the presiding officer, may, at their discretion, have people removed from meetings for improper conduct [s. 207(3)].
This includes trustees as well as members of the public.

**Board Secretary**

The *Education Act* provides that the director of education shall act as the secretary of the board [s. 283.1(1)(c)]; however, if the board has no more than five members it may appoint one of its members to act as secretary. If the director is the secretary, they may assign the secretary role to a qualified staff member.

**Board Treasurer**

The *Education Act* requires each board to appoint a treasurer. If the board has no more than five members, the treasurer may be a board member [s. 170(1)]. The treasurer is required to receive and account for all money of the board and produce, when required by the board or auditors or other competent authority, papers and money in their possession, power or control that belong to the board.

The director is often assigned as treasurer of the board. The director may assign the treasurer role to a qualified staff member.

**Committees**

Committees provide boards the opportunity to have specific issues of the board researched and discussed by a small body, with recommendations presented to the board for decision. Some committees are made up entirely of trustees and some will have a mix of members.

Most boards have a structure for their committees that contributes to efficient and effective board meetings and effective decision-making. Committees can gather information, involve members of the community, and hear delegations from the public without using limited board time.

Committee meetings generally follow the same parliamentary procedure adopted by the board, and follow the terms of reference set by the board. Committees should record the minutes of their meetings, and/or make a report to the board following every meeting. Committees may include recommendations for consideration by the board; however, the board, as a whole, makes the final decision.

Serving on committees has several advantages for board members. Committee work allows new trustees to become familiar with the conduct of board business at a less formal level and to learn more about a specific topic. Trustees also have opportunities in committees to provide input in areas in which they have special interest or expertise.

**Types of Committees**

Standing or permanent committees generally deal with ongoing or recurring matters, such as those specified in the legislation, and are an integral part of the board structure. Only trustees are members of standing or permanent committees. A staff person is usually assigned as a resource person to provide expertise, fulfill administrative requirements, and provide necessary information.

Advisory committees are established on either a short or long-term basis to provide input into policy development or other areas where the board would benefit from the experience and expertise of other participants. Non-trustee members might include teachers, students, parents, members of the community or local business-people and, in the case of Catholic boards, members of the clergy. Many boards now establish advisory committees as part of their commitment to public consultation.

Statutory Committees are required in accordance with the relevant regulation. Trustee representation on these advisory committees is required. The four statutory committees are:

- Special Education Advisory Committee (O. Reg 464/97)
- Audit Committee (O. Reg 361/10)
- School Councils and Parent Involvement Committee (O. Reg 612/00)
- Supervised Alternative Learning Committee (O. Reg. 374/10)

Select, special or ad hoc committees, such as task forces or work groups, investigate a specific issue and report to the board within a stated time frame. These committees are generally created by a board resolution and are comprised and led by trustees.

External committees are those requested by bodies external to the board who may ask for trustee representation. Such committees may be called by a trustee association, a municipality, a research body, or other organization external to the school board.

Committee of the Whole Board

With a majority vote, the board can decide to go into committee of the whole board, generally called “committee of the whole.” This allows matters to be discussed in a less formal setting. Some boards will hold committee of the whole meetings to deal with matters that fall outside the purview of other committees or to hear from representatives of other levels of government.

No minutes are to be taken during these sessions, and no decisions are to be made. Any discussion at the committee of the whole is then brought as a recommendation to the board for approval at a public meeting.
CHAPTER 5

Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities

Note: This chapter can provide only a basic introduction to the legal issues that affect trustees and school boards. The following information is not conveyed as legal advice and should not be acted on without first consulting legal counsel.
School boards are responsible for local governance of the delivery of education services in Ontario. This is a vital service in our society and one which employs a great many people. It is not surprising then that school boards are subject to a wide range of legal obligations and responsibilities, arising from both legislation and common law (court rulings).

Certain provisions of Canada’s Constitution are particularly relevant for school boards. These include: ss. 2 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and, for Catholic schools, s. 93 of the Constitution Act 1867 and s. 29 of the Charter; and, for French-language schools, s. 23 of the Charter.

Relevant Statutes

Ontario’s Education Act is the primary statute governing elementary and secondary education in the province. Other statutes that significantly affect school board operations include:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Anti-Racism Act, 2017
- Arbitration Act, 1991
- Assessment Act
- Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010
- Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014
- Canadian Anti-SPAM Legislation (S.C. 2010, c.23)
- Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014
- Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017
- Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (Canada)
- Copyright Act (Canada)
- Criminal Code (Part V - non-consensual distribution of intimate images)
- Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007
- Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996
- Employment Standards Act, 2000
- Expropriations Act
- Human Rights Code
- Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)
- Immunization of School Pupils Act
- Labour Relations Act, 1995
- Municipal Act, 2001/City of Toronto Act, 2006
- Municipal Conflict of Interest Act
- Municipal Elections Act, 1996
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Ombudsman Act
- Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001
- Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996
- Pay Equity Act
- Planning Act
- Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015
- Public Inquiries Act, Part II
- Ryan’s Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools), 2015
- Sabrina’s Law, 2005 (An Act to Protect Anaphylactic Pupils)
Statutory Duties and Powers of School Boards

The Education Act sets out the duties and powers of school boards. Sections 169.1 and 170 of the Act outline the duties of school boards in Ontario. Failure by a board to perform any one of these duties may result in that board’s liability to third parties who are in some way damaged by the board’s act or omission.

Sections 171 to 197 outline various powers that school boards may exercise. Failure by a board to exercise any of these powers may not create any liability. However, once a board undertakes any such power, it has a duty to exercise reasonable care and skill in the performance of that power, and failure to do so could result in the board’s liability to third parties to whom the duty of care extends for any damages sustained.

A school board may face liability if it inadvertently or intentionally acts beyond the scope of its legal authority. For example, a ratepayers’ group may appeal to the court to quash a decision of a school board on the grounds that the board lacked jurisdiction.

School Board Policies and Liability

To reduce the risk of liability, school boards should establish clear and accessible policies, especially in certain critical areas:

- Accessibility
- Bullying preventing and intervention
- Child abuse prevention and intervention
- Concussion prevention, identification and management
- Equity and inclusive education
- Field trips
- Human rights including religious accommodation
- Medicine administered to pupils by school staff
- Nutritional standards for food and beverages
- School dances
- School violence

- Student transportation provided by the board or school
- Supporting pupils with prevalent medical conditions (anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, and/or epilepsy)
- Suspensions, suspension appeals, expulsion hearings, and progressive discipline of students
- Trespass on property
- Use and possession of drugs and alcohol
- Workplace violence and workplace harassment

Board policies should be reinforced clearly by operational procedures and standards at the board level and in each school.

Standard of Care for Students

A school board and its employees or volunteers are expected to provide the same standard of care for students as would be provided by a reasonably careful or prudent parent in the circumstances. This is commonly referred to as the “Reasonably Prudent Parent Doctrine.” The duty of care is to protect the student from all reasonably foreseeable risks of harm. The precise degree of care required in any given case will vary with the particular facts, which may include:
The number of students being supervised at any given time
The nature of the exercise or activity in progress
The age of the students, and the degrees of skill and training they may have received in connection with such activities
The competency and capacity of the students involved; and
The nature and condition of the equipment in use at the time.

Negligence
Generally, if a student is injured, the school board will be found liable for that injury if the court determines that all of the following conditions apply:
- There was a duty of care owed by the school authorities to provide adequate supervision and protection of its students.
- The school authorities breached that duty of care by either failing to supervise or protect the student or were otherwise negligent (intentionally or unintentionally).
- The student suffered actual damage or loss.
- The breach of that duty of care was the cause of the student’s injury.

Vicarious Liability
It is important to note that a school board may be considered vicariously liable for all acts of negligence performed by its employees and volunteers acting within the scope of their employment or authority. In the case of a principal or teacher, liability flows to the corporate board.

Standard of Care
Requirements for Principals and Teachers
In addition to the requirement of adhering to the common law standard of care of the careful or prudent parent, principals and teachers also have statutory duties under the Education Act [s. 264, s. 264.1 and s. 265] and Regulation 298 (Operation of Schools – General). Principals’ and teachers’ performance of statutory duties must be monitored to determine whether their performance creates a standard of reasonable conduct. Violation of a statute is only evidence of negligence and does not necessarily prove negligence.

Personal Liability of Trustees
Generally, with the exception of subsections 198(4), 230.12(3) [Part VIII], 253(6), and 257.45(3) of the Education Act, trustees will not be found personally liable for their inadvertent acts and omissions as trustees, as long as they act within the scope of their authority. Personal liability of trustees may also arise under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act or the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 with regard to campaign finances.

Trustees have been held personally liable where their actions either were considered to be in willful disregard of the provisions of the governing legislation or were not performed honestly, conscientiously, or in good faith.

