

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Role of a School Board

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The Education Act provides for the establishment of four types of district school boards: English public, English Catholic, French public, and French Catholic. Locally elected school boards are responsible for operating publicly funded schools within their jurisdiction and for the delivery and quality of educational programs and services. Legal accountability for the decisions of the Board of Trustees applies to the school board as a corporate entity rather than to individual trustees.

A Board of Trustees must be able to function as a cohesive whole, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction to the entire system and the community it serves. Its focus is on the big picture, improving student achievement through effective policy-making, visionary planning, evaluating student outcomes and identifying major implications for the school district. The Director of Education is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the board.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has broad areas of accountability. These partly reflect obligations to stakeholder groups served. They also include critical processes that the Board of Trustees must put in place in order to provide effective governance and fulfill its obligations under the Education Act. Key areas are as follows: accountability for student achievement; accountability to the community; accountability to the Provincial Government; accountability for Board-Director relations, and for governance processes.

The Board of Trustees has the following major areas of responsibility:

#### **1. Accountability for Student Achievement**

- a) Promoting a culture that supports student success
- b) Ensuring that effective educational programs are available for all students
- c) Making decisions that reflect the Board's philosophy and belief statements that all students can learn
- d) Promoting clear, consistent expectations that focus on a successful outcome for all students

#### **2. Accountability to the Community**

- a) Making decisions that reflect the Board's philosophy, belief statements and strategic plan, and that represent the interests of the entire organization

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- b) Establishing processes that provide the community with opportunities for input
- c) Providing opportunities for communication between the Board and school councils and home and school associations
- d) Providing reports outlining Board results in accordance with provincial policy
- e) Developing policy to hear appeals in accordance with appropriate statutes and Board policies

#### 3. **Accountability to the Provincial Government**

- a) Acting in accordance with the Education Act, regulations, and other statutory requirements to ensure the implementation of provincial and education standards and policies
- b) Performing the functions required by provincial legislation and Board policy
- c) Providing advice to the Ministry of Education and the provincial trustee association regarding regional and local implications of funding and policy recommendations

#### 4. **Policy Development, Implementation and Review**

- a) Developing policies that outline how the Board will successfully function
- b) Ensuring that all new policies have in place a purpose statement prior to development
- c) Approving policy statements that meet the criteria identified by the Board
- d) Regularly reviewing the Board's policies to ensure that they reflect the desired impact and/or purpose

#### 5. **Board-Director Relations**

- a) Selecting the Director of Education
- b) Providing the Director with a clear job description and corporate direction
- c) Delegating, through policy, administrative authority and responsibility subject to the provisions and restrictions of the Education Act and regulations

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- d) Evaluating the Director annually or bi-annually; using the Director's job description and Strategic Plan as the basis for the evaluation
- e) At least once a year at the Director's request, providing the Director with an opportunity to meet alone with the Board of Trustees in closed session
- f) Periodically reviewing the compensation of the Director and senior staff
- g) Promoting a positive working relationship with the Director of Education

#### 6. **Board Development**

- a) Annually or biannually reviewing the effectiveness and performance of the Board of Trustees
- b) Developing an annual plan for trustee development (both collectively and individually) by increasing knowledge of the role, processes, and issues
- c) Using the expertise of the Director of Education, and other provincial organizations, i.e. the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Council of Directors of Education and the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association, to help develop and support the Board of Trustees' development plan

#### 7. **Strategic Planning**

- a) Providing overall direction for the Board by establishing the purpose (mission), and vision and belief statements
- b) Annually setting priorities with outcomes (Strategic Plan)
- c) Annually approving the Strategic Plan in public session for distribution
- d) Annually using the Strategic Plan to drive the budget process
- e) Annually evaluating the effectiveness of the Board in relation to the Strategic Plan
- f) Monitoring progress toward the improvement of student achievement

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#### 8. **Fiscal Responsibility**

- a) Developing a budget review process to help determine annual resource allocations using the Strategic Plan and other provincial and local directions
- b) Annually approving the budget to ensure that the financial resources are allocated to achieve the desired results
- c) Approving, as per legislation, all capital plans and other planning documents that will drive budget decisions
- d) Having in place an audit committee in accordance with O. Reg. 361/10, Audit Committees
- e) Soliciting advice from the Director of Education and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association in setting the parameters for negotiation with employee groups
- f) Ratifying memoranda of agreements with all bargaining units and non-union groups

#### 9. **Political Advocacy and Communication**

- a) Annually developing an advocacy plan for the Board, including the focus, key messages and advocacy mechanisms
- b) Annually developing a plan to ensure that the Board of Trustees is communicating with the community, city council, members of the provincial parliament and other stakeholders
- c) Annually reviewing political advocacy and building on successes

#### 10. **Recognition**

- a) Develop mechanisms to ensure that the Board recognizes students and student achievement
- b) Developing mechanisms to ensure that the Board recognizes staff and staff achievements
- c) Developing mechanisms to ensure that the Board recognizes community members and volunteers

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**11. The Board of Trustees also has the following responsibilities:**

- a) Approving school year calendars
- b) Naming educational facilities
- c) Approving disposition of land and buildings
- d) Approving education development charges
- e) Approving the issuance of debentures
- f) Designating a coordinator to administer the requirements of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- g) Approving the Board's auditor
- h) Approving the Board's lawyers