Subsection 198(4) of the Education Act establishes that a trustee of a board is personally liable if a school board, of which he or she is a member, refuses or neglects to take proper insurance on the treasurer, or other persons to whom it entrusts board money, if any of the money is lost because the board did not obtain insurance. A trustee is not liable if he or she can prove that he or she made reasonable efforts to obtain such insurance. The lost monies may be recovered by the school board, or by any ratepayer, assessed for the support of the schools under the jurisdiction of the board, who sues personally and on
behalf of all other such ratepayers.

Subsection 253(6) of the Education Act provides that any trustee who refuses or neglects to provide to an auditor of the school board:

- access to the records of the school board;
- information; or
- an explanation

as required by subsection 253(5), is guilty of an offence and, on conviction, is liable to a fine of not more than $200. However, no trustee is liable if the trustee proves that he or she has made reasonable efforts to provide the access or the information or the explanation.

The Act also stipulates that a trustee who sits or votes at any meeting of the board after becoming disqualified from sitting is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than $200 [213(1)]. This applies to every such meeting the trustee sits or votes at. A similar penalty applies to a trustee who knowingly signs a false report [213(2)], willfully makes a false statement in a declaration made under the Act [211] or who disrupts, endeavors to disturb or interrupt a meeting with the intent to prevent the discussion of any matter or passing of any motion at a meeting of a board, or a committee of the board, including a committee of the whole board, after having been expelled or excluded from the meeting [212(2)].

**Finance**

One of the most significant responsibilities of the board of trustees is to set the board’s budget each year. While the Ministry of Education provides the grants used to support their local education system, trustees must work with the dollars provided and, in accordance with statutory requirements, develop a budget that best suits the programs and services offered in their communities. In order to set policies and approve the final budget, all trustees must understand Part IX of the Education Act. This sets out complex rules on the funding of education, and on the borrowing and investment activities of school boards.

The Education Act requires that boards set only balanced budgets [s. 231]. The penalties for failing to do so, which can be severe, are laid out in Division D of Part IX of the Education Act. Division D permits the Minister of Education to appoint an investigator (auditor) to investigate the financial affairs of a school board under certain circumstances. These are:

- Financial statements indicate that the board operated in a deficit
- Failure to submit or comply with a financial recovery plan as ordered by the Minister
- Failure to pay any debentures
Defaulting on debts or other financial liabilities; or
The Minister has concerns about the board’s ability to meet its financial obligations.

Ultimately, Division D permits the Minister to issue orders, directions, and decisions relating to the affairs of the board, and even to assume complete control over all the board’s affairs, except for denominational matters in the case of Catholic boards, and linguistic matters in the case of French-language boards.

Subsection 257.45(3) provides that a trustee is personally liable if all of the following conditions apply:
- The board is subject to an order under subsection 257.31(2) or (3) (Division D).
- The board uses any of its funds contrary to the Minister’s orders.
- The trustee voted for that use of funds.

A trustee who voted to use funds in a way that contravenes an order is jointly and severally liable for the amount used, and those funds may be recovered through a court action.

**Compliance with Board Obligations**

The *Education Act* also contains provisions for the use of ministerial ordered investigations into non-financial matters [Part VIII, Compliance with Board Obligations]. The Minister of Education has the authority to direct an investigation into general school board operations, including program and curriculum matters, class size, trustee compensation, items that promote provincial interest in education, and spending [s. 230].

Such an investigation could result in a finding of non-compliance and lead to either the Minister’s issuing a direction to the board to address the non-compliance (or the likelihood of non-compliance), or in the ministry’s taking control of the board’s affairs; this could involve the appointment of a supervisor.

Where the Minister has issued a direction, and he or she is of the opinion that the board has failed to comply with a direction, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can grant a vesting order giving the Minister control over the administration of all board affairs except for denominational matters in the case of Catholic boards, and linguistic matters in the case of French-language boards. The Minister would maintain control until the board is in compliance.

As is the case with s. 257.45(3) described previously, under s. 230.12(3) any trustee who votes to use funds in a way that contravenes an order is jointly and severally liable for the amount used, and may face court action for recovery of the funds.
Provincial Interest Regulation

In accordance with Ontario Regulation 43/10 (Provincial Interest in Education) the Minister may provide for a review of the performance of a school board, if the Minister has concerns regarding the performance of a school board with respect to the following areas:

- Academic achievement of students
- Student health and safety
- Good governance of the school board
- Performance of the board and of the director of education in carrying out their responsibilities under the Education Act
- Level of parent involvement.

The review process would result in a report to the Minister. The board would be consulted about this report, which could result in the Minister making recommendations to the board to address concerns that have been reviewed. The Minister would likely not consider board supervision pursuant to section 230, unless a school board refuses to or does not fully participate in a review process, or refuses to give full and fair consideration to recommended changes arising out of the review.

Conduct of Trustees

The Education Act establishes the duties of individual trustees [s. 218.1]. This section provides that a trustee shall:

- Carry out his or her responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under the Act, the regulations and guidelines issued under the Act including but not limited to the board’s duties under section 169.1
- Attend and participate in meetings of the board including meetings of board committees of which he or she is a member
- Consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on the board’s multi-year plan under clause 169.1(1)(f)
- Bring concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board to the attention of the board
- Uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board
- Entrust the day to day management of the board to its staff through the board’s director of education
- Maintain focus on student achievement and well-being, and
- Comply with the board’s code of conduct

Trustee Code of Conduct

The Education Act authorizes boards to adopt a code of conduct for trustees [s. 218.2] and provides an enforcement mechanism for boards to enforce their code of conduct at the local level [s. 218.3].

All school boards must adopt a publicly available code of conduct for trustees on or before May 15, 2019 (Ontario Regulation 246/18). If a school board had a trustee code of conduct prior to when the Regulation came into force on April 16, 2018, then the board must review its code of conduct on or before May 15, 2019. Every board must review its trustee code of conduct on or before May 15th in every fourth year thereafter.

When a board reviews its code of conduct, it must comply with the following requirements:

- Determine whether any changes are required to the code of conduct
- If changes are required, make the required changes
- If no changes are required, confirm the existing code of conduct.

All boards must pass a board resolution setting out the course of action determined above.
Enforcement of Code of Conduct

A trustee who has reasonable grounds to believe that another trustee has breached the board’s code of conduct may bring the alleged breach to the attention of the board of trustees. Boards must inquire into any reasonable allegation of a code of conduct violation brought to the board’s attention. Boards may hire a neutral third-party investigator, including an integrity commissioner, to investigate the complaint and recommend possible sanction(s) if necessary.

If a board of trustees determines that a trustee has breached the board’s code of conduct, the board of trustees may impose one or more of the following sanctions:

- Censure the trustee
- Bar the trustee from attending all or part of a meeting of the board or meeting of a committee of the board
- Bar the trustee from sitting on one or more committees of the board, for the period of time specified by the board.

The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

School boards are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). This Act provides that every person has a right of access to recorded information in the custody, or under the control, of a school board unless the information falls within one of the limited and specific exemptions listed in the Act.

In addition, the Act protects the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information, as defined in MFIPPA, that is held by school boards, and provides those individuals with a right of access to their information. MFIPPA governs the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by boards. Of necessity, school boards have large volumes of personal information pertaining to both employees and students. All school board officials and employees, including trustees, should familiarize themselves with the basic provisions of MFIPPA to prevent inadvertent violation of the statute. Any person found guilty of willfully contravening the Act, as set out in section 48, or of altering, concealing or destroying a record, or cause any other person to do so, with the intention of denying a right under MFIPPA to access the record or the information contained in the record is liable to a fine not exceeding $5000.

Every school board may designate, in writing, an individual trustee or a committee of trustees to act as “head” of the school board for the purposes of MFIPPA. In the absence of such a designate, the school board is the “head.” The head usually delegates its powers or duties under the Act to officers of the school board who carry out the day-to-day management of the matters covered by MFIPPA.

Confidentiality of Student Records

The Education Act requires the principal of a school to establish and maintain an Ontario Student Record (OSR) for each student enrolled in the school. The contents of that record are specified in Ministry of Education guidelines.

In addition to the protection of confidentiality of the OSR offered by MFIPPA, section 266 of the Education Act establishes that the OSR information is privileged for the information and use of supervisory officers, principals, teachers and early childhood educators of the school for the
improvement of instruction of the student, and should not be disclosed to anyone else, including a court of law, except in certain limited circumstances.

Each student of a board is assigned an Ontario Education Number (OEN). This number is the key identifier on the OSR. It follows the student throughout his or her elementary and secondary education, making it easier to keep reliable records on the movement and progress of individual students while also protecting their privacy. The OEN is used on:

- Student records (the OSR and other related forms)
- Applications for enrolment into specific programs, schools, or institutions
- Provincial assessments, tests, and evaluations of the student’s achievement.

The data gathered through the use of OENs allows the Ministry to evaluate the implementation of new initiatives, identify areas that require improvement, and analyze trends and identify future needs.

**The Youth Criminal Justice Act**

The Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) applies to persons between the ages of 12 to 17 inclusive. The YCJA establishes that no person shall publish by any means the name of any young person or child, or any information that could identify such person as the offender, victim, or witness concerning an offence committed, or alleged to have been committed, by a young person. This includes any report concerning the hearing, adjudication, disposition, or appeal with respect to such an offence.

The Act provides an exception to the non-disclosure of the identity of the young offender where the young person has received an adult sentence. The Act also allows for disclosure where a Youth Court judge has ordered such disclosure, or where the provincial director, a youth worker, a peace officer, or any other person engaged in the provision of services to a young person determines that it is necessary to disclose the identity of the young offender to a representative of a school board or school to ensure the safety of staff, students, or other persons, to facilitate rehabilitation of the young person, or to ensure compliance with a court order.

The representative of the school board or school who receives this information may subsequently disclose that information to other persons, only as is necessary to ensure the safety of staff, students, or other persons.

Any person to whom this information has been disclosed must:

- Keep the information separate from any other record of the young person to whom the information is related (including the OSR).
Ensure that no other person has access to the information

Destroy the information when the information is no longer required for the purpose for which it was disclosed.

This means that school board officials must be very careful not to identify any young person or child connected with an offence to anyone – including students, parents of other students, the community, or the media – except as specifically authorized by the Youth Criminal Justice Act or a court.

**Behaviour and Discipline**

The Education Act sets out specific obligations for school boards with respect to behaviour, discipline and safety of students. The provincial Code of Conduct sets the standard of behaviour for all persons in schools. The Act clearly identifies:

- Activities that must be considered for suspension or expulsion of a student
- Who has the authority to suspend or expel a student
- The mitigating factors and other factors to be taken into account when considering suspension or expulsion decisions (Ontario Regulation 472/07 – Behaviour, Discipline and Safety of Pupils).

**Conducting a Suspension Appeal/Expulsion Hearing**

The Education Act states [s. 302(6)] that a board shall establish polices and guidelines governing appeals of a decision to suspend a pupil, principals’ investigations to determine whether to recommend that a pupil be expelled, and expulsion hearings. The Act also requires that the policies and guidelines address such matters and include such requirements as specified by the Minister.

The board may authorize a committee of at least three members of the board to exercise and perform powers and duties on behalf of the board and may impose conditions and restrictions on the committee.

**Suspension**

The following persons may appeal, to the board, a principal’s decision to suspend a pupil:

- The pupil’s parent or guardian, unless the pupil is at least 18 years old, or is 16 or 17 years old and has withdrawn from parental control
- The pupil, if the pupil is at least 18 years old, or is 16 or 17 years old and has withdrawn from parental control
- Such other persons as may be specified by board policy.

Every board shall designate a supervisory officer for the purposes of receiving notices of intention to appeal a suspension. The board shall hear and determine the appeal of a suspension, and the decision of a board on an appeal is final.
Appeals of suspensions are conducted by the board in accordance with the board’s developed procedures.

**Expulsion**

If a principal recommends to the board that a pupil be expelled, the board shall hold an expulsion hearing and, for that purpose, the board has powers and duties as specified by board policy.

It is the board that decides to expel pupils and whether the pupils are expelled from their school only or from all schools of the board. In making this decision, the board must consider any applicable mitigating or other factors, the submissions and views of all parties to the hearing, and any written response to the principal’s report to the board recommending expulsion. The parties to the expulsion hearing are:

- The principal
- The pupil’s parent or guardian, unless the pupil is at least 18 years old, or is 16 or 17 years old and has withdrawn from parental control
- The pupil, if the pupil is at least 18 years old, or is 16 or 17 years old and has withdrawn from parental control
- Such other persons as may be specified by board policy.

If the pupil is not a party to the expulsion hearing, the pupil still has the right to be present and make a statement on his or her own behalf. The board’s decision to expel may be appealed to a designated tribunal. The Child and Family Services Review Board is designated to hear appeals of board decisions to expel pupils. (Ontario Regulation 472/07 - Behaviour, Discipline and Safety of Pupils).

Members of the committee or board should seek legal advice before the hearing to ensure that they conduct the appeal/hearing properly, follow all rules of procedural fairness, and meet their legal obligations to protect both board employees and students.

Trustees who serve on the board or the suspension appeal and/or expulsion hearing committees of the board must remember that they are serving in a quasi-judicial capacity.

Boards are required to provide programs for students on long-term suspension and for students expelled from all schools of the board. A long-term suspension is a suspension for a term of from 6 to 20 school days. The Education Act requires all board employees to report serious student incidents that must be considered for suspension or expulsion, to the principal. It also requires principals to contact parents of victims who have been harmed as the result of such incidents and requires school staff who work directly with students to respond to inappropriate and disrespectful student behaviour.

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

School boards are required to have policies and guidelines on bullying prevention and intervention (which includes cyber-bullying), to create safe and inclusive schools, support and maintain a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all students and to take measures to prevent and address inappropriate behavior in schools. This includes:

- The requirement for principals to suspend and consider recommending expulsion for bullying if the student was previously suspended for bullying and the student’s continued presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk to the safety of another person.
- The requirement for principals to suspend and consider recommending expulsion for incidents that are motivated by bias, prejudice or hate.
- The requirement for school boards to educate teachers and staff about bullying prevention and strategies,
to provide programs, interventions and supports for pupils who have been bullied, witnessed incidents of bullying or who have engaged in bullying, and put on Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, which begins on the third Sunday in November of each year.

- The requirement for boards to support students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that: promote a safe and inclusive learning environment; acceptance of and respect for others; and, the creation of a positive school climate.

The Education Act requires school boards to ensure that “promoting a positive school climate” and “promoting the prevention of bullying” as incorporated into the aims of the multi-year plan. As such, boards are required to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these policies, review the multi-year plan annually, and make the plan available to supporters and employees of the board.

**Child Abuse and Duty to Report**

Every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to a child should be familiar with the duty to report a child who is or who may be in need of protection. This is required under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017. For the purposes of this Act, a child means a person younger than the age of 18. The duty to report is mandatory for children who are less than 16 years of age and persons may report children who are 16 and 17 years of age who are or may be in need of protection.

**Student Protection**

The Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 (OCTA) contains broad definitions of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct and includes sexual abuse of a student and sexual misconduct as part of the definition of professional misconduct with respect to a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. Paragraph 12.1 of subsection 170 (1) of the Education Act requires a school board to ensure that a teacher perform no duties involving contact with pupils if that teacher has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code involving sexual conduct with minors, or any other offence under the Criminal Code which, in the board’s opinion, puts pupils at risk. A board is also required to report this to the College under s. 43.3 (1) of the OCTA.

Further, under the OCTA, a school board is required to report to the College when a member’s employment is terminated, suspended or when a member’s duties are restricted for reasons of professional misconduct. This reporting requirement also applies if the employer intended to terminate, suspend or impose restrictions on the member’s duties for reasons of professional misconduct but the employer did not do so because the member resigned, or if the member resigns during an investigation into allegations of an act or omission by a member that would, if proven, have resulted in any of these actions. A school board must also report to the College if it is of the opinion that a member’s conduct should be reviewed by a committee of the College.

Both the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 require a member’s certificate of registration to be revoked when the member is found guilty of an act of professional misconduct consisting of, or including, specified acts of sexual abuse of a student/child or a prohibited act involving child pornography. The Acts also require mandatory suspension of a member’s certificate when the member is found guilty of any act of professional misconduct consisting of, or including, acts of sexual abuse of a student/child that do not result in mandatory revocation.
of the member’s certificate of registration.

The Acts allow the Colleges’ Councils or Executive Committees to make an interim order to suspend or impose terms, conditions or limitations on a member’s certificate of registration at the investigation stage if the actions or conduct of the member exposes or is likely to expose students or children to harm or injury.

Further, once the provisions are proclaimed, the Acts will require the Colleges to establish and administer new programs to provide funding for counselling/therapy for students/children who were subject to alleged sexual abuse or an act of child pornography by a member.

**Criminal Background Reference Checks**

Ontario Regulation 521/01 (Collection of Personal Information) provides school boards with another tool to promote a safe school environment. The regulation requires that school boards collect personal criminal history from all service providers who have direct and regular contact with students and employees.

**Health and Safety**

To provide a safe and suitable learning and working environment for school staff and students, it is critical that classroom practice and the learning environment comply with relevant federal, provincial and municipal health and safety legislation and by-laws, including:

- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act

Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspectors conduct health and safety inspections in schools to raise awareness of workplace health and safety hazards and to promote compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations.

Policy/Program Memorandum 76A provides direction to school boards regarding coverage under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 (WSIA) for students in work education or experiential learning programs. The Ministry of Education provides coverage for students participating in such programs, where the student is considered a worker. Coverage for these students is provided by the ministry, but school boards, with the assistance of placement employers, must ensure that the requirements of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board are properly adhered to both prior to and during the work placements.

**Exclusions**

Pursuant to the Education Act [ss. 265(1)], subject to an appeal to the board, a principal
has a duty to refuse to admit to the school or classroom a person (including a student) whose presence would, in the principal’s judgment, be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils.

An exclusion appeal is heard by the board of trustees in accordance with any appeal process established by a school board. A board’s decision will either uphold or quash the exclusion and such a decision is final.

Protecting Pupils with Prevalent Medical Conditions

By September 1, 2018, all school boards should have policies in place to support students in school who have asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and/or who are at risk for anaphylaxis (Policy/Program Memorandum 161). This is an expanded requirement to what is mandated under Sabrina’s Law, An Act to Protect Anaphylactic Pupils, which helps to protect pupils with life-threatening allergies and to create a safe and healthy school environment and Ryan’s Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools), 2015, which seeks to protect pupils with asthma.

The identified prevalent medical conditions may be life-threatening and it is essential for school board staff, including principals, teachers and other staff who have direct contact with students at risk for any of these conditions throughout the school day to be aware of the issues they face and are equipped to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency.

While parents of children with prevalent medical conditions are expected to actively participate with school staff in supporting the management of their child’s medical conditions, inform the school of same and co-create their child’s Plan of Care, and students are expected to support the development and implementation of their Plan of Care if capable of doing so, school boards also have specific obligations. School boards must provide resources and annual training on prevalent medical conditions, develop strategies to reduce risks for students, expectations for safe storage and disposal of medication and supplies and permit students to carry their medication and supplies as outlined in their Plan of Care. School boards must also outline how school staff should respond to medical incidents and/or medical emergencies.

Employees of a board may be preauthorized to administer medication or supervise a pupil while the pupil takes medication in response to an anaphylactic reaction or asthma exacerbation, if the school has the consent of the parent, guardian or pupil, and specifically for anaphylactic reaction, if the school has up-to-date treatment information. If an employee has reason to believe that a pupil is experiencing an anaphylactic reaction or asthma exacerbation, the employee may administer an epinephrine auto-injector or other medication that is
prescribed, even if there is no preauthorization to do so. The Good Samaritan Act, 2001 protects individuals, including employees, from liability with respect to voluntary emergency medical or first-aid services and provides that individuals will not be liable for damages as a result of the individual’s negligence in acting or failing to act, unless the damages are the result of the person’s gross negligence. Both Sabrina’s Law and Ryan’s Law contain provisions limiting the liability of individuals responding to or neglecting to respond to an emergency relating to anaphylaxis or asthma.

**School Food and Beverage Policy**

As outlined in the School Food and Beverage Policy, school boards are required to ensure that food and beverages sold on school premises for school purposes meet the requirements set out in Policy/Program Memorandum 150.

The nutrition standards apply to food and beverages sold at the school (e.g., cafeterias, vending machines, tuck shops), through all programs (e.g., catered lunch programs), and at all events (e.g., bake sales, sports events).

The nutrition standards do not apply to food and beverages that are:
- Offered in schools to students at no cost
- Brought from home or purchased off school premises and are not for resale in schools
- Available for purchase during field trips off school premises
- Sold in schools for non-school purposes (e.g., sold by an outside organization that is using the gymnasium after school hours for a non-school-related event)
- Sold for fundraising activities that occur off school premises
- Sold in staff rooms.

The following requirements must also be met:
- School boards must comply with Ontario Regulation 200/08 (Trans Fat Standards), and any other applicable regulations made under the Education Act.
- Principals must take into consideration strategies developed under the school board’s policy on anaphylaxis to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents.
- Food and beverages must be prepared, served, and stored in accordance with Regulation 562 (Food Premises), as amended, made under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.
- School boards must ensure that students have access to drinking water during the school day.
- The diversity of students and staff must be taken into consideration in order to accommodate religious and/or cultural needs.

The school principal may designate up to ten days (or fewer, as determined by the school board) during the school year as special-event days on which food and beverages sold in schools would be exempt from the nutrition standards outlined in this memorandum. The school principal must consult with the school council prior to designating a day as a special-event day. School principals are encouraged to consult with their students in making these decisions.

School boards are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy memorandum.

Additional information is available at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/policy.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/policy.html).
Supervised Alternative Learning

School boards are required by regulation (O. Reg 374/10) to establish a Supervised Alternative Learning Committee, which is to include a trustee. The board’s committee approves applications for students age 14-17 to be excused from attendance at school to participate in Supervised Alternative Learning. This may include employment, credit courses, life skills courses, training or other studies/activities that the committee deems suitable for the student. Regular monitoring of the student is required. The intent is for the student to retain a link to the board and to continue learning when other strategies have not proven effective.

Human Rights and Equity

Research shows that an equitable and inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving high levels of student achievement and well-being. Ontario is recognized nationally and internationally for its efforts to build and sustain an equitable and inclusive education system. Currently, all district school boards in Ontario have policies in place to support equity and inclusion as well as guidelines for religious accommodation. School boards have legal responsibilities under a number of statutes in this area, including the next four listed.

Ontario Human Rights Code

The Code outlines 17 prohibited grounds of discrimination. School boards are responsible to prevent discrimination and harassment, and where such claims are made, to respond appropriately and in a timely manner. Under the Code and court decisions that have interpreted its provisions, boards must provide work and learning environments that are free from discrimination and harassment.

Anti-Racism Act

The Anti-Racism Act aims to identify and combat systemic racism in policies, programs and services, thus building a fair society where everyone has access to equal opportunity. Education is a cornerstone of the Act.

One of the ways boards can determine where systemic racism may exist is through the collection of race-based data. District school boards are authorized to collect race and race-related data in compliance with the Anti-Racism Data Standards effective May 1, 2018.

Education Act Provisions on Positive Learning Environments

The Education Act [S. 169.1] requires all district school boards to provide safe, inclusive, and positive learning environments for all students. The Education Act [S. 303.1] also requires boards to support students to lead activities and organizations that promote gender equity, anti-racism, awareness, understanding and respect for people with disabilities and people of all sexual orientations, and gender identities.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

District school board policies and guidelines on religious accommodation are implemented within the context of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code and Education Act and its regulations and policies.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ruled in 1988 that one religion must not be given a position of primacy in public schools and that the content of opening or closing exercises
must reflect the multicultural realities and traditions of Ontario society. This ruling did not apply to Roman Catholic separate schools.

The Constitution Act, 1867, protects the denominational school rights of Ontario Roman Catholics to operate schools in the context of their faith.

**School Councils**

The *Education Act* requires each school board to establish a school council for each school operated by the board [ss. 170(1) paragraph 17.1].

School councils are advisory bodies whose purpose is to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. This purpose is set out in Ontario Regulation 612/00 (School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees). This regulation also describes the composition of school councils and the process for the election of members, the role and responsibilities of the school council, and operational matters relating to the school council. In addition, the Ministry of Education publishes a guide for members of school councils, which is available at: [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/).

The role and responsibilities of the principal, as a member of and as a support to the school council, are described in Regulation 298 (Operation of Schools – General).

Ontario Regulation 612/00 and Regulation 298 together address three key areas pertaining to school councils: the purpose of school councils, membership and operational matters, and the obligation of boards and principals to consult with school councils on certain matters.

**Parent Involvement Committee**

Ontario Regulation 612/00 requires every school board to establish a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and sets out provisions for the composition and functions of the PIC. The purpose of the PIC is to support, encourage and enhance parent involvement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being.

The PIC is a parent-led-committee that is an important advisory body to the board.

**Ombudsman Act**

The Ontario Ombudsman has the ability to investigate any decision or recommendation made or act done or omitted in the course of the administration of a school board, which includes decisions made by a board of trustees, and decisions that are final and which may not be appealed. Any person affected by a decision may make the request to investigate or the Ombudsman may initiate an investigation. An investigation
cannot commence until all rights of appeal or application of a hearing or a review have been exercised or have otherwise expired.

The report of the Ombudsman as a result of the investigation will include the Ombudsman’s opinion(s) and recommendation(s) on what should be done, reasons therefor and a request for the school board to advise as to the steps that will be taken in response to the report. The report will also be made public.

**Conflict of Interest**

The main purpose of the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act (MCIA) is to protect the public interest by ensuring that public officials do not improperly take advantage of their positions of trust to seek personal gain. The Act applies to all members of local councils, committees, and boards, including school boards, either elected or appointed. The Act also applies to members of advisory committees and other committees established under the Education Act.

**Pecuniary Interest**

Conflict-of-interest legislation is concerned only with pecuniary, or financial, interests. The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act refers to three kinds of pecuniary interest: direct, indirect, and deemed. The following are examples of each:

- A trustee would have a direct interest if the board was considering buying property that the trustee owns.
- A trustee would have an indirect interest if the trustee is a senior officer of a company bidding for a board contract.
- A trustee would have a deemed interest if the trustee’s spouse, child, or parent owns a company that is bidding for a board contract.

**Declaring a Conflict**

A member who identifies a direct, indirect, or deemed conflict of interest in a matter and is present at a meeting of the board or committee of the board at which the matter is the subject of consideration, must declare the conflict before any discussion of the matter begins. Specifically, the member must follow these steps:

- Publicly declare the conflict of interest, state the general nature of the interest, and have the declaration recorded in the minutes.
- Effective March 1, 2019, file a written statement of the interest and its general nature with the secretary of the committee or board.
- Do not vote on any question in respect of the matter.
- Do not take part in the discussion of the matter.
- Do not attempt in any way, whether before, during or after the meeting, to influence the voting on any question in respect of the matter.
- When a committee of the board, including a committee of the whole
board, is in closed session, leave the room for as long as the matter is under consideration, and have the fact that he or she left the room recorded in the minutes. At the next meeting that is open to the public, the declaration of interest shall be recorded in the minutes but not the general nature of that interest.

If a member is absent from a meeting during which that member would have been placed in a conflict of interest, at the next meeting attended by the member, the member must disclose the interest and otherwise refrain from discussing, influencing, or voting on the matter. If there are any doubts about a possible conflict of interest, trustees should seek legal advice.

**Influence**

A member who has a pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any matter that is being considered by an officer or employee of the school board (or by a person or body to which the school board has delegated a power or duty) the member shall not use his or her office in any way to attempt to influence any decision or recommendation that results from consideration of the matter.

**Registry**

Effective March 1, 2019, every school board shall establish and maintain a registry available for public inspection in which shall be kept a copy of each statement of interest filed and a copy of each declaration of interest recorded.

A member who considers a pecuniary interest in a matter to be “so remote or insignificant in its nature that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to influence the member” or “in common with electors generally” need not declare it or avoid influencing staff’s decision or recommendation regarding the matter. The decision to declare a conflict of interest or avoid influencing a staff member is the personal responsibility of the trustee. The board cannot force a member to declare a conflict or leave the room. If a trustee is in doubt, however, he or she should consider declaring a conflict and/or seeking legal advice.

**Contravention of the Provisions**

Effective March 1, 2019, an elector entitled to vote at the board elections or a person demonstrably acting in the public interest may apply to a judge of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for a determination as to whether a member or a former member failed to declare a conflict of interest, file the written statement of interest or leave the meeting where necessary; or the member participated in the vote or discussion or attempted to influence the vote; such a person may also bring an application before a judge of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for a determination as to whether a member or former member who had a pecuniary interest in a matter being considered by an officer or employee of the board used his or her office in any way to attempt to influence any decision or recommendation.

Effective March 1, 2019, where a judge finds that a member or former member contravened the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, they will now have more discretion when imposing sanctions for a breach of the Act and vacating a member’s seat is no longer mandatory.

As of March 1, 2019, a judge will be able to exercise discretion after considering, among other things, whether the member or former member took reasonable measures to prevent the contravention or committed the contravention through inadvertence or by reason of an error in judgment made in good faith.
As of March 1, 2019, the sanctions that may be imposed are a reprimand; suspension of the remuneration paid to the member for a period of up to 90 days; declaration of the member’s seat vacant; disqualify the member or former member from being a member during a period of not more than seven years after the date of the order; or if the contravention resulted in personal financial gain, require the member or former member to make restitution to the party suffering the loss or, if the party’s identity is not readily ascertainable, to the board.

Until February 28, 2019, where a judge finds that a member has contravened their disclosure obligations under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, the judge must declare the member’s seat vacant, unless the error was the result of inadvertence or an error in judgement. The judge also has the discretion to disqualify the member from office for up to seven years and to require the member to make restitution if the contravention has resulted in personal financial gain. If the judge finds that the contravention occurred inadvertently or because of a bona fide error in judgement, the member will not be disqualified from the board or have their seat declared vacant. However, the member may still be required to make restitution.

A breach of the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act by a member or former member does not of itself invalidate any decision or proceeding in respect of a matter that is the subject of the breach. However, if a member or former member failed to comply with the Act, the board may declare the proceedings to be void before the second anniversary of the date of the passing of the by-law or resolution authorizing the matter, unless this would adversely affect the rights of an innocent third party.

School boards may obtain insurance to protect trustees who are found by a court not to have contravened the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act. This insurance might cover costs or expenses incurred in successfully defending against a proceeding under the Act.

Audit Committee

The Education Act requires that every district school board in the Province establish an audit committee. The audit committee is composed of both trustees and non-trustee members appointed by the school board in accordance with its by-law on the selection process. School board staff are not permitted to be a member of the committee.

The purpose of the audit committee is to provide oversight of the school board’s financial reporting and controls and risk management. Ontario Regulation 361/10 (Audit Committees) describes the composition, functions, powers and duties of an audit committee.
CHAPTER 6

Communications, Media Relations and Social Media
Communicating with the community is an important part of the trustee’s role. All board constituents need and have a right to know about what students are learning and how well they are learning. They also have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent and a right to participate in discussions on the allocation of education resources in their community.

This chapter offers tips to help trustees communicate effectively, either through direct contact, in person or online, with parents, other ratepayers, school councils, community associations, or the media.

Board Communication Responsibilities

Start with a Communication Plan

A communication plan helps to ensure that school board communications efforts are aligned to the board’s multi-year strategic plan (MYSP). As mentioned previously, the strategic plan sets out the board’s vision, mission, goals and policies for a given period of time. This strategic plan is designed to support good governance, serve student needs and build public trust in Ontario’s schools.

The school board communication plan is built upon this strategic plan to support alignment between the school board’s strategy and the goals of the communication plan. The purpose of a communication plan is to establish the standards of communication between the school board and its respective audiences and stakeholders. A good communication plan supports consistent school board messages, both internally and externally, and helps the board make progress towards meeting its strategic and operational goals.

The school board communication plan can be developed by a committee of the board or by staff.

Key Parts of a Communication Plan

The following is a guideline for developing or updating the school board communication plan:

- **Background:** the multi-year strategic plan and/or other research and facts outlining the need for the communication plan
- **Goals:** what the board wants to achieve through communications during a set timeframe, with an emphasis on one or two priorities. Ideally, the goals of the communication plan are aligned or have some relationship to the goals of the board’s multi-year strategic plan
- **Strategies:** the specific ways in which the board hopes to reach its communication goals, connect to audiences, share information and receive feedback. With this, it is important to consider different methods of communication to ensure information is accessible to all community members.
Audiences: the various groups the board wants to engage using the communication plan (e.g., parents, students, staff, education partners, government leaders, the media, etc.)

Key messages: the main points and positions the school board wants target audiences to understand and retain

Responsibilities: the individuals and groups who are charged with implementing various elements of the communications plan (e.g., trustees, school board communication staff, etc.)

Timelines: when things need to happen (e.g., issuance of a news release, meetings with the media, community town halls, etc.)

Evaluation tools: items used to measure the effectiveness of the plan (e.g., surveys, analysis of generated media, operational audits, etc.)

It is important for school boards to review the board’s communication plan periodically and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies being used. In addition to surveying target audiences to gauge and measure engagement, it is also important to examine the ways in which effective communications have helped to advance the strategic and operational goals of the board.

Tips for Planning and Assessing Communication Efforts

Assign communications responsibilities to individuals or subcommittees and make sure the responsibilities are clear.

Use a variety of information-sharing approaches, including letters, newsletters, phone/e-mail networks, websites, blogs, social media, radio, community-access television and print media.

Prepare information sheets on important topics.

Be aware of and respond to communications barriers, such as language, culture and accessibility needs. For example, boards can often arrange for translations of board and school communications and interpreters for critical meetings and interviews.

Be mindful of who needs to know, when they need to know and how they usually access information.

Focus on listening as much as telling. Explore two-way communication, feedback and input throughout the community.

Be informative, but do not impose your views.

Welcome a range of viewpoints and seek common ground.

Design committee structures that allow for maximum participation from school councils, parents, students and other community groups.

Involve community volunteers in the initial planning of major initiatives.

Individual Trustee Communication Responsibilities

Guiding Principles

Regardless of the audience, and whether speaking or writing, certain principles apply. Always strive to be prepared, honest, clear, calm, alert and proactive. These same principles apply to board communications - but have been described below for individual trustee communications.

Be Prepared

Whenever possible, have a good grasp of the board’s position on an issue before speaking to it in public or in a written statement. Refer to the communication plan for the appropriate key messaging (if it is available). Remember the purpose of key messages is to build trust and understanding among the key stakeholders and audiences of the board.
Good key messages are short and simple messages that trustees can use to articulate the board’s position on a given issue. Key messages are designed for a specific audience and address those aspects of an issue that the board ultimately wants the audience to remember.

When making a presentation or preparing for an interview, write out the main points using the board’s key messages and rehearse them. Think of all possible questions that may be asked. If confronted with an unanticipated question; take time to think before answering. Be ready to admit to not knowing the answer or not knowing enough to express an opinion, but confirm getting the required information.

Being prepared and having practiced the message makes it easier to follow the ten Cs: being confident, consistent, credible, clear, calm, compelling, correct, compassionate, candid and concise.

**Be Honest**

Always tell the truth. Use factual and credible points that are not open to interpretation, and state the facts candidly.

If an issue can’t be discussed, state so, and indicate it will be dealt with in the future. If an answer isn’t known, say so, and refer the person to someone who may know. Don’t risk the long-term consequences of speaking recklessly.

Never say “no comment” to a reporter as it may appear that there is something to hide. Instead of saying “no comment,” explain why the question can’t be answered.

Trustees also have an obligation to respect confidentiality. As members of the school board, trustees must comply with protection of privacy legislation. Most of the board’s business is done in full view of the public and the media. A board’s policies will determine what information is confidential, but in all cases a trustee must not reveal discussions or material from a board’s private session to a member of the media.

If a board’s collective aim is to promote public understanding of and confidence in the school system, it is important that trustees support the process of democratic decision-making. During board meetings, some disagreement or controversy is almost inevitable. But once the vote is taken, trustees are collectively responsible for the board’s decision.

**Be Clear**

Speak and write in clear, concise language. Avoid educational jargon. When talking to reporters, remember that they cannot present information clearly if they can’t understand it themselves.

**Be Calm**

Stay calm during any discussion or interview. Losing one’s temper will only hurt the message and damage one’s reputation. Try a relaxation technique when angry, tense or nervous.

**Be Alert**

Don’t say things that shouldn’t be heard in any public situation and anticipate them being printed. Listen for cues from the reporter that can indicate the story they want to tell versus information that a trustee would want shared. Avoid speaking in opposition to the message to be shared.

**Be Proactive**

The Education Act requires a board to make its meetings public. As a trustee, encourage attendance at board meetings by highlighting the issues that will be discussed. Posting information on a personal website, blog or social media is an effective and timely way to inform the media and the community of emerging issues or potential controversies.

Confirm with board staff that background information is also available to the public on the school board website and that they or the spokesperson (e.g. chair of the board) will send it automatically to local media. Where the situation warrants, boards can also hold
information briefings and public information meetings. If a board proves itself to be a credible source for information about difficult issues, the media and the public are more likely to listen when the board wants to share its good news.

Monitor the media. Be aware of current education issues and fast-breaking news stories. Most media outlets have websites that are updated regularly. Using social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, etc.) is also an efficient way to keep up with the latest news on various topics relevant to the school board and to one’s role as a trustee.

**Tips for Better Writing**
- Write the way one speaks, use a conversational tone
- Avoid jargon
- Keep it simple, readers tend to be turned off by long, complicated text
- Include only one idea per paragraph
- Be selective about what is printed, don’t include all the background details
- Don’t assume readers have the same knowledge as a trustee
- Be aware of and comply with copyright laws when reproducing materials

- Be positive and constructive, be an advocate for the school board
- Make it clear what is wanted from the reader (Call for action?)
- Have several people proofread the material to be sure it is understandable and free of errors
- When possible, use handwritten notes to thank people or to encourage their participation
- Reply promptly to concerns and requests for information.

**Working with the Media**
For many people in Ontario, what they learn about schools comes from the media. Media outlets are aware that a large percentage of their audience are parents with children at local schools or other residents who are concerned about the impact local schools have on community life.

Trustees, in partnership with school board staff, are encouraged to provide their local media with ongoing, timely and newsworthy information about schools in the region. When a reporter calls about a story they are working on, it is equally important to respond in a timely and professional manner. This helps to both develop positive working relationships with local media and to ensure their position is included in their story, when appropriate.

Keep in mind that each school board’s policy on communication with the media
Taking a Story to the Media

Trustees, often in partnership with board staff, can assist the media in serving their audiences by thinking like an editor and sending a “pitch letter” that contains key facts and a potential story idea. This is called “pitching a story” or essentially positioning what they want to share as something that is truly newsworthy.

While parents are interested in a great deal of information, reporters are interested in news. News is judged by assessing the impact of the story on a reader or viewer.

The following questions can help determine whether the story or event to be covered will be newsworthy to a reporter:

- Is it new? Does it highlight new people, new programs, new ideas, or new ways of teaching and learning?
- Is it current? Stories about certain technology, for example, may be in vogue this year but less so next year
- Is it superlative? Does the story illustrate the fastest, highest, smallest or biggest of something? If so, what credible, third-party evidence exists to back up the claim?
- How is the event tied to a major news story? The media are constantly looking for ways to bring a local perspective to major national or international news stories
- What is the impact? Reporters think about if/how news will impact their readers/viewers. Will it cause them to take action on something? What’s in it for them?
- Is there a human interest angle? Reporters are always looking for interesting stories about people in their communities doing something unique and that their viewers/readers can relate to
- Are there interesting visuals? What visual appeal does the story offer – for example, students participating in an activity that lends itself to a compelling photograph for the newspaper’s print or digital versions, or for television footage?

Making the Reporter’s Job Easier

Most often, reporters are dedicated, well-meaning individuals who are usually facing time pressures. They may well be pursuing several stories in a single day, against the clock – with hourly or daily deadlines. The reporter assigned to cover an event may be a specialist like an education reporter, but more likely will be a general reporter, who deals with a different topic in every story. This is especially true in radio and television. It is primarily newspapers (and only some of them) that have reporters
assigned to cover education, although a small number of television stations do have education reporters. As a general rule, most reporters have limited knowledge of schools and how they operate. Accordingly, it is essential to make it as easy as possible to tell a story. Work with board staff to provide written fact sheets about schools, contact numbers for parents (who have already provided their permission to share their contact information), and suggestions for lively pictures or upcoming photo or video opportunities to accompany a story. In short, think of ways to help the media do the best job they can within their time constraints.

**Responding to the Media**

If a reporter approaches a trustee with questions about a current issue or event, don’t panic. Follow the tips discussed in this chapter. Be ready.

Each school board’s policy on communication with the media will differ because of varying needs and resources. Some boards have communications staff and others flow media calls through the office of the director of education. Many boards use the chair as the key spokesperson for the board. Use the protocol that works best for the board. The key is to remember that the media require a consistent and available spokesperson.

Reporters may also approach individual trustees for comment, especially if the issue is connected to a school in a particular ward/trustee area. If that happens, follow the board’s policy on communicating with the media. This may include informing board communication staff of the interview so they can assist with key messages and interview tips.

To ensure that the board is able to present its side of an issue, it will be important to respond to a media call within the deadlines specified. A reporter covering a contentious issue at the board or an incident at one of the schools has probably been sent there by an assignment editor. Typically, the reporter has only a few hours to turn in the finished story.

If possible, avoid turning down a reporter’s request for an interview, especially when it involves bad news. If the board’s official spokesperson refuses to cooperate, the reporter will inevitably get information from other sources, including those with less knowledge on the issue, which is never helpful. There are cases when interviews aren’t the best way to respond or aren’t possible based on the reporter’s deadline. In these cases, consider developing a written response or a holding statement if information is still being gathered to inform a response.

Make sure to understand what the reporter wants and how the material is to be used. For example, the recorded comments could be part of a 30-second clip on the nightly news, or incorporated into a feature segment on a radio documentary, or form part of an analysis piece for the local newspaper.

It is not difficult to anticipate what a reporter’s questions will be if they are calling about a specific issue. When receiving a call unexpectedly, trustees have the right to ask for a reasonable amount of time to gather information and prepare thoughts. When a reporter calls, take the time to ask the reporter questions to gather as much information as possible about their story, including questions they would like to ask to support the preparation. It’s also worth asking who else the reporter is interviewing to help anticipate how others may be responding to the questions.

Make sure to agree in advance about the conditions of an interview. Keep in mind that if a reporter requests an off the record conversation, it is wise to assume that at some point what is said could
very well become part of the record. For this reason, it is better to assume that everything said could become part of the record, and proceed accordingly.

**Maintaining a Working Relationship**

The best way to develop a working relationship with the media is to be an accurate source of information. This does not mean that trustees must tell reporters everything or answer all their questions. It simply means that by facilitating their job, they will likely return to the trustee for information, quotes and opinions on issues. When speaking to the media, it is an opportunity to communicate the school board’s key messages on the issue of the day.

**Complaining About Media Coverage**

There are occasions when the story resulting from an interview isn’t ideal. When it is an issue of tone or context, there may not be much one can do to change the piece. In these cases, although it may be tempting to contact the reporter to voice discontent, if everything in the story is accurate, it’s unlikely this will result in any changes. If, however, the story has a factual error, it is important to let the reporter know about the error as soon as possible and provide a suggested correction.

The correction may be issued by the next business day. For many news outlets, the correction is made to the online version of the story and subsequent searches of the outlet’s database will turn up this corrected version. If the trustee is still not satisfied with the reporter’s response, talking to the reporter’s editor is a course of action. If that doesn’t work, sending a letter to the editor or director of the news outlet is another option. If the problem is with a newspaper, contact the National News Media Council at [http://mediacouncil.ca](http://mediacouncil.ca). Keep notes of the interview with the media so that third parties can judge the facts for themselves.

It may be helpful to speak to board communication staff about pursuing a correction.

**Social Media**

Social media is everywhere - Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn. Some trustees may not use the tools themselves, but no one can deny their potential communicative power. They offer the capacity to have an informative and interesting Twitter debate, discuss local issues directly with constituents on Facebook, or participate in a successful YouTube video campaign.

While printed school newsletters with messages from local trustees are still being used in some boards, the fact that they can never be as current or as quickly dispatched as an online publication or tweet makes them less popular. Twitter, classroom and school blogs, websites and Facebook pages are changing the way families get news from their local community school. Trustees across Canada are turning to Twitter and Facebook to reach their constituents and build support for issues affecting students, staff and local communities. Consider using an online social media platform to communicate with communities.

School boards have a social media presence (e.g. Board Twitter account) and staff expertise in the areas of social media and digital communications. Consider asking for a training session with staff to get their advice on the practices that would be best engaging with local audiences. Be sure to ask board staff about applicable policies, procedures and guidelines for social media use.

**Objectives**

Before using social media, users with public profiles should write
down their objectives, which may include:

- Being accountable and transparent to the ward community
- Extending the reach of strategic messaging by building relationships with relevant social media users including school board stakeholders, other trustees, journalists, bloggers and the wider education community
- Providing leadership and credibility in the education field by sharing useful and timely information about online communication channels
- Monitor Twitter account and engage with critics and key influencers to address potential issues and correct factual inaccuracies
- Providing a low-barrier method for constituent feedback and interaction
- Posting live coverage of school board events for those who cannot attend.

Social Media Presence

Just as with planning other forms of communications, there are no rigid rules for getting messages out through social media, but always keep in mind the following pieces of advice:

- Engaging on social media can demonstrate a genuine interest in reaching out to and engaging with constituents. Twitter is one of the best ways to engage one-on-one with community members, staff and students. It is a great way to foster positive relationships with constituents – without ever having to physically meet.
- Social media can be used to anticipate future policy minefields and ask constituents for their views in advance of boardroom debate. Constituents will often appreciate the added opportunity to provide their views on the issues that impact their community.
- Don’t let social media accounts go stale. For example, send out a tweet (or two) at least every day to attract followers. Be engaging, punchy, succinct and humorous when appropriate. This will make the tweets, and therefore the information they convey, stand out. At the same time, pay attention to posting standards on each platform (e.g. An Instagram posting isn’t required frequently as Twitter).

These are some of the qualities that will keep content interesting:

- **Varied** – Cover a broad base of content types (e.g., pictures, text, audio) and sources to keep followers interested
- **Lively** – Don’t just regurgitate press release headlines. Posts should be written in conversational English.
Timely – Posts should be about issues of immediate relevancy or upcoming events/opportunities.

Credible – Posts can occasionally have a funny hook but their connection back to priorities and objectives should always be defensible. If possible, there should be hyperlinks to related content or a call to action.

Inclusive – In keeping with the knowledge-sharing culture of social media, take the opportunity to link to relevant content from a diverse range of sources other than personal or the school board website.

Content
Often, the hardest part of maintaining social media accounts is coming up with great content every day. Capture interesting and educational pieces to link in to everyday life. These can include: news releases, official school board letters and statements, new board campaigns and initiatives, great YouTube or other videos, or share followers’ content and live tweeting at events. Watch the school board account and other education accounts for content to retweet.

Aim to be established as a “thought leader” in the community. Sharing relevant research, events, awards and news from elsewhere can position trustees as trusted sources of reliable high-quality, and relevant information.

Risks of Social Media
Social media may provide many opportunities, but they also come with risks. It’s important not to be deterred because risks can be mitigated with some proper planning and discipline. Some good advice for new social media users includes:

Beware of trolls – There are social media users out there who are merely seeking to sow discord. Learn to recognize a troll, and don’t respond. “Walk” away.

People are watching – It might sometimes seem like messages are sent into the void, but reporters and bloggers are always watching for stories, both online and offline. Saying something inflammatory on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms is no different than posting it on personal websites or newsletters. Don’t post anything that shouldn’t be said loudly in a crowded room.

Find a balance – Be informative, but do not impose views on others. Welcome a range of viewpoints, and try to seek common ground. Social media must be democratic to be constructive.

Be aware of communications barriers – Consider barriers such as language proficiency, culture and the accessibility need of communities. For example, if posting an image with text, ensure the text is available
in the post itself or via a link so that it can be read by a screen reader.

- **Report harassment** – Most applications have an option to block and report complaints about other accounts. On Twitter, for example, block users from seeing one’s tweets by clicking on their username and visiting their profile. Users can also be reported for disseminating spam and being abusive. Cyberbullying happens to people of all ages and backgrounds. If a user is taking their communications too far and bullying or abuse is felt, consider contacting the local police service.

**Promotion**

Once a trustee’s objectives are determined, a format has been selected, and posts have been created, the final piece in the social media planning process should be promotion. Constituents need to know trustees are on social media. Here are some ways to grow the audience:

- Post a prominent link on one’s personal website, Facebook page or blog
- Ask friends, coworkers and other trusted connections to promote proactively from their social media accounts

- Add a link to social media accounts in email signatures
- Add the link to all ward newsletters, statements and news releases
- Email or call key stakeholders in a trustee’s area to communicate an active social media account
- Create a posting calendar and commit to a schedule (e.g. 1-2 tweets/day)

**Evaluating Success**

Like with any good strategy, evaluation and follow up are key to gauging the impact of one’s efforts. To measure the effectiveness of social media initiatives, consider tracking things like number of followers, number of retweets/shares, volume and quality of two-way communication and feedback from followers. Third party management tools like Hootsuite can help by automating tracking the number of replies, retweets or likes (e.g. Twitter)

It is important to review the plan periodically and evaluate the effectiveness of one’s strategies. Ask fellow trustees and the community whether they feel that appropriate information sharing is taking place. Use this information to strengthen the plan going forward. Also, be sure to act on some of the feedback received. Keep a log of good suggestions and take action. If online presence needs refining, look to the approaches that are being successfully used by other individuals or groups. Finally, don’t worry if the audience doesn’t grow quickly. Social media audience growth takes time. It’s an organic process that builds with trust. Followers should be judged by quality, not quantity. Having 25 local leaders reading tweets every day can be far more effective than having 2,000 followers spread out across the globe.
Appendix A

Trustee Association Contact Information
1. **Association Des Conseils Scolaires Des Écoles Publiques De L’ontario (Acépo)**

   **Contact Information**
   439 University Avenue, Suite 800 Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8
   **Telephone:** 647.499.4261
   **Email:** info@acepo.org
   **Website:** http://www.acepo.org/
   **Twitter:** @ACEPOnatario

2. **Association Franco-Ontarienne Des Conseils Scolaires Catholiques (Afocsc)**

   **Contact Information**
   67 Yonge Street Suite 1202 Toronto ON M5E 1J8
   **Phone:** (416) 250-1754
   **Fax:** (416) 250-7025
   **E-mail:** info@afocsc.org
   **Website:** http://www.afocsc.org/?lang=en
   **Twitter:** @AFOCSC

3. **Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (Ocsta)**

   **Contact Information**
   20 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 1804 Toronto ON M4R 1K8
   **Phone:** (416) 932-9460
   **Fax:** (416) 932-9459
   **E-mail:** ocsta@ocsta.on.ca
   **Website:** https://www.ocsta.on.ca/
   **Twitter:** @CatholicEdu

4. **Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (Opsba)**

   **Contact Information**
   439 University Avenue, 18th Floor Toronto ON M5G 1Y8
   **Phone:** (416) 340-2540
   **Fax:** (416) 340-7571
   **E-mail:** webmaster@opsba.org
   **Website:** http://www.opsba.org/
   **Twitter:** @OPSBA_official

5. **Ontario Student Trustee Association-L’association Des Éleves conseilleres Et Conseilleres De L’ontario (Osta-Aeco)**

   **Contact Information**
   70 Temperance St., Suite 2802 Toronto, ON M5H 0B1
   **Email:** exec@osta-aeco.org
   **Website:** https://www.osta-aeco.org/
   **Twitter:** @OSTAAECO

6. **Regroupement Des Éleves Conseilleres Francophone De l’ontario (Recfo)**

   **Contact Information**
   320 rue Lajoie Ottawa, ON K1L 7H4
   **Email:** recfo@fesfo.ca
   **Website:** https://www.recfo.ca/
   **Twitter:** @RECFO
Appendix B

Canadian Charter Of Rights And Freedoms, Section 23: Minority Language Educational Rights
Language of Instruction

Continuity of language instruction / Application where numbers warrant.

23. (1) Citizens of Canada

a. whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority of the province in which they reside, or

b. who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary language instruction in the same language.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary language instruction in the language.

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province

a. applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

b. includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.
GLOSSARY
ACÉPO

ADFO
Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes. Members include school administrators in French-language schools in Ontario. Related associations for principals include OPC and CPCO.

AEFO
Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. The French-language affiliate of the Ontario Teachers’ Federation.

AFOCSC
Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. The association of school boards and trustees serving Ontario’s French Catholic school system

AGÉFO
Association des gestionnaires de l’éducation franco-ontarienne. Members include managers in French-language school boards in Ontario.

ASFO
Association des agentes et agents de supervision franco-ontariens. Members include supervisory officers in French-language school boards in Ontario. Related associations include OASBO, OCSBO, OCSOA, and OPSOA.

CMEC
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

CODE
Council of Ontario Directors of Education. Members include directors of education from all four school board systems – English and French public, and English and French Catholic. (See also ECCODE and CODELF)

CODEC
Conseil ontarien des directions de l’éducation catholique. Members include the directors of education from the French-language Catholic school boards. (See also CODE.)

CODELF
Conseil ontarien des directions de l’éducation de langue française. Members include French-language directors of education in Ontario of both public and Catholic French-language school boards. (See also CODE.)

Collaborative Professionalism
Collaborative professionalism is defined by the Ministry as professionals at all levels of the education system working together, sharing knowledge, skills and experience to improve student achievement and well-being of both students and staff.

COSBO
Council of School Business Officials. Members include superintendents of business or senior business officials from all four school board systems.

COSHRO
Council of Senior Human Resource Officials is a sub-committee of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials. Members include representative superintendents of human resources or other senior human resources officials from all four school board systems.

Coterminous Boards
District school boards that serve all or part of the same geographical area.

CPCO
Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario. Related associations include ADFO and OPC.
DEF
District Effectiveness Framework is an overview of the characteristics of high performing school districts.

DSB
District school board.

ECCODE
English Catholic Council of Directors of Education. Members include directors of education for English Catholic school boards. (See also CODE.)

ECE
Early Childhood Educator. Works in a team with a teacher in full-day kindergarten classrooms.

EDU
Ministry of Education. An abbreviation used by the ministry in some of its publications.

Elementary Level
Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. (See also Primary Division, Junior Division, and Intermediate Division.)

EqAO
Education Quality and Accountability Office. A crown agency established in 1996 to measure and communicate the achievements of students, schools, and school boards, using province-wide assessments of students and other indicators.

ETFO

First Nation(s)
The term used in this handbook in place of terms such as Indian or Native to describe Canada’s Indigenous people. There are 133 distinct First Nations in Ontario.

FDK
Full-Day Kindergarten programs. This program for four and five-year old students was instituted in Ontario on September 2014.

GSN
Grants for Student Needs.

ICT
Information and Communication Technology.

IEP
Individual Education Plan. A special education plan developed for a student who requires specific services, supports and accommodations.

Intermediate Division
Grades 7 to 10.

INUIT
The Inuit are the Indigenous people of Arctic Canada.

IPRC
Identification, Placement and Review Committee. A committee made up of at least three individuals, at least one of whom is a principal or a supervisory officer, who decide whether individual students should be formally identified as exceptional and, therefore, requiring special education support.

Junior Division
Grades 4 to 6.

LRA
Labour Relations Act.
MACSE
Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education.

MÉTIS
The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people of Canada with a unique history, culture, language and territory.

MFIPPA

MYSP
Multi-Year Strategic Plan is at least three years in scope and aimed at achieving the school board goals. The MYSP must be reviewed annually with the Director of Education.

NTIP
New Teacher Induction Program – supports the growth and professional development of new teachers.

OASBO
Ontario Association of School Business Officials. Members include administrators from school boards throughout Ontario. Related associations include ASFO, OCSBO, OCSOA, COSBO, and OPSOA.

OCSBO
Ontario Catholic School Business Officials. Members include administrators in Catholic school boards throughout Ontario. Related associations include ASFO, OASBO, CSOA, COSBO, and OPSOA.

OCSSA
Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers’ Association. Members include supervisory officers for Catholic school boards throughout Ontario. Related associations include ASFO, OASBO, OCSBO, and OPSOA.

OCSTA
Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association.

OCT
Ontario College of Teachers. The Ontario College of Teachers establishes and implements standards for certification, teaching practice, and professional development. It also accredits faculties of education. OCT is self-regulating professional body, which may confer, suspend, or rescind the teaching certificates of its members.

OECTA
Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association. An affiliate of the Ontario Teachers’ Federation.

OEN
Ontario Education Number. A number assigned to each student by the Ministry of Education to facilitate data collection.

OESC
Ontario Educational Services Corporation. A non-profit organization set up by the four school board associations (OPSBA, OCSTA, ACÉPO, and AFOCSC) and the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) to provide services to school boards, (e.g. a school energy coalition which intervenes at the Ontario Energy Board to effect savings for boards.)

OLF
Ontario Leadership Framework is an overview of the leadership practices and personal leadership resources that support creating the conditions in which student achievement can thrive.

OLS
Ontario Leadership Strategy.
OPC
Ontario Principals’ Council. Related associations include ADFO and CPCO.

OPSBA
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association.

OPSOA
Ontario Public Supervisory Officers’ Association. Members include supervisory officers in public school boards throughout Ontario. Related associations include OASBO, OCSBO, OCSOA, and ASFO.

OSR
Ontario Student Record.

OSS

OSSD

OSSTF

OSSLT
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. A province-wide test administered by the EQAO and written by Grade 10 students. The test is based on the Ontario curriculum expectations for language and communication – particularly reading and writing – up to and including Grade 9.

OSTA
Ontario Student Trustees’ Association. The association representing student trustees from public boards. OSTA-AECO liaises with the Regroupement des élèves conseillers et conseillères francophone de l’Ontario which represents students in both public and Catholic French-language boards.

OTF
Ontario Teachers’ Federation. An umbrella organization for the following affiliates: OECTA, OSSTF, ETFO, and AEFO.

PIC
Parent Involvement Committee is a system-level committee of parent representatives established to support improved student achievement and wellbeing through encouraging and enhancing parent involvement. The Parent Involvement Committee may provide advice to the Board.

PIRLS
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. An international assessment conducted through the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), involving a random sampling of students in over 30 countries. Ontario students participate in this assessment.

PISA
Programme for International Student Assessment. An international assessment in reading, mathematics and science for 15 year-olds conducted through the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) involving a random sampling of students in over 30 countries. Ontario students participate in this assessment.

Primary Division
Full-Day Kindergarten to Grade 3.

Public School Boards
The non-Catholic English and French-language school boards.
RECFO
Regroupement des élèvesconseillères Francophone de l’Ontario. The association representing student trustees from the French public and French Catholic school boards

Rules of Order
Rules of Order refer to the parliamentary procedures followed to ensure motions are introduced, debated and voted on in an orderly manner.

SAL
Supervised Alternative Learning – relates to policies and programs intended to re-engage young people 14 to 17 years old who are not attending school and are at risk of not graduating.

School authorities
Governing bodies for school systems in remote or distinct communities that are not served by district school boards. In this handbook, the terms school board and board are used to refer to both district school boards and school authorities.

School councils
Advisory bodies composed of parents, community members, and others with a mandate to provide advice to the school principal and the school board on certain matters.

SEAB
Special Education Appeal Board. A committee established by a school board to hear an appeal of an IPRC decision, either for or against identifying a student as exceptional.

SEAC
Special Education Advisory Committee. A committee established by each school board to monitor the board’s special education programs, services, and plans.

Secondary level
Grades 9 to 12. (See also Intermediate Division and Senior Division.)

Senior Division
Grades 11 and 12.

SET
Special Education Tribunal. A tribunal established by the Ministry of Education to hear appeals made by parents who disagree with the identification and/or placement decision made by a school board following a meeting of an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee, and a subsequent meeting with an appeal board. The appeal proceeds before the tribunal as a formal hearing between the parents and the school board.

TIMSS
Trends International Mathematics and Science Study. Student tests conducted through the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), involving a random sampling of students in over 30 countries. Ontario students participate in this assessment.

TPA
Teacher Performance Appraisal is the appraisal process for teachers and is normally conducted once every five years against province-wide teacher performance standards.